

Outside Looking In: A Table for Sinners - Luke 7:36-50

Come to the Table Series - Norwalk Christian Church, October 15, 2018

I want you to get a physical image of our story today....

Jesus comes in, sits at the table. I imagine even though this is an impromptu gathering, people are following Jesus including the twelve along with some of the women that followed Jesus, so in the men would have come in, those that fit, and would have been lining the walls, the only women present in the room would have been serving the meal. And... this woman comes in, uninvited. She falls to Jesus' feet crying. Tears fall from her eyes onto his feet, and using her hair which she lets down in front of all these men, she dries his feet. Now let me just say that letting her hair down wasn't seductive in that time, it was looked down upon, shameful, it was not done in front of others. I was trying to think of something that would be of similar relation today. Something that's a normal part of life that society has made taboo.

Imagine you're at a dinner gathering and a woman you didn't know at the table begins to breastfeed her child. There's a bit of uncomfortableness there. It's a normal and natural thing to nurse a child. It's also a normal and natural thing for this woman to have hair. Most of us have hair, not all, but most of us. And she let her hair down. She's drying his feet I imagine first from the tears that bathed his feet and then from the oil that anointed them. This oil that's meant for the top of your head is being poured over his feet. She knows she's not suppose to be there and probably already feels like an outcast. Look at her posture. The woman doesn't even stand-up while she's there. She bows at this feet, as she cries, kisses, pours, and dries. What this gesture can say about her view and respect for Jesus is tremendous. She is the only one showing him hospitality.

Yet these men are so caught off guard by this woman's hair being down they can't even begin to see what she's doing.

The least of these, this woman, offers him everything. the tears in her eyes and the hair from atop her head. The oil to anoint my feet. And you, Simon, this is your home and you haven't even offered me so much as a glass of water or even a "hello." That's today's equivalent.

No water to wash his feet, no kiss hello, no oil for his head. A good host would offer water to wash the dirt from his feet. A good host would greet him with a kiss to welcome him in. A good host would offer him oil for his head before he sat at the table. (*It was a customary hygienic thing, the olive oil over your head would act as a deodorant of sorts before sitting down for a meal with others.) And this Pharisee offers him nothing.

The woman, washes his feet with her tears, kisses his feet, anoints his feet with oil, she welcomes and invites him, she gives everything, even when others are watching.

I have to ask myself if Simon was even able to see Jesus? Was he able to believe in Jesus before seeing him? Or was he starting to believe the gossip that was going around about Jesus? That he associated with the wrong kinds of people, pagans, prostitutes, he was really just a drunkard himself. Why else would he not welcome Jesus into his home, to his table? And I wonder if Simon almost felt validated when this sinful woman follows Jesus in and makes a spectacle of herself as she kissed his feet. I wonder if he was starting to feel that his hesitation and doubt was founded. Had he intentionally not welcomed Jesus? Had he already made up his mind that he didn't want Jesus to stay very long? That he wasn't a savior, he was a fraud.

...Simon hasn't figured it out yet.

I know a couple, no worries, Travis, it's not us... I know a couple that started off their marriage thinking that they each had to respond appropriately to everything the other did in order for them to have a perfect marriage. It was of the noblest intention. They were very cordial following the status quo. That is until one day when one of them had enough and exploded on the other which lead the other to explode all the pent up frustrations right back. It was messy, it was ugly, but then they were able to get it all out and forgive each other. And they were closer having that messy conversation and forgiving each other than they were just going about doing what they thought was the polite expected response.

Simon hasn't figured that out yet. He hasn't figured out that this woman with all her baggage and new forgiveness has brought herself closer to Jesus than him just following the expected path. He also hasn't figured out that

he's in the same boat as this woman. He thinks he's different, but he's not. He can't see past all the outward fixtures of her life to see a real person who is just like himself.

Jesus stopped, as he often did when people were confused, and he told a story about two men owing a debt, one large and one small. And asked Simon which was more grateful, the one who was forgiven much or the one who was forgiven little? There's hesitancy in his voice, "I guess the one that was forgiven much." Technically that word is translated "I suppose" but you get the point, there's doubt to his answer. I don't know why. Did he expect Jesus to be confusing and turn things upside-down, perhaps like he's heard of him doing? Or was he uninterested in any line of questioning at this point? Had he already made up his mind about this so-called savior?

Jesus turns and tells the woman her sins are forgiven. The same wording from a couple chapters earlier, when the four friends, who brought their paralytic friend to Jesus through the roof of a packed house. And Jesus gets the same response here he got there. Who can forgive sins? Why would this man think he has that kind of authority to do only what God can do?

The one whom a lot was forgiven loves a lot, the one who little was forgiven, loves little.

This new sermon series is about coming to the table. The table where Jesus is the ultimate host. Jesus eats at tables with people who are sinners. Those whom he has forgiven much. And those who he has forgiven little. And he treats them all with dignity, respect, and love. Won't you come join us as we gather at Christ's table today?