

Last Sunday
Also Last of "Love Takes Time"
Luke 7:36-50
November 21, 2010

This whole event is about a person's love as evidence of faith in Jesus.

Three people are the focus of these verses, Jesus, an unnamed woman, and a Pharisee named Simon.

Jesus is the only Source of genuine spiritual love. He alone is the Source of trust in God.

The woman shows by her free and grateful love for Jesus that Jesus' love has entered her heart.

Simon shows by his lack of love for Jesus that Jesus' love for him had still not touched him for he had rejected it.

Certainly, the aim of God giving us these words is that

We Be Committed to Christ Jesus Because of Love

Because of love, but whose love? This is most important to know. It is obvious that this unnamed woman loved Jesus. That's why she went to Simon's house that day. That's why she did everything she did at Simon's house that day. But her loving devotion is not where it all started.

How is it that this woman had come to think this way about Jesus? It was because of how Jesus thought of her. It was because of how Jesus had shown His love for her. Jesus had been preaching and teaching the Good News of the forgiveness of all sin from God for all people, because all people need forgiveness. Jesus Himself would earn all that forgiveness.

We learn from these verses that this woman had earlier ruined her reputation in town. Scripture offers not even a hint as to what sin or sins had done that to her. It makes no difference. Then, like today, a person can ruin one's life in countless ways. The violation of any commandment of God can be done so openly and grossly that our community can turn away from is in disgust. Her sin might be dishonesty. It can be persistent lying or hurtful gossip. It can be obvious self-centered envy or jealousy. It might be badly using others. It might be stubbornness or a nasty temper. It could be drug abuse, alcoholism or any of the many ways of violating the sixth commandment with adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, or any way of demoting God's view of marriage. Even this list doesn't exhaust the list of possibilities. Any sin can ruin our reputation. Satan delights in doing this to anyone.

That's not how God feels about it, though. Jesus, our God and Savior, came here in the flesh to rescue all of us poor, hurting, dying, disgraced sinners from that sin and all the horrible

consequences of sin, including the most horrible consequence of all, death, which sin is able to make permanent. That is named hell, outer darkness, a burning lake. Because of His eternal, immeasurable love, and nothing else, Jesus has lived and dies for the world, for that woman, for Simon the Pharisee, for you, for me.

That town's reaction to her sin had certainly impressed her sin upon her. When Jesus assured her of forgiveness for that sin, she was one thankful woman. The Gospel made her a believer in Jesus as her loving Savior God and that joyous confidence planted love for Jesus in her.

And, immediately, that love wanted to give, to give thanks. She took the time to think about what she could do, how she could serve Him, how to show her love, devotion, and thanks to Him. She heard Jesus was at Simon's house. She knew where that was. She purchased a special, beautiful alabaster container of expensive perfume. She went to Simon's house at once.

"Behold, a woman." That is how it is worded in the original. She was unexpected. It was a surprise. She had no invitation. The courage it took for this woman, with her reputation, to go to that Pharisee's house, was tremendous. Only love for Jesus could have overcome all of her other fears and uncertainties.

She got emotional. She cried, maybe cried in repentance for those sins, maybe cried for overwhelming joy at the forgiveness she had heard Jesus preach, maybe cried out of sincere gratitude for that gift, probably cried for all of these reasons. Emotions don't confine themselves to tidy compartments. The flowing tears were soon dripping off her cheeks onto Jesus' feet. Now what? She had not planned for this and, of course, no one in that house was going to provide a towel. So, she let down her hair and dried Jesus' feet with her hair. She poured all that perfume on His feet and then she kissed His feet, not politely, but with reckless abandon.

Simon was quite offended, offended at her coming into his house to do this, offended that Jesus let her. Simon did not believe Jesus was a prophet, let alone the Prophet, High Priest and King of kings, the promised Savior. Now, he figured he had the proof. If Jesus were a prophet, He'd know about his woman and never accept her devotions.

Jesus knew Simon's thoughts, told Simon his little example, and asked Simon whether the man whose \$60,000 debt or the man whose \$6,000 debt got cancelled by the lender would show the most appreciation to the lender. Simon rightly said the man whose \$60,000 debt was forgiven would be most thankful. "Correct answer," Jesus said.

Simon showed not even what would then have been considered common courtesies to Jesus. That showed no love. The woman showed extraordinary kindness and devotion that showed great love. Yes, the woman's holy love for Jesus also was involved here because Jesus had first lovingly forgiven her. Jesus here again reassured her of that forgiveness, one on one, personal absolution, and assured her of entire salvation through her faith in Jesus. Such faith is alive, and so it works by means of love.

Do we need Jesus and His forgiveness? Yes, the same as everybody. Does Jesus want all to have forgiveness? Yes! He wanted this woman to have it and Simon, the Pharisee, to have it. She had forgiveness by faith. She showed forgiveness by love for Jesus. Simon was still without Jesus, faith or love because he had seen no need, no need for Jesus or His forgiveness. Jesus spent most of His time here talking to Simon and showing Simon that his lack of love for others was a problem, a sin. Yes, Simon needed forgiveness.

How are we doing at showing love for Jesus or for our neighbors? Do we, like the woman, make time, think about and actually carry out our plans for expressing our new, willing, joyous, grateful service of love to Jesus? Or do we show only the barest of courtesies to Him? Or do we show no courtesies to Him at all?

Think about your use of time for your Lord and Savior, Jesus. Think about how you might honor Jesus. Carry out your intentions no matter how unpopular others may find it. A person can give without loving. But a person cannot love without giving. Amen.