

Luke 7:36-50

One Woman's Story

In this passage is a story that seems to be about a woman who has less than everyone else around her, and her encounter with Jesus.

What does the story tell us about the person's house Jesus went to? What did he think of himself?

He was a Pharisee. His name was Simon (v40).

It is important to understand what that meant so we can understand who this guy was. In those days there were Sadducees and Pharisees. They were both religious and general leaders in Israel in the Bible times. The Sadducees were more aristocratic and tended to align with the Roman leadership and didn't associate with the common man. Because of this, they were not well-liked by the common man. Pharisees were typically middle-class business men who were in contact with the common man and held in much higher esteem by the common man. They were in some ways more influential than the Sadducees because of this. They also had more contact with Jesus in the New Testament. The Pharisees started out as a movement against idolatry and they knew the old testament well, they would have studied it their entire life. Eventually, Pharisees became more legalist. It is not clear in this story if Simon is hostile toward or just curious about Jesus. We do know that the Pharisees were documented in the new testament as being hostile toward Jesus and did eventually unite with the Sadducees to have Jesus hung on the cross.

He did not follow customs to welcome Jesus as a guest in his home (44-46).

We don't know for sure what he thought of himself, but it seems he did not see himself as a sinner (v39). Or maybe he did not think he was as bad of a sinner as the woman. He also apparently thought of himself as a judge of prophets and as wise (v39).

What does the story tell us about the woman who came to the dinner?

She had lived a sinful life (v37). She brought perfume for Jesus, she stood behind Jesus weeping, cleaned his feet with her hair, kissed them, then put perfume on them (v38). Simon saw her as a sinner and someone who should not be touching anyone who was upright. She was apparently known in the community as a sinful woman.

Notice that Simon calls her a sinful woman but Luke refers to her as a woman who had lived a sinful life.

What did it mean that she had washed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, kissed them, and put perfume on them?

It was a shameful thing for a woman in those days to let her hair down in public, and it was unheard of for a woman to touch a man, and certainly a "sinful" woman touching a man in public would have been horrifying for most men. Jesus is not most men. The perfume was also presumably expensive, so it was a big deal that she chose to bring that with her. Kissing his feet and washing them was a sign of deep reverence. So, she did something against custom, something humbling, showed Jesus she believed

in him, and in turn, he took her sins away.

In verses 41-43 Jesus tells a story about the cancellation of debt. Why do you think Jesus told Simon this story?

First, he wanted Simon to know, and us to know, that he sees all and hears all. Second, he needs us to understand who he is and what he does. He is God's son, sent here to love us and save us. Last, he needed Simon to see that the more you think you need a savior, the more you will love the one who saves you. Simon didn't think he needed a savior, but this woman desperately wanted one and took action to get one.

So, what is this story saying to us?

While Simon (and probably others at the dinner) was tallying up the woman's sins, Jesus was trying to subtract them. They saw a sinner, Jesus saw a woman he loved and wanted to heal.

So, who was Simon really? He was someone who saw Jesus as a new-comer who was trying to shake things up, and he didn't trust Jesus. He liked the position he was in, the things he was doing, and the way he was doing them. He didn't see a need for Jesus. He didn't know what he needed.

And who was the woman? She was someone who was desperate. She had a need for healing, love, and a friend. She obviously heard of Jesus, maybe heard his teaching, and she believed he could heal her. She broke social convention, sacrificed materially, humbled herself before Jesus and others, engaged emotionally, and allowed herself to be completely vulnerable to Jesus. She was a woman who was accepted, forgiven, and loved by Jesus.

This is not a story about a woman who has less than, it is a story about a woman who has been given more than she could have ever imagined.

What is this story saying to you?

This story is saying to me to come to Jesus expecting healing and love. Be humble. Don't label people by their actions, but point them to Jesus so he can reveal their true identity. Jesus is not impressed by achievement, possessions, status or knowledge. He is drawn to those who draw to him, those who believe in him and are not afraid to show it. It is saying that no matter how much I learn about the Bible, I need to remember and share that beautiful and amazing truth with as many people as I can.

I like that Jesus told her to go in peace. He didn't say I am going to make your enemies like you and everyone else forgive you. Going in peace is something she can do, regardless of the world around her and circumstances she is in. And she can do that because of Jesus.

What do you think the woman did after that encounter with Jesus?

I bet she told others. I bet she lived differently. I know she had peace. I know she had everything she needed, and more than she ever dreamed of. I know that because my story is not so different from this woman. I lived a life of sin. Jesus forgave me, and I have never been the same.

What do you think you need to do now?