

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
2nd November 2021**

READINGS

You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

Psalm 139:1-6

When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Luke 7:36-50

REFLECTION

I heard a story about a teacher whose classroom was located at the side of the school nearest the main road. Traffic was constant, including the sound of emergency vehicles, throughout each day. At the beginning of each class, the teacher would complain to the students about the noise from the traffic. The emergency vehicles especially annoyed him with their sirens.

After one weekend, the teacher addressed the class at the beginning as he usually did. This day he said he wanted to apologize to the class. He told them that this weekend his wife had a medical emergency. The care that the ambulance crew provided saved his wife's life. He told his students, "I want to apologize because I was listening to the noise instead of thinking about the lives."

In his external world, the teacher heard noise. The experience with his wife caused him to see instead that lives were being cared for by those noisy vehicles. As a result of his experience, he gained a better perspective of his experiences with the emergency vehicles.

The disciples looked at the woman and saw a sinner in the community; they did not see the woman who in her life was reaching out for help.

Jesus is helping these disciples, and us, to see that there are lives that need care. Sometimes the "noises" of selfish desires, greed, or bigotry, keep us from seeing beyond the sin or the wrongly perceived experiences of life. The opportunity we have is that of seeing Jesus' way of seeing people, seeing the possibilities for righteousness in them, forgiving them when they fall short, encouraging them to go in peace.

A lot of what God had done throughout history hasn't seemed fair to people. Why was Jacob not denounced by God for his conniving ways? Why was David not disowned by God for his disgraceful actions? Why was the adulteress not condemned by Jesus for her open disregard of the moral laws? Why was Peter not disavowed by God after his blatant denial of Christ in the courtyard? Why was Paul not banished by God forever because of his persecution of the Christians early in his life? Why? That is the question: Why?

And the answer is because there is nothing in the world so tenacious and resolute as the grace of God. The Gospel of John tells us: "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (John 3:17)

Look around you this week at the people you will meet. Some you will know, some you will not. Some you will like, some you will call friends, some will get under your skin, and some will really, really annoy you. Each of these, just like you, are precious to God, because God sees the person beneath the lifestyle, and God longs for them to know his forgiveness and love and you might just be the person he had chosen to show that love to them.

PRAYER

God who sees all,
Who sees beyond the masks we wear

God who looks into our hearts,
Who knows us completely,
Not the person we present to the world.
You know what we feel and think
And still you love us
Still you value us worth dying for,
Still you give all for the love of us.

May we never hide ourselves from you,
May we learn to pour out our hearts in faith.
Like the woman who bathed the Lord's feet,
Without care of what others think,
May we worship you and serve you with our all.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen.

