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Sermon: May 5, 2013  
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“A VISION TEST”

Luke 7:36-50

- Please turn to Luke 7:36-50.

Simon is hosting a dinner party, and Jesus is the guest of honor. Most Pharisees have already rejected the popular new rabbi, but Simon wants to take a closer look. He wants to see for himself what this man is about.

Simon’s home is built around a courtyard, and that is where dinner is being served. The long, low table is surrounded by low-slung couches that radiate outward like spokes from the hub of a wheel. Each guest leans on his left elbow, leaving his right arm free, with his legs and bare feet stretched out away from the table.

A woman who is not on the guest list enters the courtyard. This is not at all unusual: people are free to come and watch, as long as they are unobtrusive.

- ☞ But she is anything but inconspicuous. Simon looks at the woman and his piercing gaze misses nothing.

{Lk 7:37-38} He sees her *draw near* to the rabbi, nearer than a woman should to a man who is not her husband.

He sees *her weep with abandon* so that her tears wet the rabbi’s feet, and it is an embarrassing spectacle.

- ☑ {Snodgrass} He sees her *let down her hair in public*, “**a shameful and seductive act, something no respectable**” adult “**woman would do**,” except possibly in the most extreme circumstances.

He sees her *dry the rabbi’s feet with her hair, and kiss them repeatedly*,” acts of outrageous indecency.

He sees her open an alabaster jar of perfume and *anoint* – not *the rabbi’s* head, mind you, but his *feet*, an extravagant and offensive demonstration.

It only takes a few seconds for Simon to dissect, analyze, and categorize this woman: smutty reprobate, filthy seductress, cheap harlot. Of course, he already knew this; everyone in town does. Still, this lewd display confirms it.

- ?! *What would we see in this woman?*

- ☞ Simon looks at Jesus, and his piercing gaze misses nothing.

Simon sees that Jesus *does not shrink back* when the woman draws near, as he would.

He sees that, unlike him, Jesus *does not appear to be scandalized* when the woman lets down her hair.

He sees that Jesus *does not recoil* when the woman weeps on his feet, dries them with her hair, and kisses them, as Simon would do in his place.

He sees that Jesus *does not rebuke* the woman when she anoints his feet, as he would.

- It only takes a few seconds for Simon to dissect, analyze, and categorize this rabbi: fool, fraud, false teacher. In verse 39 he mutters 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.**”

- ?! *What would we see in Jesus?*

☉ Jesus looks at the woman with righteousness and compassion, and he misses nothing.

{Lk 7:37-38} When she draws near he sees a person whose soul has been famished. But Jesus {Jn 6:35} “**is the bread of life**” and by coming to him she “**will never go hungry.**” Her soul has been parched, but Jesus has living water and by believing in him she “**will never be thirsty.**” This is why she comes to Jesus.

{Is 51:3} When she weeps he sees a woman overflowing with joy and gratitude. Sin has laid waste her life; but now, through Jesus, God has made “**her wastelands like the garden of the LORD.**” She bursts with “**Joy and gladness**” and “**thanksgiving.**” This is why she weeps.

When she lets down her hair he sees a woman whose intent is neither to seduce nor to shock, but simply to serve her Savior by drying his feet. This is why she lets her hair down.

When she anoints his feet, he sees a woman at worship. {Lev 4:7; Ps 116:17} As priests present “**fragrant incense**” to God, so she is making a “**thank offering,**” and {Lev 2:2} it is “**an aroma pleasing to the LORD.**” This is why she anoints his feet.

It only takes a few seconds for Jesus to know this woman: *redeemed* reprobate, *forgiven* sinner, precious daughter of God. {Lk 7:19} She perceives that Jesus is “**the one who was to come,**” and this insight is transforming her. {1 Jn 3:2-3} “[Seeing] **him as he is**” she is empowered to “**purify [herself], just as he is pure.**” Already she is starting to “**be like him.**”

■ In verses 48 and 50 the Lord tells her, “**Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace.**”

☉ Jesus also looks at Simon with righteousness and compassion, and he misses nothing.

Jesus sees Simon’s *inhospitality*.

☑ {Barclay} A first century host welcomes a caller to his home by giving the kiss of peace, having a servant wash the guest’s feet, and placing a drop of olive oil on the guest’s head. Simon invites Jesus to his home and feeds him an elegant meal, yet he neglects all of these common courtesies. It is a “**strange combination of a certain [deference] with the [exclusion] of the usual [good manners].**”

■ In verses 44-46 Jesus calls him on it, and draws his attention to the fact that the woman Simon scorns has done his work for him: “**she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.... this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.... she has poured [expensive scent] on my feet.**”

Jesus sees Simon’s *blindness*.

{Lk 6:41-43} Simon is supremely confident of his discernment. He is absolutely certain that he knows exactly who this woman and this rabbi are, just by looking at them. That is why he says 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.**”

■ So in verse 44 Jesus asks, “**Do you see this woman?**” Simon sees her sullied reputation, her wrong choices, her faults and failures and brokenness – but he does not see *her*. He does not see a human being created in God’s image. He does not see a

person whom the Lord earnestly desires to save. {Ro 8:29-30} He does not see a *former* sinner who has been “**predestined... called**” and “**justified**” and who is now being “**conformed to the image of [God the] Son.**”

■ And Jesus sees Simon’s *lack of love*.

If Simon loved this woman with *αγαπη* [agape] love, he might notice the changes God is working within her. Even if he didn’t notice that, he would look at her as a poor person in need of good news, a prisoner in need of freedom, a blind person in need of sight, a victim of oppression in need of liberty. He would welcome her instead of judging her. But Simon does not love her.

If Simon loved Jesus he would look at him, not as a subject to be scrutinized, but as a rabbi to be honored. Hearing to his teachings, he would accept that Jesus is at least a prophet upon whom the Spirit of God has bestowed special insight. Seeing his transformative impact on sinners, he would repent and believe that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. But Simon does not love Jesus.

■ In verses 40-43 Jesus tells him a parable:

**“Two people owed money to a certain money-lender. 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 [replies], “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”**

**“You have judged correctly,” Jesus [says].**

■ Then, in verses 44 and 47, Christ Jesus uses Simon’s own words to convict him: **“Do you see this woman? I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”**

The implication is obvious: unlike “**this woman**” Simon has shown little love to Jesus because he “**loves little,**” and he “**loves little**” because he “**has been forgiven little.**”

❓ Question: has Simon “**been forgiven little**” because he has little to forgive?

❓ {Lk 6:41} Or is it that Simon has “[paid] **no attention to the plank in [his] own eye,**” is so insensitive to his own need that he has repented only of a tiny speck of sin, and consequently has “**been forgiven little**”?

Luke does not tell us. However, as one who has been like Simon I suggest that the second possibility is more likely than the first. It isn’t that Simon has little to forgive; it is that only a little of his sin has been forgiven.

Simon the Pharisee is blind, but he does not perceive it. He believes that he has 20/20 vision, but at the eye doctor’s office he cannot even see the largest “E” at the top of the chart.

What about us? The way we look at other people is a test of our spiritual vision.

Have the logs been removed from our eyes? Are our eyes open? Are they functioning properly?

May the Lord Jesus open our eyes to see as he sees!