

Sermon on Luke Seven Thirty six- eight three

_ Have you ever wondered why Jesus died? I know that his death has redeemed us by taking away our sins, but have you ever wondered just what Jesus did to make the people so mad that they killed him? I mean here was a guy who was preaching and teaching with more authority than the priests and scribes. He was casting out demons, healing sicknesses and reversing death. He would feed thousands and forgive sins. He was proclaiming the kingdom of God with his words and deeds, just what the people were begging God for, so why would they kill Jesus?

Today's Gospel reading gives us a glimpse into why. Jesus was dining with a Pharisee named Simon. Now just because Simon is a Pharisee doesn't mean he's a bad person. As a Pharisee he cared deeply about the Jewish religion; he wanted to make sure that it flourished. He is today's council member, church elder or Sunday school teacher. So here's Jesus eating with Simon and his friends and they're all watching the new rabbi; some maybe even waiting for Jesus to make a mistake. They didn't have to wait long!

In Jesus' time women weren't allowed to be in the room with the men eating except to serve the food and they wouldn't have touched them! There were no chairs so the men would recline on the floor on their sides and eat off of the low tables. Women kept their hair up and covered except when they were at home. So here we have the men eating and talking when in comes a woman with a "reputation" who weeps at Jesus' feet, lets down her hair to dry his feet and then

rubs ointment into them with her hands. We today have no idea how scandalous this event would have been seen by the others in the room.

Now when Simon and the others see this happening they begin to wonder if Jesus really is the prophet that everyone is proclaiming him to be; because if he was he wouldn't let this woman come near him, let alone touch him! But Jesus is a prophet, he not only knows what kind of a woman this is; he knows what kind of a man Simon is so Jesus tells a parable.

In this parable two men are forgiven their debts to a certain creditor. One man owes ten times more than the other man. Jesus asks Simon who he thinks would feel the most forgiven—not too hard of a question, but Simon doesn't know he's being set up! Of course the one who owes the most feels the most gratitude! And here's where Jesus gets Simon.

As a host Simon should have at least offered Jesus a basin of water to wash off his feet, greeted him with a kiss of welcome and anointed his head with oil; but Simon has done none of these basic host duties. The woman on the other hand has washed his feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, kissed them and rubbed ointment into them. This woman knows who she is and that she's been forgiven and now she lives out her gratitude. Simon on the other hand doesn't act grateful because he feels he has nothing for which he needs to be forgiven. And that's what gets Jesus killed.

It's not about any of the other things that Jesus is doing, not even setting people up in his parables—it's the forgiving. See, if we say that we are forgiven then it implies that we have needs; that we are guilty and broken. While there is

nothing better than forgiveness when we know that we need it—there's nothing worse than being offered it when you think that you don't!

You know what the saddest part is—we'd probably do it again today! No one—me, you, anyone—wants to admit that we have needs, that we are guilty, that we need forgiveness. A lot of us only turn to God when we've exhausted every other option and have no where else to turn. We need to keep up this illusion that we're self-sufficient. Our sin from Eden onward has been to need no one—not even God to make it.

Most of the time we're able to keep that illusion alive; that is until someone like Jesus comes into our life and shatters that illusion into little pieces by offering us forgiveness. We feel shame, embarrassment and anger at his mere mention of it and we know that it's over; our charade is over and we die with our dream. But we don't want to die, so we kill the one who offers us life eternal.

But thankfully Jesus is more than a prophet—he's the Son of God who has come to give us forgiveness even though he knows what kind of people we are and how we would rather kill him than admit our brokenness and our need for him. He comes to us anyway because that's what love does—it doesn't heed the cost. And because Jesus is the Son of God he is raised from the dead which really gets us! If he won't stay dead we have no other way out except to die to our illusions, our pretenses, and our denials and we are raised by the love and forgiveness that Jesus has offered us all along.

So, how are we going to live our lives now that we've been forgiven and given God's mercy and grace? Will our lives show the gratitude for what we've been given? I pray that it does!