

Luke 7: 36-50

- To begin this hour we will prayerfully listen to and reflect on Luke 7: 36-50, a parable of mercy.
- Let's remind ourselves that we are in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord and prepare ourselves to hear his word.
- Come Holy Spirit, help us open our hearts and minds to the scriptures that you have inspired. Your word is alive and active and can speak to us today. Help us to leave behind our own expectations and pay attention to what you are doing in us through these words.

(Slowly read the scripture passage.)

Luke 7: 36-50

One of the Pharisees invited him to a meal. When he arrived at the Pharisee's house and took his place at table, suddenly a woman came in, who had a bad name in the town. She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment.

She waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is and what sort of person it is who is touching him and what a bad name she has.'

Then Jesus took him up and said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' He replied, 'Say on, Master.'

'There was once a creditor who had two men in his debt; one owed him five hundred denarii, the other fifty.

They were unable to pay, so he let them both off. Which of them will love him more?'

Simon answered, 'The one who was let off more, I suppose.' Jesus said, 'You are right.'

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'You see this woman? I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in.

You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

For this reason I tell you that her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love. It is someone who is forgiven little who shows little love.'

Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'

Those who were with him at table began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man, that even forgives sins?'

But he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

- Was there a word, phrase, or image that seemed to stir something in you? Spend some time repeating the phrase or sitting with the image. Trust that God is working. Make yourself available to his work in you.
- Lord, what do you want me to know?
- How do you want me to respond?
- How do you want me to apply this to my daily life?
- Spend some time in silent listening and adoration of God. At this stage, the Lord may further reveal himself to you in the gift of peace or joy. If so, allow yourself to rest with God in that feeling

(Wait 1-2 minutes before reading the reflection.)

The hospitality that Jesus receives in the house of Simon the Pharisee is almost an uncomfortable level of intimacy. Strangely though, the hospitality is not provided by the dinner host but by a woman with a poor reputation who enters the house without an invitation or permission. This woman rushes towards Jesus, bathes his feet with her tears, wipes them with her hair, kisses his feet, and pours perfume over them. This is shocking because her actions are so intimate and she is a sinner. This woman does not let her reputation and state stop her however. She knows exactly who Jesus is and treats him with the hospitality and love he deserves.

Simon's attention is focused on the scandal of the scene. How can someone who is considered a prophet let his feet be washed this way? Shouldn't Jesus know who is touching his feet? Simon obviously believes that the woman should not be in Jesus' company, let alone touching his feet. Have you ever caught yourself thinking like Simon? It is easy to think that mercy is for some people or some of our sins but not for all. However, God's mercy is not limited to a select few or a handful of our sins. God, in his mercy, waits longingly for us to come to him so that he can eliminate all our sins. No matter who we are or what we've done, we are his children. He seeks to remove anything that prevents us from experiencing the fullness of his love.

Jesus uses the parable of the two debtors to demonstrate this. He makes clear that the two debtors cannot repay the sums they owe but nevertheless, are pardoned by their creditor. Jesus tells this parable for Simon's benefit but Simon does not realise that he is a party in the case; that he is like the debtor who owes fifty denarii. The woman, on the other hand, is like the debtor who owed five hundred denarii. Jesus explains through the parable that any kind of sin is a debt that has been acquired. As we are all selfish, inclined to judge and doubtful of God's care, we too carry a debt of sin, and it is probably larger than we like to think. We, like the two debtors in the parable, cannot possibly repay the sum we owe; therefore the only way out is the merciful cancellation of our debt by a Father who loves us too much to refuse us.

Simon is not able to understand this mercy but the woman does. She did not let anything or anyone stop her from coming into Jesus' presence with total abandonment. She knew her need for his mercy and was confident that he would be able to forgive her sins. And with abundant love he does just that. The woman accepts the gratuitous mercy of God and allows it to transform her life. She is able to love because she was given unconditional mercy.

With the woman who scandalously trusts in the abundance of Jesus' mercy, come to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament now. Ask him to help you become aware of your own debt, rather than someone else's. Ask for the grace to let go of our fears and come intimately close to Jesus in gratitude and faith.