

Come Follow Me  
Elo Viz production  
Week 10  
Matt 8, Mark 2-4, Luke 7

I am so excited for this week's study. There is a story that we will read about that has such amazing depth and meaning. We can learn so much from one encounter Jesus has. There are four different accounts of this story and all of them vary a little bit. But the principle is the same. At the end of Luke 7 the story begins like this:

“And one of the Pharisees desired him, [Jesus] that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. (Luke 7:36)

First off the Pharisee was Simon. Not Simon the apostle but Simon the Pharisee. Matthew and Mark call him Simon the Leper. The word Pharisee literally means “separated”. These were men who were perfectionists when it came to the observing of the laws. This is how the Bible Dictionary describes it:

“A religious party among the Jews. The name denotes separatists. They prided themselves on their strict observance of the law and on the care with which they avoided contact with things gentile. They upheld the authority of oral tradition as of equal value with the written law. The tendency of their teaching was to reduce religion to the observance of a multiplicity of ceremonial rules and to encourage self-sufficiency and spiritual pride.” (Bible Dictionary: Pharisees)

This is important to understand if we are to grasp the magnitude of this encounter we are about to read:

So, Jesus is invited to have dinner at Simon the pharisee’s house. Some believe that this was a large dinner party, others believe that this was an outside event. In any case what is important is that while they are at dinner this woman comes in, a sinner with an alabaster box (Luke 7:37) John tells us that her name was Mary. (John 12:3) It is believed that this is the same Mary from the account of Mary and Martha. She is Mary of Bethany

This woman had a reputation, most scholars believe that she was a harlot or a prostitute. All Luke tells us is that she was “a sinner”. Which is an interesting way to put it. Not someone who has sinned: That would have included everyone. It was more of a label or a title that he was assigning to her. She was “a sinner”, or the sinner. Someone with a life of sin.

So she somehow gets into the house and brings with her an Alabaster box of precious ointment of spikenard. Two things that we may not be familiar with. Alabaster was a soft stone used for sculpting and was commonly used in the day to hold precious oils and perfumes.

Spikenard was the perfume in the box or jar, depending on which gospel you are reading. This Spikenard was very expensive. It is believed that this would have been an inheritance or dowry for Mary, probably the only thing of value that she had. The only other time we read of Spikenard in the Bible is in the songs of Solomon. (Songs of Solomon 1:12) In this passage it refers to this perfume as a ritual used between the bride and the bride groom representing love and loyalty to each other.

So, she comes in as they are sitting for a meal and as Jesus is sitting at the table, remember that their tables were low to the ground and they would sit leaning against the table and their feet would be behind them. As He was sitting there she was weeping, bathing His feet with her tears, Luke and John tell us that she anointed his feet with the oil. Mark and Matthew tell us she poured it on His head. Mark actually tells us she broke the box and poured it on His head. A symbol of her willingness to give all that she had.

This next part is where we get a lot of variations, and I believe it is for a purpose. Luke tells us that Simon the Pharisee has a thought in his head. John tells us it was Judas Iscariot that had the thought. Mark and Matthew tell us it was all the apostles that had the thought. I would think that if they were all there they might all have had the thought. It's a symbol that anyone in that house that had some sort of status or authority other than Jesus was quick to judge this situation and this woman.

This is what they were thinking, First from the religious leader:  
“This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.” (Luke 7:39)

Then from those concerned with earthly possessions:

“Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?”  
(John 12:5)

Luke is the only one to give us the parable that Jesus presents to Simon in response to his thought:

“**41** There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

**42** And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

**43** Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.” (Luke 7:41-43)

The reverence to a debtor is an important one. First a pence represents a common man's daily wage. According to Utah's workforce website this is about \$200 a day in our currency. So. If we were to bring this parable into our modern day understanding Jesus says: there is a creditor that has two loans out with two debtors. One owed him \$10,000 and the other owed him

\$100,000. Neither of them were able to pay (meaning that nothing we have is of worth in the heavenly realm) And he frankly forgave them both. So Jesus asks: Which one would love him more? And as stated by Simon: the one that owed him more. And Jesus acknowledges that Simon “judged” rightly. Then this piercing question:

“And he turned to the woman, [He looked at her] and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman?” (Luke 7:44)

Do you see what I see? Do you see this woman? As was custom in that day:

“44 I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.” (Luke 7:44-46)

All three of these customs Jesus points out are things that anyone would have done for any friend or acquaintance that enters into their home. Simon did none of them. This woman, on the other hand, did more than that which was required to show respect and love.

This woman who was the least among them, washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. She kissed His feet and covered them in expensive perfume, which was all the earthly possession that she had. What a marvelous symbol of humility. Before Jesus sacrificed His life for her, before He suffered in the garden for her sins. She saw Him for who He was and what He was come to do.

The parallels in this account are astounding. On one hand we have the righteous of the righteous according as the world saw them: The Pharisees and even the apostles. Those who thought of themselves as the example. They sat there and compared themselves to others that they felt were lesser than them, more sinful than them. In our prosperity and pride we do the exact same thing. How many of us look at others in our ward and say in our hearts: Yea, I'm good... Sure, I'm not perfect but at least I'm better than those people. At least I don't come to church smelling like smoke. At least I go to the temple once a month, unlike my neighbor who only goes a few times a year. I'm at least better than them. I'm worthy to take the sacrament every week, at least I'm better than that guy down the aisle that I just saw didn't take the sacrament. At least I'm better than him. It's easy to point to someone else and compare ourselves to them.

What we are learning here from this story is that when we stand before the judgment bar of God, our confession that at least we were better than so and so, will not be sufficient. They are not the standard that we will be judged on. The standard is Jesus Christ! How do you

compare to Him? We get to choose who we will be in this story. We have a massive swing from the greatest to the least. And Jesus tells us which will be greater in the Kingdom of God. And it will not be the self righteous and prideful. No matter how good you are, no matter how sinless you try to be, you can not save yourself. You will not be able to enter the Kingdom of God on your own merit. We all need Jesus. He is the only way. He is the advocate with the Father. And only by and through Him can any of us be forgiven and return to live with Them.

So how do we get there? I believe for most of us we see ourselves somewhere in the middle. We aren't the Woman at His feet. We have not sinned that much, we are not that bad. But we are also not like Simon the Pharisee. We are not that self righteous, we are not that bad! We probably see ourselves somewhere in between those two. But therein lies the problem. If we judge that the woman is good and the pharisee is bad we would be wrong. But if we judge that the Pharisee is good and the woman is bad, we would also be wrong. They are the same in the eyes of God. If sin has a scale of 1-100 anything on that scale is seen by God and the same. Whether you sinned one time or one hundred times or anywhere in between, you're doomed for condemnation.

Romans 3:23 says: “23 For all have [sinned](#), and come short of the glory of God;”

But just as Jesus says to this woman who is truly humble and willing to lay all her sins at His feet; He says to us:

“Thy sins are [forgiven](#). Thy [faith](#) hath saved thee; go in [peace](#). (Luke 7:48,50)

Which is to say:

“[We are] [justified](#) freely by his [grace](#) through the [redemption](#) that is in Christ Jesus”  
(Romans 3:24)

The way we get to be the person that God has meant us to be, is one day at a time, one conversation at a time, one thought at a time.

Just a little better is all He asks. Line upon line, precept upon precept. So next time we see one less fortunate as ourselves, perhaps we can see this woman, and feel compassion and awe at the humility that is their gift. Or when we bump into the many modern day Pharisees that live around us, may we feel compassion for the leperous disease of pride that grips their heart. Perhaps when we begin to have a thought that is contrary to the being God intended, we can quickly shift our thoughts to gratitude and empathy for any that we meet. I can assure you that it's not easy, but it truly is worth it. It's worth making the changes that need to be made in order to be more like Him. For that is the whole purpose of this life.

Of this truth I testify, In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.