

Worship-at-home

February 13, 2022

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

Convoys and the Kingdom of God

Call to worship:

God has created the world and called it good.

In Christ, God has redeemed the world and defeated the powers of death.

The Holy Spirit is at work in the world, calling us to follow Jesus.

All praise and glory to God, Holy One and Holy Three!

Prayers of Praise, Confession, and Supplication:

You Lord are in the world

your Presence fills it

your Presence is PEACE.

You Lord are in this place

your Presence fills it

your Presence is PEACE.

You Lord are in my life

your Presence fills it

your Presence is PEACE.

You Lord are in my heart

your Presence fills it

your Presence is PEACE.¹

God of mercy:

You have called us to be thankful

for your good gifts to us,

but too often we have taken them for granted

as if we deserved them.

You have called us to be hopeful

through the gospel of Jesus Christ,

but too often despair has come upon us,

and the cares of the world

have weighed us down.

¹ David Adam, *The Edge of Glory*, 76.

You have called us to be joyful
in the wonder of your presence among us,
but too often we become mired in the mundane
and lose the gift of reverence.

By your saving power, O God,
enable us to celebrate your love for us
with joy and thanksgiving.

Assurance of Pardon:

While it is true that we have sinned,
it is a greater truth that we are forgiven
through God's love in Jesus Christ.
To all who humbly seek the mercy of God I say,
in Jesus Christ, your sin is forgiven.

Accept God's pardon,
be at peace with God,
at peace with one another,
and at peace with yourself.

Give thanks to the Lord,
for He is good,
His love endures forever.
Amen.

Hymn: #670 "Amazing Grace" (with "He is Lord")
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOiKZKV3vxI>
(Steph Macleod and friends)

The Word of God:

*God of wisdom, we long to hear your holy Word in new and fresh ways.
Open our ears to hear your call.
Open our minds to understand your truth.
Open our eyes to the work of your kingdom and equip us to take our part. Amen.*

Sin, Forgiveness, and the Kingdom of God

READ LUKE 7:36-59; 8:1-3

1. A Pharisee, named Simon, invited Jesus to supper. A good question to ask is: Why? What was the reason for this invitation? It could be that Simon liked Jesus and was genuinely interested in becoming better acquainted. However, this seems unlikely. Simon did not extend any of the usual signs of hospitality: water with which to wash his dusty feet, oil to anoint his sweaty brow, nor even a kiss hello (the equivalent of a North American handshake.) It would appear that Simon's intentions were more hostile. Perhaps, he wanted to entrap Jesus: get him to say something that would condemn himself. Perhaps, like so many school-yard bullies, he wanted to give Jesus a false sense of friendship so that he could then ridicule the carpenter's son from Nazareth.

It seems plausible that Simon wanted to test Jesus in some way. To find out if he truly was the Messiah figure which his reputation suggested.

Prior to this dinner, Jesus resuscitated a man in Nain as the mourners were carrying him to his grave. After that miracle, the people glorified God by saying: "A great prophet has risen among us!" (vs. 16) Then, in verse 39, we read Simon's thoughts: "If this man *were* a prophet, he would have known"

It seems Simon wanted to find out just what kind of a prophet this man Jesus was! He wanted Jesus to prove himself.

While they ate, an uninvited guest appeared. As was the custom, Jesus, and the others would have been reclining at the table. Lying on their left side with their heads toward the table and their right arm free to reach to the table and pick the food. This would have left their feet pointing away from the table.

The woman, having learned that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, entered the dining area and, discretely (staying away from the table, and away from prying eyes), anointed Jesus' feet with tears and ointment.

This was the test for which Simon was waiting.

A prophet is someone who speaks on God's behalf. This means, surely, that a prophet must do whatever they can to keep themselves from encountering sin – either in themselves or in others. They would have tried to keep themselves pure, righteous, and holy. And, on God's behalf, they would condemn or at the very least call out,

anyone who was not. In God's name, they would call sinners to repentance – perhaps publicly so that the element of shame would be in their favour!

This was Simon's viewpoint: If Jesus is the prophet people say he is, he will know who this woman is and will send her away, or simply ignore her – as if she wasn't there.

This woman had developed a reputation. We're not told what were the nature of her particular sins. Many people assume she was a prostitute. But Luke, who is careful to describe in great detail any part of the story that is important, omitted this detail. It's as if Luke was saying: it doesn't matter.

2. Among other lessons that could be gleaned from this story, one has to do with perspective and viewpoints.

From Simon the Pharisee's perspective, this woman was a sinner. That is all that mattered for him to reject her and not deem her worthy of any attention.

And, from Simon's perspective, the fact that Jesus failed to similarly reject her, was evidence enough that Jesus couldn't possibly be a man of God, much less the Messiah!

If you support the truckers' Freedom Convoy, how do you view people who don't? When you encounter someone who opposes the protests, what are your thoughts about that person? What do you say? What does your body language say about what you think of the other person?

If you don't support the truckers' Freedom Convoy, how do you view people who do? When you encounter someone who supports the protests and maybe even takes part, what are your thoughts about that person? What do you say? What does your body language say about what you think of the other person?

If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him – that she is a sinner.²

3. As the evening went on, Jesus revealed that he knew exactly what this woman had done. And he didn't care.

² Luke 7:39

Jesus never dismissed her sins. She is the one who owed the 500 denarii. Jesus said it clearly: “her sins, *which were many.*” Jesus knew her.

Yet, from Jesus’ perspective, her sins did not define her value.

Simon the Pharisee saw her as a sinner and therefore not worthy of attention and care.

Jesus saw her as beloved and therefore worthy of forgiveness, salvation, and life in all its abundance.

4. We can read this story from another angle as well.

Simon, the Pharisee, was a good Jewish citizen. Pharisees were a sect of the Jewish community – we might think of it as a *denomination*. They strove to accurately interpret the covenantal laws and abide by the same in worship and behaviour so that their worship and their living would truthfully reveal the glory of God. To be labelled as a Pharisee, Simon must have been remarkable in his piety. He followed the rules, he said his prayers, he avoided sin. He was righteous.

The woman, lived in different circles. Luke tells us that she was “in the city.” Maybe she lived in the downtown core. Maybe on the street, or in shelters, or in supported housing. Or, maybe simply in a small, middle-class neighbourhood. Her childhood was likely quite different from that of Simon’s.

And, she knew who she was and what she did.

She also knew how great a debtor she was to God’s Grace.

When Simon heard that Jesus was in the city, he invited him into his house; to scrutinize him. To test him. To make him prove himself. He believed Jesus owed him some evidence, some proof that he was the prophet of the Lord.

When the woman heard that Jesus was in the city, she went to find him. And she spared no expense – whether of finances (alabaster jar would have to be broken open so the ointment couldn’t be saved for later) or of reputation (she wept openly and wiped his feet with her hair before kissing those feet that walked through the dust and dung of the city’s streets) – to demonstrate her gratitude and her awe for his grace.

She has shown great love because she knows that her sins, which were many, have been forgiven.

Simon, the Pharisee, tested Jesus. The woman, the sinner, worshiped him.

The woman was aware of who she was, and more to the point, she was aware of who Jesus is. She knew that He is the one who forgives sins. She knew that in Him is the life that transcends the boundaries of our mortality and even our daily struggles. She knew that in Him is peace that passes all human understanding.

The woman knew she lived encompassed by the grace of God.

This is why the proclamation of the kingdom of God is good news. That we live in the kingdom of God, by the advent, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus means that we live encompassed by the grace of God. We live in the state of sin-forgiveness.

It is true that our sins are many; it is a greater truth that sin has been forgiven through Jesus Christ – and that holds true regardless of what side of town you live in, or what side of the protests you support.

How easy it is, to be so weighed down by distractions, escape tactics, and simply by the worries of this age, that our hearts fail to know that gospel; our eyes fail to see Grace among us; our minds fail to comprehend who Jesus is and what he does.

When we can learn to see by faith that sin – both ours and others – is forgiven, that the kingdom of God is a present reality – yet-to-be-perfected, but present nevertheless – and that everyone is beloved and worthy of grace, then we will begin to experience the glories of salvation, and know the peace that passes understanding.

When we experience the love of God ourselves, we can then encounter others not with condemnation and gossip but with the peace that gives testimony to the presence of the kingdom of the God of Grace.

For the good of our souls, the health of our societies, and the glory of God. Amen.

Hymn: “Come, thou font of every blessing”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yINnG5bxnsE>
(Matt Bosswell)

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving:³

God of mercy and justice,
you love your creation.
You revealed your love in Jesus Christ,
as he walked in our shoes,
as he suffered and died.

Jesus, you redefined love forever.
To love one another is to give of ourselves.
To love one another is to suffer on behalf of others.
When we love one another in grace and generosity
we demonstrate our gratitude and love for you.
We ask for the courage and wisdom to serve others
in humility and with neither counting the cost nor judging their worthiness.
When we cross boundaries, when we encounter other cultures,
help us to listen well and be willing partners.
Kindle in us a vivid imagination,
so that we can serve even those whom we cannot see or hear.

God of hope and healing,
In Jesus Christ you confronted demons that trouble our minds
and the pain and illness which can weigh us down.
We pray today for all those who are facing health concerns,
and for all who care for the suffering and those in need support.

Keep a time of silence.

Surround each one with your steadfast love.

God of peace and promise,
when we wrestle with any burden,
your Spirit prays within us with sighs too deep for words.
Today we pray for all those whose burdens seem too heavy to bear:
for the victims of violence or disaster, for their friends and families...

Keep a brief silence.

For refugees at risk in so many places in the world,
and those making a new home in our community...

Keep a brief silence.

For those caught in despair and poverty in our own neighbourhoods
and in the forgotten corners of your world..

Keep a brief silence.

³ From worship resources for February 6, 2022 PWS&D Sunday available at:
<https://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/2022/01/28/pwsd-sunday-2022/>

Renew the strength of all facing realities beyond their control with your steadfast love:

Receive all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, and equip us to do your will as together we pray the words Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: #740 "Make me a channel of your peace"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apHvbe-iJ3U>
(Paul Salipong)

Benediction: