

“A Love that Has to Do Something”

Luke 7:36-50, Matthew 22:36-38

1/22/06

Our theme for this year is Love God. Love Others. Make disciples. I shared two weeks ago about how this must begin by realizing and accepting God's love for us. That is the crucial beginning stage. God loves you more than you can imagine. Last week, was Martin Luther King's birthday, and the focus was on visioning and dreaming with God about how to live for God & grow God's Kingdom. Once we experience God's love for us, how can we work with God to grow the Kingdom?

As I said, the starting point is God's love for us. Then the next phase is to love God back. This morning we are going to focus on two passages of Scripture about loving God. The 1st is Matthew 22 & Jesus description of the Greatest Commandment and the 2nd text is of a woman demonstrating that type of love.

Matthew 22:36-37 36 *“Teacher, which commandment is the greatest?”* 37 *He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”* 38 *This is the greatest and first commandment.*

Jesus didn't simply say that the greatest commandment is to love God. No he said to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.

In other words this is not a casual love this is loving God with all that we are. Loving God completely. I read an acronym of what is included in loving God with all your Heart. You may want to write this down. I thought it was pretty good.

H – humility

E – emotion

A – adoration

R – repentance

T – thanksgiving

We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul.
LOVE GOD COMPLETELY.

In the past we have defined that loving of God as worship. That is not the narrow definition of having a worship service. It is instead worshipping throughout the day in all that we do, by expressing our love to God. That should be at the heart of our worship services – expressing our love to God. The goal of our worship services is to come before God's presence, experience God and to love God. Worship should not be seen as just a service, worship is to be expressed throughout our lives.

Let's look at Biblical example of showing love to Jesus through a person's actions. I would like to give the entire story so we can get the full context.

Luke 7:36

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.

Jesus was known as a friend of sinners & tax collectors. He is also known for often being critical of the Scribes, Pharisees & the current religious establishment in general. We see in this account, however, that he did spend time with religious leaders. It was probably a bigger and more noteworthy message the times that he spent with non-religious people.

The passage begins that one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him. Why would he invite Jesus over for a meal? There are at least 3 possible reasons

- 1) He was an admirer of Jesus'. Not all Pharisees were Jesus' enemies. This is unlikely because as we will see he was rude to Jesus.
- 2) It could be that he wanted to get Jesus into a discussion to deliberately get him to say something that he could use against him. This is doubtful, because he does refer to him as a Rabbi.
- 3) Most likely, Simon liked to have celebrities or people who were considered important over. It doesn't seem that he had the greatest of respect for Jesus, but Jesus had a following & it could make him look good for Jesus to come to his house & be seen with him.

The meal would be eaten in the courtyard of his house. The house of wealthy people of that time would often include a courtyard. In warm weather meals would be eaten there. It was the custom that when a Rabbi or teacher was at a meal in such a house, people would be welcomed to come in & listen to the conversation and teachings.

Whenever a guest would come to a house like this, there were generally 3 things that were done:

- 1) The host would place his hand on the guest shoulders and give him a kiss of peace. This was a mark of respect and it would be extremely rare to not do this for a respected Rabbi.
- 2) The roads were dusty & they sandals, so cool water would be poured over the guest feet to cleanse & comfort
- 3) Finally, either sweet smelling incense was burned or a drop of sweet smelling perfume is dropped on the guest head.

They would then recline at a table, laying on low couches, resting on the left elbow with their feet stretched behind them. Quite different from our way of sitting around a table.

We see how this religious leader invites Jesus over, seemingly to show off. He wanted to have the celebrity in his home & for everyone to see him hosting the celebrity.

This is in a huge contrast to the woman who next approaches him.

Luke 7:37-38 *37 And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. 38 She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.*

The passages tells us that she is a sinner. Most people believe that she was a prostitute. It would have been acceptable and understandable for her to come to the outer area and look in at this dinner party. Others may have stepped away from her, but that would have been OK. She did something that was unacceptable in that culture. This woman, this sinful woman walked into the courtyard. She walked up to the guest of the table.

Why? She knew people would talk. She was most likely very uncomfortable in that setting. It was out of her comfort zone. She probably was well aware that the Pharisee that hosted the meal wouldn't want her there, but it wasn't about him or the other people. She did it for Jesus.

She loved him and she loved him so much that she had to do something. She had to go beyond just standing there. She had to get out of her comfort zone & she even had to do something that was financially sacrificial.

She had an alabaster jar of ointment. It was costly, it was beautiful, it was aromatic. Perhaps it was a family heirloom. It may have represented all that was left in her life that was beautiful-her hopes and her dreams. Perhaps she had been saving it for a special occasion. She didn't speak a word, but she expressed her feelings, her love for Jesus, by her actions.

She came to anoint his feet with this precious & costly ointment. I think when she approached him she is overwhelmed with all sorts of emotions: excitement, unworthiness, gratitude and love. She begins to cry. She began to wet his feet with her tears, along with the ointment and then she let her hair down to dry his feet.

Again there are all the people in the room who are going to be judgmental of her, but she is totally focused on Jesus. Think about how this would look. A prostitute walks into the house of a Pharisee. She walks up to the guest of honor. She pours costly ointment on his feet. She cries and she wipes his feet with her hair. I am sure there are lots of whispers around the table and outside. Simon, the Pharisee may have had doubts about Jesus before and to him this confirms that Jesus is not what he claims to be.

Luke 7 39 *Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "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."*

Jesus responds to Simon with a story.

Luke 7:40 – 50

40 Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." **41** "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42** When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" **43** Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." **44** Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. **45** You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. **46** You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. **47** Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." **48** Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." **49** But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" **50** And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Jesus tells a little story of 2 people in debt a 500 denari debt & a 50 denari debt (a denari is about 1 days wage) Who will be more grateful for the forgiven debt?

Then he compares this woman to Simon. He didn't give Jesus water for his feet, or a kiss or a drop of oil on his head. She wet his feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed his feet & has poured expensive perfume on his feet. She has shown gratitude & her sins have been forgiven.

It is also interesting to notice that Jesus didn't say that Simon's sins had been forgiven. It doesn't appear that Simon realized that he had done anything that needed forgiveness. This brings us back to the point that I made two weeks ago. The beginning point of loving God & loving others, is receiving God's love. Simon had not received God's love.

We must realize our need for God. We must realize our sins. We must realize & accept God's love and then love the LORD our God with all of our heart, with all of our soul and with all of our mind.

This event demonstrates a great contrast.

1st response is to have Jesus over for a meal. Show him off to the neighborhood, but don't treat him with real respect. Be quick to criticize him when he doesn't do as you want him to. We could compare this today to people who want to appear Christian, but have not really committed themselves to God. It's about appearances not about a life change.

2nd response is one that is overcome with love, respect & gratitude for Jesus. This one gives the best thing that she has for Jesus. This woman is so focused on Jesus that she

doesn't care what other people think. She lets her hair down - literally & figuratively. Her total focus is Jesus.

Why is there such a difference. She sees her need for Jesus. She accepts him & his love. She is forgiven much & is very grateful. She is ready to live a life of gratitude.

As Jesus, explains, however, if you have been forgiven little, you have little gratitude. It is not that the Pharisee didn't have a lot to be forgiven of. It is that, he didn't see his need for God. He felt that he was OK on his own. He had not accepted God and God's love.

Conclusion

We are to accept God's love and then love God completely. We are to love God as this woman did.

What is your response to Jesus? Do you have a love that has to do something? You may question what can I do? Love God in all of your actions. Commit yourselves to God completely. Commit your money, your time, your talents. Focus totally on Jesus without being concerned about what others will think.

Focus on Jesus & love Him completely.