

St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church in the Town of Tonawanda, N.Y

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ - Associate Rector Scripture: Luke 7:36-50

"Kingdom Eyes"

Last Sunday, Fr. Ward spoke to us about the personal transformation that takes place in a person who gives themselves totally to Jesus. St. Paul was a magnificent example of how someone with a terrible past was changed forever; was not only made acceptable, but became a pillar of the Christian Community. It was a brilliant lesson and reminder for each one of us – that nothing is beyond God – and no one is beyond transformation. In fact – in Jesus Christ – we welcome it.

In today's Holy Gospel from Luke - we read of a woman who came to Jesus with an alabaster jar of perfume. At the feet of our Lord, she wept and anointed his feet not only with the perfume, **but with her tears.** These were tears of gratitude, of joy, of freedom. This was a woman who had a terrible past – the Pharisee said so, proclaiming "*she is a sinner!*" The Pharisee was full of judgment – but Jesus was not – instead He was accepting, welcoming, and forgiving. Jesus used Simon's self righteousness as a teaching moment – for Simon the Pharisee – and for us as well. Jesus said to Simon: "*A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?*" Simon answered and said, "**I suppose the one whom he forgave more.**" And He said to him, "*You have judged correctly.*"

The Pharisees were always swarming around Jesus, ready to catch Him, to trip Him up - asking outrageous questions. For example, in Matthew 15:2-3 they ask Jesus "*why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.*" and He answered and said to them, "*Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?*" Jesus later gave further clarification in verse 11 saying: "**It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.**" Then the disciples came and said to Him, "*Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?*" They asked Him to explain further, so Jesus told them in verses 17 to 20: "*Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. **These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.***"

How often society, yes - even Christians, open our mouths without thinking and lash out judgment about people and their past, about people's appearance, or about something that may have been said about that person. Instead of welcoming and getting to know the person, **the Pharisee in us comes out** and says – "**He or she is a sinner!**" or "**how come you do this or look like that?**" **Whose eyes are we seeing this person through?** It would seem to me that it is through eyes of judgment or even self righteousness. Jesus had more to say about the human condition of "Phariseeism" in the Gospel of Matthew 7:1-5 – in which He gets to the heart of the matter by saying to the crowd **and to each one of us:** "*Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. **Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?***" Or how

can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:1-5)

An important lesson for all of us today – is that in our daily work as Christians – spreading the Gospel – it is NOT just about words – it is about HOW WE TREAT OTHERS. **We are all guilty of this! All of us!** Are we Pharisees who judge first and then get to know the person (that is if they are still around) – or are we ready to put Jesus' Words into action

- and welcome,
- love,
- befriend, teach –
- evangelize if you will,

and leave the judgment and the transformation to Jesus? OR – do we righteously quote the Bible to them about their past, reminding them they have sinned (and believe me they need no reminding), expecting them to behave the way we expect? Our treatment of them should speak volumes of our commitment to them – **welcome or judgment?**

There is not one person present today – not one – that does not have a past. I am sure each one of us has done something in our past **that we would not want others to know about, and that we are not proud of.** (The enemy probably reminds you of this all the time.) Being in a relationship with Jesus Christ and being truly repentant, asking for the Lord's forgiveness, is all we need – and that spot, that blemish is removed. The very fact that you have come here today, for anyone that comes here, means that they have either given their life and their past to Jesus Christ - or are on the road to doing that – and **we are not worthy of judging.**

Jesus said to Simon, the Pharisee: *"Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. "You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. "For this reason I say to you, **her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."** Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."*

My brothers and sisters, we come here today – worshipping the One who **went to the cross so that we might have a relationship with Him, so that our sins would be forgiven.** Only Jesus can do that – only Jesus can judge and replace our misplaced, judgmental, self righteousness – with His righteousness. His righteousness is one that welcomes the tax collector and the sinner, and does not remind them of their past!

Far too many people today are walking around with very poor self esteem, a poor self image, and don't see themselves as God see's them. Jesus Christ sees each one of us with **Kingdom Eyes,**

- not as the imperfect - who live in an imperfect world,
- but as filled with a hope and a future, filled with promise, to be a child of the Most High – who will be sharing our faith with others, and spending all eternity with Him.

Oh, if only we could see each other as Christ sees us, including ourselves – through Kingdom Eyes! Jesus says to each one of us – **YOU ARE WORTH IT!**

One of my favorite preachers and speakers is Reggie Dabbs, who speaks at Kingdom Bound each year and Joshua Revolution as well. Reggie has made a cornerstone of his ministry this

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reminder: **“You cannot change yesterday, but you can change tomorrow!”** You can give Jesus your past, your yesterday – and you can ensure a brighter, freer tomorrow by walking with Him, and loving those that HE puts in your path.

As a “Great Commission” church – we NEED to remember the words of Christ before He left to ascend to the Father: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.”* (Matthew 28:19-20) This is Jesus’ call for us to BE disciples and MAKE disciples, not to be Pharisees.

Lord, I pray that you would strengthen us in our walk with you, that you would give us Kingdom Eyes, to see one another as you see us – to share your promise of forgiveness of our sins, of our past, and not to be ones who point out imperfections - but instead to seek you; your guidance and your wisdom. Help us to shed any self righteousness, Pharisaical, judgmental tendencies, and instead be filled with a desire to share you and your Word with others through Kingdom Eyes. Let us come to you, humbly, each with our own alabaster jar, seeking your freeing love and with grateful obedience for how you have dealt with our past, **follow you and your example.** Amen.