

Luke 7:36-50 *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. 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. 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. 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 spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." 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. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 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" Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

Luke 17:1-4 *Jesus said to his disciples, "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to anyone by whom they come! It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day and turns back to you seven times and says 'I repent,' you must forgive."*

There are multiple topics and ideas at play in both sets of these verses. Even in Luke 7, I could give a whole message on just the historical context and underlying meaning of some of what is going on. BUT, what I want to focus on in both sets of scripture is love and forgiveness.

Love and forgiveness is a two way street. When you truly love someone, your desire is to forgive them (sometimes even when on the outside it would appear they don't deserve it.) Now, I don't want forgiveness to get mixed up in how some relationships can become toxic, abusive or unhealthy. We want to forgive those we love because, well, we love them! Also, when we mess up, we want to be forgiven, right? Sometimes our mess ups are just little things like, we forgot to do the dishes, we spilled coffee on the carpet, we didn't show up at the right time, we

said something hurtful out of emotion... you know the things. Sometimes, sometimes our mess ups are even bigger. We cheat, we lie, we steal, we covet, we get angry, we are jealous, we gossip, we commit some sort of illegal act (whether we get caught or not is a different story.) When we read about this sinner of a woman, I am sure we think the worst things. Even in her sinful state, she knew who Jesus was, showed him immeasurable amounts of love, worshiped him...she didn't even ask for forgiveness. Jesus recognized her acts of love and worship. Her love preceded her forgiveness. Jesus also recognizes that those who have the largest debt, will experience the greatest forgiveness and love. A reciprocal love. We don't like this; our flesh does not like this. In God's economy, this is how it works. This is the radical love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In the second teaching, Jesus is trying to explain how key forgiveness is. We not only should be ready to forgive, but our hearts should be postured toward forgiveness. Even if that means we have to forgive time and time and time again. When he says 'little ones', many theologians don't think He is necessarily talking about children but those who maybe aren't mature in their faith. We certainly don't want to be stumbling blocks. We should be full of mercy and grace and HELP on their journeys. Even those of us who are mature, who are disciples, WE WILL STUMBLE. Now, let's not get too crazy where Jesus says 'to rebuke the sinner;' a rebuke doesn't have to be a finger wagging tongue lashing! How about a gentle, pull someone aside, talk...'hey friend, I am not sure that was the right thing to say or do.' If our job is to help others or lead others into the family of God, wouldn't it behoove us to approach with love and forgiveness or even opportunities for repentance? Where does repentance happen?

I had a student who was raised in a very conservative, charismatic church. She got pregnant when she was 15. Her parents were beside themselves. They were leaders in the church. They made her stand in front of the whole congregation and confess her sin, repent, and they gave her a purity ring and she promised 'to be good.' Do you want to know a secret? She was not 'good.' She struggled. I think she was extremely traumatized and felt HORRIBLE about herself. What if...WHAT IF... we were gentle, full of grace, love and gave space for a person to repent...and doesn't true repentance occur in our hearts? Does it need to be in front of a body of believers? Does it need to be running to the altar? RADICAL LOVE. RADICAL FORGIVENESS. Think about the woman who was a sinner in Luke 7... did she repent? Was her love and worship of Jesus her repentance?

I, personally, am so thankful for the RADICAL LOVE of Christ. I am so grateful that He is so incredibly forgiving. At this point in my life, I want to be known for being loving and forgiving than hateful, grumpy and unforgiving. Which is a better role model for Christ?

To love or to show radical love, that is the question.