

# Gospel Lesson for the Week

June 17, 2007

## Third Sunday after Pentecost

Read Luke 7:36-8:3

Read also I Kings 21:1-21; Galatians 2:15-21; Psalm 5:1-8

*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."*

Luke 7:36-48

## PRIOR HISTORY

There had to be something that went before.  
The simple exchange we have is not enough.

Simon, it seems, and his companions  
knew well what she *had* been.  
Jesus knew what she had *become*.  
All that the dinner guests can see is Sinner  
All that Jesus sees is Sinner saved by grace.

Somewhere along the way he'd met her  
and he had cleansed her  
of whatever demon possessed her.  
Whatever went before,  
whatever sins or indiscretions,  
were swept away.  
But how?  
Is forgiveness purchased  
with a costly bottle of perfume,  
or humble act of devotion?  
Hardly so. No crass transaction, this:  
    Perfume for absolution!  
More complex and yet more simple than that.

The transaction had been completed  
before she'd barged in on Simon's dinner party.  
And this was just her thank-you gift.  
No wonder now she spends  
her time, her cash, her love at Jesus feet,  
anointing him with costly perfume and tears.

And the lesson for Simon that day?  
The lesson for us all?  
A relationship with Jesus  
is not to be purchased  
with a dinner invitation,  
but may be celebrated  
with costly acts of true devotion  
rooted in God's grace received.