

Luke 7:36-50  
Forgiven Much  
January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018

One year my family and I had an awesome visit to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Our last full day there we took a ride on mules down into the Grand Canyon and witnessed a woman hiker being knocked off the edge of the trail into the Grand Canyon.

We were being lead into the Grand Canyon by a very experienced mule wrangler and mule train had stopped to let the wrangler go back and straighten up and tighten up the saddle of a woman who had got her saddle leaning sideways by leaning away from the edge.

The wrangler had tied up his mule and a hiker decided to pass the tied up mule by walking on the rocks on the edge of the trail (like on the cover of our bulletin).



It was about a 60 foot drop almost straight down to the trail below.

Well, as she walked behind the wrangler's mule she startled it, and it knocked her off the edge. My daughter Sarah said the mule bumped her, my son Kevin said it kicked her. But either way she went over the edge.

Now immediately a debate broke out among the members of the mule ride as to "whose fault it was." After all we are a very litigious society. Some said, "It was just an accident." Some said, "No, it's the wrangler's fault."

Most said, "No it was the woman's fault" and then listed her many sins that caused her to be knocked off the trail such as:  
>she was walking on the rocks on the outer edge of the trail,  
>& she walked behind a mule and everyone knows you don't do that,  
>& she startled the mule and the mule did what mules do

>and finally, she hadn't followed the **RULES** in the handout for hikers in the Grand Canyon to sit still until the mule train passes.

It was quite frightening for me for all I saw was the top of her head as she went down over the side.... well more on this later.

In our Bible story today Jesus was invited to the Pharisee Simon's house for dinner. In those days wealthy people like Simon had their homes arranged around outdoor courtyards where such dinners were served. The courtyards were open to the public and when prominent Rabbi's like Jesus came to eat, the public would show up to listen to the Rabbi speak, and they would sit around the walls of the courtyard. This is how the woman who was a "sinner" got in.



In Jesus' day at dinners like this the guests would actually lay down on the floor with their feet behind them and rest their heads on their left hands as they ate. This is how the woman could stand behind Jesus weeping and wash his feet with her tears, kiss them and wipe them with her hair. She then anointed his feet with ointment.

Now in Simon's day if you invited an important person to dinner all the common hospitalities of the day would have been observed. You would have had their feet washed with water. You would have greeted them with a kiss and anointed their head with aromatic oil.

None of these things Simon did, which makes you wonder why he invited Jesus. It certainly wasn't out of love and respect for none was really shown except the invitation.

Now the parable of the 2 debtors point was that this "sinner" woman had already received Jesus' forgiveness; so it was out of gratitude that she showed her love by doing all the acts of hospitality that Simon didn't do. Her presence and her actions scandalized Simon.

So Jesus asks Simon a question that is also addressed directly to you, **“Do you see this woman?”**



Do we only see the sin and the bother and embarrassment, or do we see the sinner, the woman?



Do we see this woman as a person to avoid because they might contaminate us, or do we see her as a person, in great need, who gives us an opportunity to minister?

And beyond this woman in our story do we see only the sin or do we see broken, hurting people knocked off the edge of life by sin?



Do we avert our eyes? Or do we open the eyes of our hearts and see them like Jesus does, children of God and all they can grow to be?



Now back to the woman hiker who went over the edge. She caught onto a couple of bushes that were on the side of the trail and said, “Help me. Could someone help me? I don’t want to die. Could someone help me?” She said it in the calmest voice I have ever heard in a situation like that. I would have been screaming at the top of my lungs.

And thank God for the wrangler. He did not debate like the rest of us did as to whose fault it was she was in this condition. He didn’t cuss

or shout or say, “You stupid woman look what you have got yourself into this is all your fault!”

He got himself down on his stomach in the dirt of that trail, the excrement of the mules, and reached over the edge.

He didn't debate or curse her sins of ignorance of mules, he got down on his stomach in the dirt of that trail seeing what she could be... and that was alive.

He reached over the edge to try to give her life!!!! More later.

Do we only see the sin as Simon did, or do we see the sinner in need? Do we see the person as God sees them in the future, set free of sin and stretch out our hands to give them life?

In every story in the Bible there are those we identify with. In this story for some it is the woman who is “the sinner”. Note: she is not called a “harlot” or “adulterer”, but simply a “sinner.”

That allows all of us who know we are “sinners” to identify with her. The truth is, I found in my research for this sermon, that there were 8 or 9 other professions she could have been in besides the “oldest” to earn her the designation here as “a sinner.”

Well the Simon the Pharisee saw himself as the part of the righteous and the holy. And for us “unless we see something of ourselves in Simon the Pharisee, we are so blind to our own need (of Jesus and forgiveness) that we have failed to hear the story.”

“Simon thought of himself as pious and righteous. He had no idea what it meant to be forgiven and no awareness of his need for forgiveness.” New International Bible Commentary on Luke. He knew not love.

The woman truly had the advantage. She knew she needed help. She knew she had fallen over the edge. So she reached out and received help from Jesus, and out of deep gratitude and love she ministered to Jesus.

If at this point you don't see yourself at all in Simon you have a great problem for all of us as Christians at times see ourselves as more righteous and holy than others. That leaves us **in the state of sin of being "self-righteous" rather than relying on the righteousness of Christ.** In effect we have rejected Jesus by our "self-righteousness."

It says, **"Simon thought to himself if this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."** In Jesus' response to Simon, Jesus showed that he saw who Simon was as well as the woman. **"Jesus went to Simon's house for dinner."**

Jesus modeled the same acceptance of Simon as he offered to the woman. Jesus did not stand removed from this self-righteous, arrogant, backward Pharisee. Jesus also offered him acceptance and Grace."

Desperate Preachers Site 'CalgaryClergy' June 8, 2010

Both were sinners. Simon did not see his sin and so he was blind to his need for a Savior in Jesus, so Simon missed God's grace and new life. He loved little, and it showed, and he was lost. He'd fallen over the edge while standing on firm ground.

The woman on the other hand, "Her openness to God's forgiveness and her selfless loving response are accepted as faith, (by Jesus) and forgiveness is equated with salvation." "The result is peace, Shalom as Jesus said, **"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."** New

International Bible Commentary on Luke.

All in this story are sinners but Jesus. He is the source of forgiveness and Grace. Do you see yourself in Simon or the woman? Both are sinners and here today in this time and place God accepts you—just as you are.

If you are a Simon sitting in judgment and condemnation of others and do not see them as children of God with all the potential that God sees in them, here is your place of repentance, forgiveness and new life. You can receive new eyes to see beyond the sin... to the sinner... to the person... to the woman, and in Christ see what they can be.

You will know if you are a Simon if your love has grown cold and you feel no desire to shower acts of love on Christ through others and his body the Church. But if you are in such a state, and your love has grown cold, know that in this place at this time Jesus will revive you if you come to him.

If you see yourself in the woman and are painfully aware and ashamed of your sin... here in this time and in this place you can receive peace, forgiveness, and new life.

If you feel your sin has knocked you over the edge and you are hanging on for dear life now is your opportunity to reach up and take Jesus' hand.

Jesus is reaching down from the cross to you! Jesus is reaching down through the pain and the blood to offer you forgiveness of sin that he has paid for with his blood. If you have just a little bit of faith to reach up and grasp his hand, Jesus will save you! Your faith in him will save you and you can go in peace.

That wrangler—he humbled himself. He got face down in the dirt and filth of that trail and reached down over the edge and.... pulled that woman hiker to life—new life.

It seems like a cliché, but that woman was holding onto the only bush on the side of that trail. The wrangler asked the woman to give him her hand and he would pull her up.

She did and so that mother of 4 had her life handed back to her and she could go on living it in gratitude aware of how precious and fragile life can be.

Here in this time and in this place Jesus is reaching down to offer you salvation, peace and a new life of love. Won't you take his hand?

If you are painfully aware of your sin and need of forgiveness it is offered. Simply ask for it and receive it. Jesus will take you just as you are.

If you have stand in judgment and self-righteousness over others and feel no need of repentance you are actually in a more dangerous place. You don't realize you are hanging onto a bush on the side of a trail. It is only those who feel the need and repent, who are granted new life. If you are a Simon this time and this place is also for you.

It is a place to repent and receive the eyes of Christ, to see those in need to minister to, and new eyes to see what they can become.

Come one, come all your faith in Jesus Christ will save you and you can go and live in peace and in love.

What is God saying to you and what are you going to do right here right now? Will you accept your Savior and your Salvation?

Let us pray... (A prayer of repentance and acceptance of new life.)

“Open the Eyes of my Heart”