

In the house of Simon, the PhariseeLuke 7 vv. 36-50

In Capernaum there lived a number of Pharisees.

The Pharisees of Juda and Jerusalem hated the Prophet of Nazareth. They were in wait for the opportunity to kill the Lord Jesus.

Neither did the Pharisees of Galilee and Capernaum believe in the Lord Jesus. Oh, no, they rejected Him as the Messiah, they were annoyed that the Lord Jesus was so friendly with the publicans and they became angry when Jesus helped and healed people on the Sabbath day. But they still did not hate Him so much as did the Pharisees of Judea and Jerusalem. That would come about later on.

As you know already, the publicans invited each other to feasts. The Pharisees did the same among themselves. The Pharisees too sometimes prepared a great feast and then invited their friends to their homes.

One day, one of these Pharisees, whose name was Simon, has also prepared such a banquet and has invited the other Pharisees.

Come, let us imagine that we can just have a look inside Simon's house.

The large room, evidently the upper room, has been carefully prepared for the purpose. Long tables stand in the middle, on which the most sumptuous food will soon be served. Around the tables are low couches, on which the guests will take their places. Near the door stand cruses filled with water. Servants stand ready to help the incoming guests.

Simon looks at it all and smiles. Yes, everything is ready, nothing has been forgotten.

Here comes the first guest.

Simon walks up to him and gives him a kiss. You probably think that is rather strange, because in our country good friends usually shake hands. In Eastern lands however they gave each other a kiss.

The servants take a bowl, fill it with water and wash the feet of the guests.

In the land of Canaan people walked in sandals. They knew no socks or stockings. Since it was so warm in the East their feet soon became burning hot. Furthermore the sharp sand tended to stick fast and that was painful. Now you can well understand that it was very refreshing to wash one's feet. When this

took place they rubbed a few drops of oil or some ointment on to the feet, which had a softening effect and took away the burning sensation.

Among the rich it was customary also to sprinkle a few drops of sweet smelling ointment or balm upon the head of the guest. The fine aroma was very refreshing. However such a balm was very expensive.

Nowadays "Eau de Cologne" is used for the same purpose. This was of course unknown in the East in those days, and so there they used this sweet-smelling ointment or balm.

Slowly the room in Simon's house fills with invited guests. All are greeted by Simon with a kiss of friendship. The feet of each one are washed and all are anointed with oil. Of course - that is just as it should be. Simon ensures very carefully that everything follows his instructions.

But are they all treated like this? ... No, just look. Here comes someone else. Yet Simon does not go to meet this guest. He receives no kiss of welcome. The feet of this Man are not washed and He is not anointed with oil. He is placed at the lowest end of the table.

Now, why is this Guest treated thus? ... Surely He has been invited by Simon. Indeed, He does not come unasked, He has received an invitation like all the others. Who is He then? ...

Let us ask Simon himself. "Simon, who is this Man? Why do you give Him no kiss, why are His feet not washed?"

And Simon might well have answered "Which man? ... Oh Him! That is only Jesus."

Isn't it dreadful children? How humiliating for the Son of God. The feet of Jesus were also painful and burning, but Simon doesn't worry himself about that. The Lord Jesus should be only too pleased that He is allowed to sit at table, that He is invited. Yet He gives the Lord Jesus no sign of respect or honour.

The Saviour does not run away in anger though. No, He remains and shows no sign of resentment. But we may be sure that He felt it, for He was human, just like us. We do not like to be treated with contempt either. Do you? ...

At last all the guests have arrived and the feast can begin. Simon sits down also, at the head of the table - for he is the host.

There now, Simon glances round the circle. He has invited Jesus purposely, so as to get into the good books of the people. People will think "What a generous man that is". Yes, they will consider it very kind of him. They will treat him with even more respect than usual. He will be even more honoured.

Furthermore he now has a fine opportunity to take particular note of Jesus. Who knows, this Prophet may perhaps do something with which they can accuse Him. The Lord Jesus knows all these things, but He remains silent.

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While the guests lie upon the couches around the table and enjoy their repast, a woman enters quietly.

Now I must first let you know something else. When we invite our friends to a meal the door is shut and nobody comes in uninvited. Among us such a thing would not be polite. But in the land of Canaan on such an occasion the doors stood wide open. Anyone who wished could enter. They were not guests, and could not sit down and eat, but they could well look on and speak to the guests. The host in fact would encourage it. The more the better, for then all could see how rich he was, and how well he treated his guests. It would be talked about.

At Simon's house too then, the door stands open, and through that open door a woman enters. For a moment she stands still, probably back in a corner, and listens to what is being said. It looks as though this woman is at a loss, as though she is ashamed.

Just look! She is weeping! Who is this woman and why does she weep?

Everybody in the city knows her, including Simon and the other Pharisees. When she entered, Simon the host had perhaps looked down his nose, for this woman was a bad woman. Everyone spoke of her with contempt, and she had earned it, for she had been a bad woman. I wrote "had been"! She had however become sorry for her sinful life. She was now ashamed of her former sinful deeds. Often she has wept tears of sorrow and repentance.

She has now heard that Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth is present at the feast in the Pharisees' house. Very likely she has at some time heard Him preach. Undoubtedly she has heard that Jesus said He is the Saviour. And she believed these words. A Saviour was just what she needed. How she wanted to go to

When she hears on this day however that Jesus is in Simon's house, she can no longer hesitate. She goes to that house and slips inside. The contemptuous glances of the Pharisees do not frighten her off, for she is after Jesus.

Slowly she gets closer and closer to Jesus. At last she is right behind Him.

You know already that in the land of Canaan the guests lay upon low couches with their feet away from the table.

There stands the woman now. Not a word does she speak. She believes that only Jesus can forgive her many sins. Yet of that she is not worthy. If the Lord were to thrust her away He would be righteous, and yet she can no longer live without this Saviour.

Great tears fall from her eyes; tears of true and honest repentance, and those tears fall right on to Jesus' feet. Yes, she makes His feet wet with tears. When she realises this, she dries them with her hair. She has bought a box of costly, excellent ointment, and this she pours upon the feet of the Lord.

Why ever does she do that? ... Oh, she does it out of love. She wants to give her all to Jesus. Her soul hungers for a word from the Saviour. Will He forgive even her sins?

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Around the table all is silent. Conversation ceases. All eyes look towards the sinful woman and towards Jesus. All faces show a look of disgust. Simon is especially indignant. He would gladly thrust out this rude woman with harsh and angry words, but he dare not. Yet he sits there becoming more and more furious inside. All sorts of evil thoughts well up in his heart.

He thinks: "If Jesus really were a prophet, then He would not allow that. He would know what sort of woman this is and He would forbid her."

His lips curl into a contemptuous smile. Jesus, (thinks he), is a deceiver. But he does not say that, he just thinks it within.

Suddenly the silence is broken. Jesus turns towards the host and says: "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee".

His answer comes at once "Master, say on". Though he is trembling with anger, he retains a polite exterior.

"Simon", the Lord continues, "there was once a man who had a lot of money. One day he loaned to a poor man five hundred pence. A little later he loaned

to another man fifty pence. Yet neither of them were able to repay what they owed. So what did the rich man do? One day he said to his debtors: "You need not repay me anything, I forgive you both your debts. Now I ask you, Simon, which of these two would be the most thankful? Which of the two would love the rich man most?"

At once Simon replies: "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most."

The Lord Jesus says "Thou hast rightly judged."

Then Jesus turns and points to the woman standing behind Him.

"Seest thou this woman?" He asks Simon. "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." And why had she done that? "Her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

The Lord Jesus then turns to the woman and says kindly: "Thy sins are forgiven."

Oh, children, what must it have been like for that woman? With those words a peace she had never known drops into her soul. She is on the point of crying now - for joy. Her many sins, her great sins are forgiven and she believes the words. God Himself works that faith in her heart.

Once more, for a moment, a deep silence reigns.

Then the Pharisees begin saying within themselves: "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?"

They are full of unbelief and mistrust. They do not believe the words of the Lord Jesus. On the contrary they reject them. They become annoyed and angry. They think that Jesus has no right to say such a thing.

The Lord Jesus turns again to the woman however and says: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

And the woman did go away. She has had that burden of guilt removed, which had been pressing down upon her. She had been a prisoner, a prisoner of sin, but the Lord Jesus has set her free. Later, when she died, that bad woman went to eternal glory, and how many of those righteous Pharisees were shut out for ever? We do not know.

These stories have now been told to you, but what do you do with them? .. Do you need a Saviour? ... Do you have sorrow for sin? ... Do not think that you are any better. Oh no, if your sins are not forgiven, then you are in a dangerous ... a very sad condition. Outside this Saviour you can never find salvation. Remember that carefully!