

LESSONS FROM THE TABLE:

The Ultimate Party Crasher

June 19, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord’s Favor* (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point for 2022:

As the world begins awakening from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new *possibilities* with God this Pentecost season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: Luke 7:36-50 NRSV *One of the Pharisees asked Jesus^[a] to eat with him, and when he went into the Pharisee’s house he reclined to dine. ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair, kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. ³⁹ 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.” ⁴⁰ Jesus spoke up and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” “Teacher,” he replied, “speak.” ⁴¹ “A certain moneylender had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?” ⁴³ Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt.” And Jesus^[b] said to him, “You have judged rightly.” ⁴⁴ 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. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven loves little.” ⁴⁸ Then he said to her, “Your sins are*

forgiven." ⁴⁹ But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

This Week: Luke 7:36-50 NRSV³⁶

Luke tells us that Jesus is dining with Simon at the Pharisee's invitation, presumably in an elegant house and in a relatively formalized setting, when in walks a woman "*who was a sinner.*" We can easily imagine the shock and discomfort that her arrival precipitated, this awkward intrusion of an uninvited guest into a proper and carefully planned dinner party. Then the woman intensifies the unease in the room when she stands behind Jesus, weeping onto his feet, drying them with her hair, and then anointing them with oil. Filled with self-righteous indignation, Simon is immediately dismissive of Jesus and his ministry. The sinful woman's intrusion into his sanitized world – and Jesus' obvious acceptance of her – dramatically judge the exclusiveness of Simon's judgmental religiosity.

Simon's attitude toward Jesus is revealing. He notices – and undoubtedly rejoices in – Jesus' apparent inability to read the heart of the intruder. Simon had invited this new spiritual phenom to supper in order to size him up, to determine whether he belongs in the inner circle of correct believers, and he is watching this scene unfold with great interest. It is clear that Jesus is not as discriminating as Simon himself, not as insightful in his assessments, not as religiously careful. But Jesus the judge decisively intervenes at this point: "*Simon, I have something to say to you.*" He then tells the Pharisee the parable of the creditor who forgave two debtors. How does all of this 'crash Simon's party'? The Pharisee is so concerned with appearances and avoiding contamination that he is blind to the presence of grace around him. Among the presuppositions of Simon's religion is the egotistic conviction that divine favor is won through human achievement. It is this self-righteous, judgmental party that Jesus crashes. As long as divine love is appreciated as something that flows from personal performance, one's self-centered, sinful ego reigns. This self-centered notion blinds Simon to both the woman's extravagant love and his own sinfulness. Ultimately, it blinds him to the authentic workings of the pardoning God who can change the heart of anyone.

– Adapted from The Word on Fire Bible, pp 346-348

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Why do you think the "*woman who was a sinner*" responded to Jesus in such an extravagant, emotional way?
2. On a scale of 1-10 (1- tepid, 10 – extravagant!), how do you compare with the woman in terms of your love for Jesus? Explain your response.

3. Through the parable, Jesus crashed Simon's personal party of respectability, self-righteousness and judgmentalism which had left him keenly aware of the sins of others but blind to his own. How are you at spotting the speck in your neighbor's eye, while neglecting the plank (Matt 7:3) in your own?
4. Former slave ship operator John Newton wrote of the Amazing Grace "that saved a *wretch* like me." While none of us have committed Newton's particular sin, how has God's grace save you from your particular *wretchedness*?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 7:49-50 *But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"* ⁵⁰ *But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*