

WORDS FROM THE BACK

**Everyday is the day that God says to you —
I LOVE YOU!**

**Will today be the day
that you hear those words?**

**People, who are loved by God
Let us worship God together
in this hour, in this space!**

SCRIPTURE OF THE DAY

Luke 7:36-50

Forgiveness and gratitude

36 One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. After he entered the Pharisee's home, he took his place at the table. 37 Meanwhile, a woman from the city, a sinner, discovered that Jesus was dining in the Pharisee's house. She brought perfumed oil in a vase made of alabaster. 38 Standing behind him at his feet and crying, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured the oil on them. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what was happening, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. He would know that she is a sinner.

40 Jesus replied, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

"Teacher, speak," he said.

41 "A certain lender had two debtors. One owed enough money to pay five hundred people for a day's work. The other owed enough money for fifty. 42 When they couldn't pay, the lender forgave the debts of them both. Which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the largest debt canceled."

Jesus said, "You have judged correctly."

44 Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your home, you didn't give me water for my feet, but she wet my feet with tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You didn't greet me with a kiss, but she hasn't stopped kissing my feet since I came in. 46 You didn't anoint my head with oil, but she has poured perfumed oil on my feet. 47 This is why I tell you that her many sins have been forgiven; so she has shown great love. The one who is forgiven little loves little."

48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 The other table guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this person that even forgives sins?”

50 Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

Common English Bible (CEB)

Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible

RESPONSE TO ... STORY

O Christ, You Are Life

LYONS 10. 10. 11. 11 ("O Worship the King, All Glorious Above!")

**O Christ, you are life! You heal and restore!
You bring God's good news to those lost and poor.
Through all of your ministry here on the earth,
You looked in the crowds and saw each person's worth.**

**You went to a house and sat down to eat;
A woman in tears anointed your feet.
Your host muttered, "Sinner!" but you turned to say,
"She's joyful because she's forgiven today!"**

**O God, give us life and show us anew:
Each person is loved and valued by you.
May we see all people as children of yours,
And work for your kingdom that heals and restores.**

Biblical Reference: Luke 7:11-17, 36-50, 7:22, 15:1-32, 4:18

Tune: Joseph Martin Kraus, 1784; until recently attributed to Johann Michael Haydn ("O Worship the King, All Glorious Above!") (MIDI)

Alternate tune: HANOVER, William Croft, Supplement to the New Version, 1708 ("Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim") (MIDI)

Text: Copyright © 2010 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.

Luke 7: 36 - 50 (Cotton Patch Gospel of Luke)

A certain church member invited him [JESUS] home for dinner. He accepted and went into the church member's house and sat down. Then a shady lady of the town, who had heard that Jesus was being entertained at the church member's home, bought a bottle of high-priced perfume. She sat at his feet sobbing, and her tears began to wet his feet. She dried them with her long hair and kissed his feet and dabbed on some of the perfume.

When the church member who had invited him saw what was going on, he thought to himself, "If this fellow were a real man of God, he would recognize the kind of woman that's fondling him and know that she's a shady character."

Then Jesus said to him, "Simon, I want to talk with you about something."

He said, "Why sure, Doctor, go right ahead."

"Two men were in debt to a certain banker. One owed five hundred dollars, the other fifty. When neither of them could pay up, the banker wrote off the debt of both. Which of the two would you think was the more grateful?"

Simon scratched his head and said, "Why, I suppose it "was the one who was relieved of the larger debt."

Jesus said to him, "Right you are!" Then he turned to the lady and said to Simon, "Do you see this lady? When I came into your home, you didn't even give me water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You didn't even shake hands with me, but she, ever since she got here, has lovingly kissed my feet. So let me point out to you, Simon, that she has been relieved of a heavy load of sin, as evidenced by her great gratitude."

Then he said to her, "Your sins are gone."

And the guests at the table whispered among themselves, "Who does he think he is--forgiving sins!"

He said to the lady, "What you've just done has been the making of you; keep it up--with my blessing."

— Excerpt From: Clarence Jordan. "Cotton Patch Gospel: Luke and Acts." iBooks. <https://itunes.us/2-6Rz.1>"

MEDITATION

Love + Forgiveness = Faith

Dogs Patiently Waiting For Their Names To Be Called For Dinner Time
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEIBXsvFj6M>

Funny Dog snitches on sibling. Who stole the cookie?
www.barkbadges.com
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88XQcpU5Vuk>

Guilty dog desperately asks for forgiveness
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OI7HuH_uxzw

June 12, 2016 — “Love + Forgiveness = Faith”

St. Stephen UCC/Louisville, KY/The Rev. Jim Harper III

Do any of you have a dog? [Someday soon, we will give equal time to cats — but today we are introducing our meditative time together by dog illustrations.

Dogs are wonderful pets and can make a house feel like a real home, but sometimes they misbehave, especially when they are puppies.

Puppies like to play.

They become rambunctious and sometimes do naughty things.

They like to dig holes.

They track mud into the house on their paws.

They like to chew on all kinds of things - sometimes your best shoes.

You may be upset with your dog when it does these naughty things, but at the same time, you love it.

Dogs can look very sad when you scold them.

And as we just saw a few minutes ago, Dogs can also make a dramatic move to seek forgiveness.

You may think about how loyal and loving your dog has been, always there waiting for you and wagging its tail when it sees you coming.

Your dog treats you as if you are the most important person in the world.

That is how we should approach God everyday!

We should wag our tails and smile from ear to ear and jump for joy, everyday as we approach God.

Also, let us take note, even though you don't approve of what your dog has done, you forgive your pet.

Today we visited with a wonderful story in the Bible about forgiveness.

Jesus was criticized for letting a woman who was a sinner be near him and touch him.

Jesus knew this woman's name and he knew that the woman had many sins, but he said to her, "*Your sins are forgiven*" (7:48).

Then, he said to her, "*Your faith has saved you. Go in peace*" (7:50).

One of the things that this story says to me today is this...

- God knows each of our names.
- God knows what is in each of our hearts, minds and souls.
- God loves us unconditionally.
- God forgives us unexplainably.
- God offers forgiveness to each one of us.
- When we come to God, God embraces us and says, “Your faith has made you whole. Go in peace!”
- God's words to us are like a giant hug around our hearts.
- God loves us so much...
- When we love God back, our faith transforms us and gives us peace.
- When we ask to be forgiven for the bad choices we have made and the things we have done that have hurt others, Jesus forgives us because he loves us.

Another interesting thing is this...

- In this story there are two main characters, besides Jesus, — an intriguing, interesting and indictable women; and then there is Simon.

Many of us can identify with the woman who anointed Jesus' feet, but a less appealing prospect is to identify with Simon the Pharisee:

- Simon the judgmental,
- Simon the callous,
- Simon who couldn't even show the common courtesy of a welcoming kiss, but who still believed himself several cuts above the repentant woman.

The problem is, if we are like Simon, we are not apt to know it, for Simon was blind to his own character, his own actions and interactions.

Jesus did not tell the parable of the two debtors for the woman's benefit, but for Simon's.

When a person suffers personally from self blindness, it often takes a direct confrontation to invite the person to look at themselves and see what everyone else already sees.

If we don't see any of Simon in our own character — yes, it may be because he doesn't lurk there — and that is something to celebrate... but it could also be because Simons always have trouble seeing themselves as they are.

Jesus speaks to Simon's character flaws with the parable to make him see — to help him see, what he couldn't see on his own.

We can use the parable in the same way — we can use this parable to confront ourselves — this story acts like a mirror today and we all are asked to look deep into the mirror and see if we are just as guilty of being judgmental, as Simon was.

When we do, we are likely to discover we possess elements of both the woman and Simon, and both need much forgiveness.

This is what we all need to remember today:

When we look into a mirror — or when we look into this passage — we should see God saying “I Love You!”

When is the last time you felt God saying that to you?

When was the last time you heard God, deep in your soul, in the back of your mind, or even in the flutter of your heart say to you, “I LOVE YOU!”

God says it everyday, the everyone, but is any one listening?

Maybe one of the keys to listening is to be aware of where you are on your spiritual journey!

So today I ask you —

- Do you know that God loves you?
- Are you approaching God everyday, as joyfully, and as non-pretentious as a dog approaches its owner?
- Are you living your life in forgiveness or are you stuck like Simon in a state of self-denial and pretentious behavior?
- Are you engaged in the spiritual journey that God has set before you?
- Are you aware of who is traveling with you on this spiritual journey?

June 12, 2016 — “Love + Forgiveness = Faith”

St. Stephen UCC/Louisville, KY/The Rev. Jim Harper III

God is Still Speaking and we really need to be listening —
God is Still Speaking and we are also asked to respond —
Respond today with me as we pray together this prayer of commitment — this
prayer of faith...

Amen.

Amen.

Sources:

The New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized Edition), copyright 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the [National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America](#). Used by permission. All rights reserved.(NRSV)

The New Oxford Annotated Bible

[The Message](#) (MSG) Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

Contemporary English Version (CEV) Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society

<http://www.sermonwriter.com>

Sacla' Stage a Surprise Opera in a School Lunch Hall - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNgCM7zp30M>

TABLE BENEDICTION — <http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/table-benediction>

The Power of Words - A girl Changed a BLIND man Day [Amazing]

CHRIST HAS NO BODY — <http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/christ-has-no-body>

THE HAND THAT STEADIES THE PLATE - <http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/the-hand-that-steadies-the-plate>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNhYbJbqg-Y>

Children's Sermons/Luke 7:11-17/Compassion by Lois Parker Edstrom

Scripture quotations from the World English Bible

©2016 COMMUNICATION RESOURCES, INC., ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

JLHIIIIFILES, Louisville, Kentucky, 2016.

PRAYER OF FAITH

Thank you, Jesus,
**for showing us the way to salvation
and the way to transformation,**
Thank you, Spirit-Filled Being,
**for showing us the way to the pearly gates
of heaven right here on earth,
free and open all the time.**
Thank you for leading us to the clear,
**cool river that runs through the middle of the heavenly city,
the river running with the water of life.**
Dear Ultimate One,
we accept your invitation to salvation,
**and your call for us to under go through
spiritual transformation!**
With hearts full of gratitude we take up your offer
**to fill the emptiness of our lives,
with thankfulness and we receive your guidance to change direction.**
Right now, by the power of your Holy Spirit,
we are converted from the way of death
to the way of joyful eternal life on earth.

June 12, 2016 — “Love + Forgiveness = Faith”

St. Stephen UCC/Louisville, KY/The Rev. Jim Harper III

Oh, Dear One,
**with humble hearts we come before you in prayer,
and with joy we invite you to live in our hearts forever!**

Amen.

Amen.

- adapted from <http://tcpc.blogs.com/musings/2012/12/jim-burklos-book-of-common-prayer.html>

SONG OF RESPONSE

The Lord’s Prayer

EVA, Vocalist/Albert Hay Malotte, composer