

I Have Something to Say to You

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time- Luke 7:36-8:3

As I was listening to the reading of the gospel, at a recent parish meeting this week, the words that struck me were the words that Jesus says to Simon, the Pharisee. **"Simon, I have something to say to you."** What I heard was, "Susan, I have something to say to YOU!!!" Oh my! It made me listen.

The story is one we all know. A woman, known in the community as someone with a reputation, comes to Simon's party in which Jesus is the guest. She is not an invited visitor. In fact, her intrusion is probably highly improper. She is known as **"a sinful woman"**. To invade a dinner, which was probably meant for men and those with prestige, would have been unfitting for her gender or her status.

She takes an active role in this story, providing for Jesus the hospitality that should have been, but was not, offered to him by his host. What happens is pretty much what takes place on social media, during coffee breaks and around the water cooler... there is a sense of righteous judgement by Simon followed by a full on-slot of gossip about those we judge as not worthy.

Oh, yes... I've done this very thing, judging another based on my sense of propriety. I can get my high and mighty hat on in just the right position making it very easy to reject the other. We are all Simon in one form or the other. Whether I was judging the awkward junior high school girl in my 7th grade class, or making judgement on how my peers raised their kids...I am...We...are all Simon.

So what is Jesus telling me to do this week? Well, I think he is saying to me that I need to recognize myself as the woman of the story, owning up to my sinful nature, seeking Jesus' mercy and forgiveness. **"Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears."** Am I able to kneel before the Lord with this same sense of contrition, recognizing my sins, while at the same time recognizing Jesus' great love for me?

I need to look at myself as Simon, acknowledging the missed opportunities to welcome those who (in my opinion) are hard to welcome. **"When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner.'** I need to provide the necessary hospitality at church, at home, at the grocery store that is fitting the dignity of every person I encounter. This, I can tell you, is not easy!

The challenge put before us, by Pope Francis, to practice a full year of mercy is what Jesus is calling us to today. Practicing mercy provides us with the opportunity to recognize our failings and our need for God's mercy and forgiveness. Practicing mercy also allows us to welcome those we judge unworthy, breaking through our judgmental barriers, opening up an avenue where the love and forgiveness of Christ heals all sin.

Blessings!


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