

Sermon for the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost (C), Proper 6, 17.vi.2007 [Fathers' Day]
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint James the Apostle / Brogue, Pennsylvania
II Samuel1:26-12:10,13-15, Psalm32, Galatians2:15-21, Luke 7:36-8:3
8:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist Brief Order, 10:00 a.m., Service of Word & Prayer (WOV)

J. J. !

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was
and Who is to come! ✠ Amen.

Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven, hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace." Soon afterwards He went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

– Luke 7:47-8:3

Is this a version of the same story we heard only a few
Sundays ago from John's Gospel, with Mary Magdalene as
the woman who anoints Jesus with costly ointment, who
washes His feet with her tears and who dries His feet

with her hair? Are we to understand that Mary Magdalene is the subject here, too, numbered with the other women disciples after her dramatic act of contrition and faith? Perhaps so. Perhaps not. In any case, she is a woman very out of place—as a woman, as a public sinner, probably a prostitute, and as such a person presuming to enter a righteous man’s house and to insult his guest by not only approaching him but *touching* him. Here Simon the Pharisee does not attack her for doing what she is doing, as does Judas Iscariot in John’s version, but he complains to Jesus about her because it is *she* who is doing what she is doing.

Simon the Pharisee, Simon the righteous Jew, does not realize who Jesus is, and in fact does not seem to accord Jesus the minimal courtesies of a guest—the opportunity to wash one’s feet. He invites Jesus into an

apparently hostile dinner party, to recline at a table full of critics. Perhaps the whole thing is a set-up, with the poor woman we meet in this story persuaded, perhaps even hired to enter this male circle of the righteous critics just to see what Jesus would do. They see, and they do not understand.

Regardless of how or why she entered that house at that hour, this woman with a heavy burden of conscience was relieved of that burden without confessing a single word, without naming a single one of her apparently many sins. Her weeping, her whole body language says it all. Jesus forgives her. Jesus declares God's peace to her. Jesus gives her a new place from which to start in life and sends her on her way from that point in peace. Next we are told that there were a number of women, first among them Mary Magdalene, but also "Joanna, the wife of

Herod's steward, Chuza." That is, this woman, be she Mary Magdalene or not, is now numbered among a group including the wife of one of the most powerful men in Jerusalem and Roman Judæa at that time, the wife of the man who stood closest to King Herod. This nameless woman, or Mary Magdalene, probably no older than a girl, is now numbered among the most prominent first converts of the Way of the Cross. She has entered in the peace of Christ into the aristocracy of forgiven sinners.

She, who would probably not have ever described herself as a righteous person, has received much from God and she loves the One in Whom she has met God very, very much. Simon the Pharisee, who *knew* himself and his friends to be righteous, shunning sinners, loves the One he thinks is just some itinerant Rabbi very, very little.

We look at empty pews in this and other churches and may imagine the people we would like to see among us, worshipping and serving God. Jesus calls those who treasure God's grace above all else into His Church. With such love He can work great things for the Kingdom of God and for His Church. Those who do not need Him, those who do not treasure His Father's mercy or His Spirit's peace, He also does not need, but of that He and He alone is Judge. As we pray and plan in the weeks and months and, if God grant us that much time, in the years ahead, as we prepare ourselves as a congregation to receive others in Jesus' name, let us also prepare our hearts and minds to receive Him as the One Who finds in us much to forgive and Who forgives *us* richly. ✠ Amen.

Now to Him Who love us and has freed us from our sins
by His blood, and has made of us a kingdom, priests to
Our God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with
the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. ✠

Amen.

