

Luke 7:36 – 8:3: ³⁶One of the Pharisees asked [Jesus] to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

⁴¹"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then 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 wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

^{8:1}Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

The Party Crasher

Introduction

Ever have someone crash your party? You know, where an uninvited guest shows up and eats your food and drinks your beer. You plan for so many people and now you don't have enough food to go around? One of the most famous party crashers of all is Barry Bremen, known as the Great Imposter. From 1979 till 1986, Bremen crashed professional sports arenas on many, many occasions. He twice disguised himself as an NBA All Star to shoot baskets during warm

ups at the All Star Game. He shagged flies dressed as a Yankee at a Major League Baseball All Star Game. He also played several rounds of practice golf at the U.S. Open. Beyond impersonating athletes, he has also made it to the big show as a major league umpire, a Super Bowl referee, and an NHL referee. At the 1985 Emmy Awards, he accepted an award for an absent Betty Thomas, who was actually there. And at a 1979 Dallas Cowboy game, he disguised himself as a cheerleader and managed one cheer with the gals before being tackled by security.

In today's Gospel reading, a Pharisee named Simon throws a party and invites Jesus. But an uninvited guest shows up and crashes the party—and like Barry Bremen, this woman turns everything on its ear. Thanks to this uninvited guest, Simon gets a good look at his true self, and finds out what it really means to love as God loves and to forgive as God forgives.

GOD USES THE LAW TO CRASH YOUR SIN PARTY SO YOU REPENT, AND THEN HE USES THE GOSPEL TO CRASH YOUR GUILT PARTY, SO THAT IN CHRIST'S FORGIVENESS YOU KNOW GOD'S LOVE, AND YOU LOVE AS CHRIST LOVES YOU.

I. The Woman crashes Simon's Party.

This woman who crashed Simon's party wasn't the kind of person you'd invite to one of your parties. She was an open and disreputable sinner—and everyone knew it. Simon, in self-righteous fashion, thinks to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." But there she is, crashing a party she would never be invited to.

Now it was customary at those times to recline at the dinner table for a party like this. This sinful woman comes up behind Jesus, whose feet would have been pointing away from the table, and she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment—an alabaster flask of ointment—expensive stuff.

Obviously, this woman loved Jesus—and she wasn't too proud to show it; nor did she hold back her gratitude. Knowing Simon's negative judgment of this woman, Jesus told Simon a parable: A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."

Then we find out why this woman loves Jesus: Because He has forgiven her sins. Jesus looks at the party crasher and says to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Out of gratitude for Christ's love and forgiveness, flows the woman's love for Jesus. She love didn't earn this forgiveness, for Jesus didn't say, "Your love has saved you; go in peace." He said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Faith isn't something we do for God or offer to God—it is a gift from God. Faith receives Christ's righteousness. Faith recognizes and gives thanks for all that Christ did for us—His life, His death on the cross, and His resurrection. Faith trusts that for the sake of Jesus, God forgives the humble and repentant sinner. This woman loved Jesus—she was willing to crash that party and make a fool of herself—to show Him her love—because she had been forgiven much. In His forgiveness, Jesus had taken away her guilt before God.

II. The Law crashes Simon's Party.

But in Simon's thinking, he was superior to this woman. He was a good man—she was an open and disreputable sinner. He was a Pharisee—religious insider—she was an outsider. He was important—she wasn't worthy of his hospitality. You could say, he was comfortable—even arrogant—in his sin. Ask yourself, "Did Simon really need Jesus?" The answer is, "no."

The person who truly keeps God's Law, loves—loves God and His neighbor above himself—love is the fulfillment of the Law. Did Simon love God or his neighbor? Or, did Simon love himself?

Simon didn't do even the basic things to welcome Jesus. He didn't greet Jesus, wash His feet, or anoint His head with oil—as you would do to a welcome guest. There is no love for Jesus in Simon—and there's no love for his neighbor by the way he regards this woman. Jesus uses that party-crashing woman to show Simon he didn't love because in his mind he didn't need forgiveness.

For Simon, this woman has become the hand of God's Law to crash his party of sinful self-righteousness.

The Law of God is His good and perfect Word that teaches us what love looks like. But for sinners, the Law becomes a curse as it shows us our sins—it shows us that we don't love God or neighbor as we should. The Law is there to make you uncomfortable in your sins. The Law, properly proclaimed, crashes your party of sinful self-righteousness and any idea that you are just fine without Jesus.

For example, you say love God, but you give Him your leftovers, not your firstfruits. You say love God, but you worship Him "now and then," when it's convenient. You say you love

God, but you won't forgive your neighbor as you are forgiven. You say you love God, but you don't trust His Word.

The Law crashes your party—my party—everyone's party of sinful self-righteousness.

For this woman, the Law had done its job: it showed her her sins—and it filled her with guilt. The Law actually drove her to seek God's mercy where His mercy can only be found—in Jesus. And there in Jesus she received the mercy of God in His words of absolution: “Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” In forgiveness, Jesus created faith—faith that trusted His forgiveness—Faith that rejoiced in that forgiveness—Faith that responded to that forgiveness in love.

We think of her tears as tears of sorrow, but perhaps they were tears of joy. She was already forgiven when she crashed that party—and she had much love for Jesus because she has been forgiven much—because she knew the love of a merciful God.

III. Absolution crashes the Law's Party.

What Simon wasn't was merciful—he needed the Law so he could see himself as God sees him, repent of his sins and turn to Christ for mercy and forgiveness. He needed the Law to crash his party, and the Gospel to save his soul.

The Law of God is good and wise because it crashes your party of sin and self-righteousness. It shows you that you're not better than anyone else. It shows you that you don't love as you ought. Under it's Holy Hand, the Law makes you feel the weight of God's wrath against sin—and it fills you with guilt and despair. But what God tears down, He also builds up.

By showing you God's mercy in Jesus, the Gospel crashes the Law's party of guilt and despair. While the Law shows you your lack of love, the Gospel shows you God's full and

perfect love for you in Christ. Christ's absolution, "Your sins are forgiven," announces your full and complete restoration as a child of God—you are declared righteous through your faith in Jesus.

And from the gift of absolution and faith flows the gift love, as you respond to God's grace in love and gratitude for God's grace.

Conclusion

The Law crashed Simon's self-righteous party. But did he repent? We don't know. But we see the fruit of Christ's forgiveness—faith and love—in this woman and Christ's followers: "And the twelve were with him,² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means."

Those who know the grace of God in Christ Jesus, love much and do much for God and neighbor, because they know that everyday, they are forgiven much.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.