

SM020 – The Woman who Wept at Jesus' Feet

You're listening to Stories of the Master.

The stories of Jesus have reached into the hearts of millions. They have changed people, families, and nations. Not all have loved the stories Jesus told. Not all have honored the life He lived. Some were angry with Him, the things He did and the things He said. Others were deeply moved and found hope. What will your response be?

Today on Stories of the Master, The Woman who Wept at Jesus' Feet, and it is taken from Luke 7:36-50. I hope you will follow along in your own Bible.

My name is Jonathan, and I will be your Storyteller and Teacher.

I'm so glad you're here. Gather your friends. Come close and listen. It's time for the world to hear again the stories of the Master.

And now, The Woman who Wept at Jesus' Feet.

Part 1

She stood at the edge of the crowd. She had heard about Jesus, his miracles and his teaching, and she wanted to see and hear him badly. She had so much she needed to say, so much to tell about her life, and so many questions to ask, but what chance did she have of ever getting close enough to talk with him and have him speak personally to her? Besides, she was a sinner. She had a reputation in her community and she must be discreet when in public so as not to arouse hostility from others.

She listened as Jesus spoke and even though the distance was almost too great to hear, it was as if Jesus were speaking right to her. As he spoke all her sins came up before her eyes, all her unworthiness, and all her shame and she began to cry. It had been a long time since she cried. Her heart had been hardened by the bad choices she had made in life and by the mistreatment from men and the anger of the other women in the community. It is as if her heart had been baked by the hot middle eastern sun and it was dry and unfeeling.

Yet when Jesus spoke of God's kingdom coming with love, forgiveness, mercy, healing, restoration, she felt a stirring inside. His words washed over her and penetrated deep into the soil of her heart softening it, enlivening it, nourishing it, and giving her hope. She began to cry again, but this time the tears were different because she felt different. She was feeling again. Her heart was coming alive. She sensed the love of God, the mercy of God for someone such as she was and it was all because of this man Jesus and his words spoken that day.

The sermon was over and Jesus and a group of men began to walk her way. She stood still watching, she pulled her shawl more closely across her face and body so others would not see who she was. How she longed to be close to Jesus and talk to him! They were now right next to her and she heard Simon the Pharisee say, "Jesus, what you have stated today is a hard word to receive. I would like to discuss

this more with you. Several friends are coming to my house today to discuss Moses and the Prophets. I would like you to come to my house and join us for lunch so that we can discuss these matters further.”

Jesus replied, “I accept your invitation Simon,” and with that, the men continued walking toward the house of Simon the Pharisee. The woman could not believe her good fortune. She knew where Jesus would be next - at the home of Simon the Pharisee, and if she hurried, she could be there at this house for the lunch. She would not be an invited guest. Only Simon’s guests would recline at the table, but villagers would be allowed to come into the home and stand to the side of the feasting men, watching, listening, and learning as the men discussed matters of theology. The crowd would be great in the house and there would not be room for all. She had only a moment to decide, and then the woman ran to her house to get something of great value to her and ran toward the house of Simon the Pharisee, hoping against hope that she got there before Jesus and Simon and his friends and that she would be allowed to enter.

Breathlessly she came to the street where Simon lived and in the distance she saw Simon and the others with Jesus. She was ahead of them. She walked quickly to the house of Simon and there she saw servants scurrying around with last minute preparations for the meal. Already, several other villagers were entering the house and the room where the lunch would be held. These were not invited either but they had come, men and women to watch the meal and hear the conversation between Jesus and Simon the Pharisee. Then she entered and with great relief no one recognized her or asked what she was doing there. There was such noise and busyness going on, she was able to find a place that gave her full view of the door through which Jesus would walk and the place where he and the other men would recline at table and talk.

Her heart was pounding within her and she clutched the small bottle at her breast that held her precious perfume. If only she could give this to Jesus as a gift. It is the least she could for all he had done for her. She had not even met him and yet she felt so close to him and felt such love and release that she had not felt in years.

Then the men walked through the room. First was Simon, the master of the house and then his friends. As each one walked in they were given a kiss and their feet were washed. Some were anointed with oil and one by one the Pharisees entered. The woman watched the entire proceeding and each man was honored. She also noticed something she thought a little odd, she saw Simon talking with the servants and she heard snatches of his orders to them, “When he enters the room ... do not ...” and then the voices were blotted out. Then she heard, “no water for his feet,” and “no oil.” Why was Simon saying this? What was he referring to?

Finally, Jesus entered the house and into the banqueting hall. He took two steps in and stopped. At this point servants were to come forward with water for his feet and Simon was to come forward in gracious hospitality with a kiss on the hands or the cheeks. But no one moved. The servants stood there helplessly. They looked to Simon but his stone face warned them that they were not to make a move in the direction of Jesus. And there Jesus stood, alone, shamed, and dishonored in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Had not Simon invited him? Was he not his guest? Then why was he not given the marks of

hospitality? Why was there no kiss for Jesus as the others had received? Why was there no water for his feet? Why was there no oil for his head.

Jesus had walked into a trap. He looked at Simon who smiled back at him, not a smile of friendship but a smile of one who has conquered an enemy. He looked at the other Pharisees who were already reclining at table but who refused to make eye contact with him. He looked at the servants and smiled at them as if he were saying, "It's OK. I understand." Then, Jesus walked to his place at the table and reclined.

The guests who had watched this oversight, this insult could not believe what they had just witnessed. Jesus was forced to eat with unwashed hands. He would be ceremonially unclean, yet he went forward to the meal anyway. Jesus had just been publicly insulted by one of the leading men of the village, yet he stayed and took his place at the meal with great dignity and composure.

But if the guests were surprised by what they had just seen, and if the room was now charged with anxiety as people held their breath wondering what would happen next, the woman stood in shock as she saw the humiliating treatment Jesus had endured by these men who claimed to be the representatives of God. She looked to the servants and pleaded with her eyes for them to do something for Jesus, but they could only look back with weak, helpless smiles. She looked around at the table of dignitaries. Not one of them had fulfilled the rules of hospitality. All of them had insulted Jesus. She wanted to go to each of them, shake them, slap them, scream at them for the way they had treated this man who now meant so much to her, this man who had given her hope, this man who had given her forgiveness and a new life.

Her heart pounded within her and she knew what she must do. "Very well," she said to herself, and the woman walked to the table where the men were beginning their lunch and stood silently behind the feet of Jesus.

Interlude

Hello everyone, this is Jonathan Williams, the creator of Stories of the Master where we are retelling the story of Jesus and the stories he told.

Today's story, "The Woman Who Wept at Jesus' Feet" has for a long time been one of my favorites. I think it is one of my favorites because of the deep emotion that is present within every part of the story. It is also one of my favorites as I have thought on my sin and the mercy of Jesus to me.

I hope this story will be meaningful to you and that you will tell others about it, especially as you hear the conclusion in just a few moments.

Stories of the Master is a ministry of Word of God, Speak where we teach about life change, how to build a biblical worldview, and how to connect your story to the story of God's love for the world. Stories of the Master is a retelling of the life of Christ and the stories he told. We believe the world

needs to hear it all again and we hope you will tell your friends about this ministry, that you will pray for us, and that you will even consider a gift to help us take his stories all over the world.

You can write to us at PO Box 90047 in San Antonio, TX 78209 in the U.S. That's Stories of the Master – PO Box 90047 in San Antonio, TX 78209. We would love to hear from you and learn how this ministry is blessing your life. You can also email us at this address: stories@storiesofthemaster.com and we will respond to you.

Our website, storiesofthemaster.com has many other resources available for you – books, studies, and recordings of past broadcasts. We hope you will look us up on the web at storiesofthemaster.com.

Jesus is having lunch at the home of Simon the Pharisee. He has been purposely insulted by the lack of hospitality given him, no water for his feet, no kiss for his hand, no oil for his head, but someone is there who will make up for the deficiencies of the men who have sought to humiliate Jesus. That someone is a woman, she was a sinner, and what she would do would shock all those in that room that day. Let's get back to our story.

Part 2

The woman, the sinner, the one who was stained, the one who was looked down upon by every other woman and who was shamed by men walked to Jesus. She was supposed to stay by the back wall with all the other villagers who were there to watch the meal and listen to the conversation. She felt like all eyes were upon her. "Who was this woman and why was not taking her proper place?"

She stood behind Jesus at his feet, and she thought, "if no one else will wash his feet I will." She looked around at the servants for water. She dare not speak in a meeting where men were there to discuss important matters but everyone knew what she wanted. She wanted water to wash Jesus' feet. If no one else would do it. If no servant of Simon the Pharisee would do it, then she would wash his feet! But no one moved and the woman looked in grief and anger at their hardness of heart.

Then she knelt on the floor at the feet of Jesus and burst into tears, tears for what they were doing to her master, tears for the way they had insulted the only man who had ever loved her and respected her, tears for her own sin, and tears for the mercy she had received. And as she knelt at his feet, sobbing with great sorrow over all these emotions roiling through her heart, her tears began to fall upon his feet and wet them. At last, there was water for his feet. And then the tears came even more as she realized what was happening and that now she could wash the feet of Jesus. Her sorrow had provided her with the water she needed to perform this act of honor and respect. With great gentleness she moved her hands across his feet and washed the dust away.

But now she had to dry his feet. She looked up at everyone, at the Pharisees, at the ones standing besides the wall, at the servants. She needed a towel to dry Jesus' feet. But still no one moved. "Very well," she thought. "I have come this far. I have come into the home of a Pharisee. I have walked to a place in the room where I am not supposed to be. I have let my tears fall upon the feet of this holy man Jesus and washed them with my sinful hands. I will not stop now."

And the woman did the unthinkable. She did what no one in that part of the world did in public. She let down her hair in the sight of all. Only a wife at home in the presence of her husband did such a thing. Slowly, knowing that every eye was upon her, she let down her long, beautiful hair, brought it in front of her body and stooped even lower and began to dry his feet with her hair. But the act was exhilarating! She did not care what others thought for this was the first time she had ever used any part of her body in worship and in respect to anyone! She kissed his feet with her lips – in humility, in gratitude, and in worship to God for his mercy in her life. Again and again she kissed his feet. Then the woman raised up slightly and put her hand in bosom and brought out her most precious possession, perfumed oil. She would not presume to touch Jesus' hands or his head. She stayed at his feet and anointed his feet with the oil.

The servants who watched the woman were ashamed for their lack of courage as the woman did what they should have done. The guests who were in the room were wondering what would happen next to this sinful woman who had dared to approach Jesus in the home of Simon the Pharisee. But the Pharisees who watched these events unfold in front of them recoiled in horror and revulsion as if some plague had entered the house and was threatening them. They could not believe the boldness of this sinful woman and her complete lack of modesty. But their greatest shock was that Jesus himself did nothing to the woman. He did not move. He did not protest. He did not ask the servants to remove her from the house. In fact, he seemed to be enjoying what the woman was doing.

Simon the Pharisee, with a knowing look on his face mumbled to the Pharisee next to him, "If this man were a prophet he would know who this woman is and what kind of person she is and would not allow her to touch him. He would know what a terrible sinner she is."

But Jesus turned to Simon and said, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

And Simon the Pharisee said, "Say it, teacher."

And Jesus said, "A moneylender had two men in debt to him. One man owed him 500 silver coins. The other one owed him 50 silver coins. Both men were unable to pay him their debts, and the Master, graciously forgave them both. Which of the two will love him more?"

The tables were now turned. Simon had invited Jesus to his house for lunch but his goal was to put him in his place by insulting him when he walked through his doors by not offering him water for washing, a kiss for the cheek, or oil for his head. He had set a trap for Jesus but his trap was undone by the unexpected actions of a woman and by a parable that revealed the truth for all to see and hear. Simon was now trapped and to save face he answered, "I ... suppose the one whom he forgave more."

"I suppose." Didn't he know? Of course he knew, everyone knew the answer to Jesus' simple question from his simple story, but he had a hard time admitting the truth even though it was looking at him right in the face through the eyes of a lowly, sinful woman who provided water, a towel, kisses, and anointing oil that he, as the master of the house, should have provided.

Simon grudgingly answered the question and then Jesus turned to the woman who continued to kiss the feet of Jesus in worship and anoint them with her costly perfume. He said, "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. You gave me no kiss. But she, since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with perfume."

"For this reason, I say to you Simon, that her sins, which are many have been forgiven for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

Jesus then reached down and touched her shoulders. With one hand he lifted her face and looked deep into her eyes and said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."

The Pharisees could not believe what they had just heard. As if it were not enough that Jesus would let such a woman touch him, now he was claiming to forgive her sins. Who did he think he was? But while they were choking on their lunch over what the woman did and what Jesus said, Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace."

And the sinful woman stood up, took one more look at Jesus, and walked out the door with her head held high and deep peace in her heart. ~~Her desires were fulfilled beyond her wildest imaginations. When she had heard Jesus teach earlier in the day her heart had been touched by the love of God and she felt her soul coming alive again as the forgiveness and mercy of God spread through her heart. She had longed to be close to Jesus and to thank him but she had no idea how she could get close to him.~~

~~But at the home of Simon the Pharisee, God opened a door and her worship of Jesus and honoring him has been told countless times through the ages.~~

~~And now it has been told to you?~~ I would like to ask you this question. Who in the story are you most like? There are several types of people here.

First, there are the Pharisees, self-confident, self assured, self righteous, and self absorbed. They thought they had a corner on the truth. They thought they had everything figured out. And they thought they knew better than Jesus. Simon laid a trap for him. Simon insulted him and thought that God would be pleased with the way he treated Jesus. They thought they knew the woman. They thought they knew how she should behave. They thought they knew misbehavior when they saw it, and they thought they knew that Jesus could never forgive anyone's sins. But every step of the way, they thought wrong!

It is so hard to admit one's errors when one is proud. Even when Jesus told him the simple parable he had a hard time telling Jesus the correct answer because to give him the correct answer meant that Jesus was right and he was wrong.

Are you like this man? I pray not. Because it is so hard to humble oneself before God and to admit that God is right and we are wrong. But humble yourself you must. And I pray that you will do so today.

Second, there are the servants and the bystanders. The servants have their hands tied. They can do nothing. They have received orders to do nothing for Jesus from their master Simon. Yet, the woman did

something. The woman had courage to step forward when others would not. The woman was willing to shame herself by letting down her hair but others would not even give a towel. One wonders that if a servant had stepped forward how the story might have changed. He surely would have received the wrath of Simon the Pharisee but he would have received the praise of God.

The same is true of the bystanders. They came into the luncheon area to watch the men eat and to hear their conversation. Perhaps they were curious. Perhaps they were hoping to watch Jesus do another miracle. Perhaps they wanted to hear an argument because they liked a good fight. But the woman was there among the bystanders as one who deeply loved Jesus and who had been forgiven much. Everyone heard the same message that Jesus gave. But the woman mixed the word of Jesus with faith in her heart. Her life was transformed and heart awakened to the love for which it was created.

Are you like the servants and the bystanders? Curious, wanting to see something exciting? Or afraid to act when an injustice has been done? Step out in faith! Be courageous. Worship Jesus today.

Then, there was the woman. Perhaps you identify with her the most today. Perhaps you have sinned greatly. If you will let the words of Jesus penetrate your heart, you will find your crusty, old heart strangely warmed and renewed by the power of God. You will find yourself coming alive again. You will find your heart filling with love for God. You will have courage. You will not be afraid of what others say or think about you so great will be your gratitude for the mercy of Jesus in your life.

The woman who wept at Jesus' feet. Her desires were fulfilled beyond her wildest imaginations. When she had heard Jesus teach earlier in the day her heart had been touched by the love of God and she felt her soul coming alive again as the forgiveness and mercy of God spread through her heart. She had longed to be close to Jesus and to thank him but she had no idea how she could get close to him.

But at the home of Simon the Pharisee, God opened a door and her worship of Jesus and honoring him has been told countless times through the ages.

And now it has been told to you.

Ending

Hello everyone, this is Jonathan Williams and I hope you have enjoyed today's story about the sinful woman who dared to touch Jesus and not only to touch him but also to wash his feet with her tears and dry them with her hair. One part of the story often goes overlooked – how much Jesus enjoyed what this woman was doing. While the religious people recoiled in revulsion, Jesus received her worship with joy over this sinner who had repented and found God.

And such will be his response to you, if you will come to him in humility, in gratitude, and in worship. He loves you. He has died for you, and he has risen to be your Lord. He awaits your arrival at his feet to worship.

When you do arrive at his feet, will you also let us know this good news that you have come home to God. Write us at Stories of the Master – PO Box 90047 – SA TX 78209 in the U.S. and tell us your story.

Stories of the Master is a ministry of Word of God Speak where we teach the truth of God's word for life change, a biblical worldview and to connect your story with the story of Christ's love for you. Our desire to is help people all over the world connect their personal stories to the story of Christ's love for them. Please pray for us and help us with your financial gifts to take these stories to a world that needs to hear about the Savior of mankind.

Please check out our website – storiesofthemaster.com and you can listen to today's story again, download it or purchase a CD to share with a friend. You will also find books and studies that will help you grow in your discovery of Jesus and your relationship with him.

My name is Jonathan Williams and I hope you have been blessed today and I look forward to you joining us next week for another Story of the Master. Until then, may the Master himself richly bless you.