

# Sermon Notes

St Mark's Anglican Church  
South Hurstville

**Pentecost 3**  
**17 June 2007**

**Preacher**  
**The Reverend Chris Albany**  
**Rector**

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Readings: 1 Kings 21:1-10,15-21a; Psalm 5:1-7; Galatians 2:15-21; Luke 7:36-8:3

## Making the first move – forgiven much, loving much

Think about those times in your life when you've had a falling out with someone – and we all have! Perhaps because of something you have done or said – or maybe the other has been the cause of the rupture in the relationship. Sometimes its things not done or said, that can be just as destructive – sometimes it all just seems to be a misunderstanding. Such incidents usually end with one or the other apologising and seeking to restore the relationship and there is forgiveness, reconciliation.

But sometimes that doesn't happen, the hurt is too great. One or the other feels that there is a lack of acknowledgement of hurt caused and appropriate apology, sometimes harsh words (so hard to undo) are spoken and the rift just seems to persist and widen; feelings harden and the prospect of reconciliation seems remote. The end result can be that people, family members, close friends stop talking to each other. If you've never experienced such a fundamental break in relationship yourself, I'm sure you've known others who have.

I want to suggest that the gospel passage we have just heard about the woman who anoints Jesus feet in the house of Simon, has something helpful to say to us should we find ourselves in such a situation! For it reminds me of a story, that I want to tell you, but first a little about that gospel passage. It is a reminder to us, if we need it, of how great is the grace and love of God towards us and therefore the inappropriateness of our sitting in judgement on another. The woman gets it – she knows she doesn't deserve the acceptance, love, forgiveness that she has discovered in Jesus. Luke doesn't tell us whether she has come to this realisation through a previous encounter with Jesus or whether she has just heard the way Jesus has interacted with others and heard what he has been saying – as Luke has reported in earlier chapters and realised that this good news is for her! She expresses her thanks in her extravagant and scandalous actions,

Simon hasn't got it – he gives himself away by his failure to offer Jesus the usual cultural courtesies of a host to a guest. A welcome, washing of feet, etc. Simon loves little because he isn't aware of his own need for forgiveness – his self righteousness and readiness to judge others - this woman and Jesus included – blind him to his own need for grace – freely available if only he will accept it!

Note the woman is not forgiven because of her actions, her love. The forgiveness comes first, Jesus makes that very clear – her actions show that she has experienced forgiveness, To Jesus hearers - for people today still, that can be hard to accept. That forgiveness and love is offered to us in Jesus without condition – we call it by that word I have just used – grace! Undeserved – offered even before we ask for it – without pre-conditions.

The question is how do we respond? For our response is a sign of whether we have really understood and taken on board, the reality and immensity of what God in Jesus is reaching out to offer us. Do we really know that and live it out. Frail, sinful, undeserving of acceptance and love as we so often are – for we all muck up, get it wrong, fail others and ourselves and our God – do we really understand that if we are made acceptable, forgiven, loved in Christ than we can never stand in judgement and condemnation of another? Are we able to love much, like this woman, because forgiven much!

Which brings me to my story.

Once there was a man who had fallen out with his brother – there had been great hurt and a rift had developed. So much that they has not spoken in years. The man was troubled by this and so he went to speak to his priest about it, explaining, from his perspective, something of how the rift had occurred and that whilst he wished there could be some reconciliation, he felt that it was up to his brother to make the first move and apologise for after all it was his brother who had caused the initial hurt. And that did seem to be the case from what he told the priest. She was a wise and sensitive person and in response to his question “I am right to want him to apologise first, so I can forgive him?” The priest said, “Even if what you have told me is true and accurately describes what happened, I cannot really say who is to blame for what has happened between you and your brother. It is not appropriate for me to comment on the rights and wrongs of the situation and who should be the first to act! But what I can tell you is this: Whichever one of you and your brother makes the first move and seeks to make contact and do something about bringing about a reconciliation – whichever one of you does that – that is the one of you that has the most love!”

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