**Luke 7:36-50, 8:1-3 (ESV)**  
“One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and took his place at the table. 37  And 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, 38 and 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. 39 Now 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.” 40 And 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. 42  When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” 43 Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” 44 Then 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. 45  You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46  You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” 48 And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” 50 And 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, 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.”

**“Welcoming His Feet”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. As we come together for the first joint service during these summer months. It is to welcome what we share as a dual parish, which is a unity of faith and life in Jesus Christ as Lutherans. Of course, there are many challenges for keeping the Gospel. First off, we live in a culture where people want to feel welcome. Behavioral Science and psychology show how different actions bring about different responses. It is why stores many times have someone standing ready to greet you with a smile and “Hello.” It is why communities hang up banners showing the positive acts to display to our neighbors. It is why most entering a church expect to see the same reception right from the start no exceptions.

Whatever the culture wants to try to live up to for gaining business or establishing proper etiquette towards people, the truth has come to us by baptism into Christ. We are sinners; this is what the Law repeatedly shows in this life and what makes welcoming the Gospel our highest priority. St. Paul makes it clear, “…so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.” There is a lot to work on with welcoming each other in loving service in the church. The same is also true for reaching out to those who might enter our doors. Yet, never forget the good news of Jesus made headway far more with Gentiles then the Jews. It is simply because they truly needed this Savior sent by the Father. Welcoming Christ with His service of forgiveness changes how we welcome Him and the feet of others.

The Pharisee certainly had no reason to welcome Jesus any special way. Matter a fact; he does not even give the basic courtesy when inviting him to his house. There was no washing the feet of his visitor, no kiss as an affectionate greeting, and no oil for cleansing the head. At best, he was treating Jesus as his equal, not the honored guest and especially not the Son of God come into a sinful world. The Pharisee saw himself to be law-abiding, decent, respected, loving, and successful. He had no debt to pay so no gratitude had to go out to any particular person. When the kingdom of God welcomed him in Christ, he missed God’s grace sitting right at his table. Worse of all, he did not want to see it and rejected having any need for it. Having Jesus in the home was for show and tell, but had nothing to do with Him truthfully being the Savior.

The same reception of Jesus happens half-heartedly still today. An apparent loving culture appears Christian but denies His Church the free exercise of religion. Those in churches want to appear loving too but at the expense of preaching Christ as Savior of sinners. Luther tells us, “It is bad enough, and more than bad enough, that we are wicked and are transgressors against all the Commandments of God. Yet over and above this, we add the sin of sins when we smugly reject the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins being offered to us through Christ. Believe me, this blasphemy is greater and more horrible than anyone can express” (Galatians Commentary Vol. 179). Worse than lacking love, is not being able to welcome Christ who lovingly comes by Word and Sacrament with His forgiveness.

This good news is far more than being in some kind of “loving” community. Matter a fact, the woman in our text that came to Jesus had no community. Identified as “a sinner” meant she had no socially acceptable place to be. Yet, all that changed when she learned Jesus was at table in the Pharisee’s house. The woman came already knowing He was the promised Savior of sinners. Her entrance outshined the Pharisee’s self-righteousness by unreserved love looking to Jesus. In gratitude for His forgiveness repentance poured forth more than with common courtesy, but holding up Christ as Lord at her own expense. This was true courage under these circumstances before the Pharisees, but faith does not measure the surrounding situation. It longs to hear the Word and so the Savior gladly welcomed her into His kingdom by saying, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Plenty want to change what is culturally acceptable, even make room to accommodate certain sins, but there will always be the social outcast. These are the ones all in a society can agree are the worst. We track their lives in communities for what they have done. Lock them up in prison for the vile acts they commit. Extend no love because they would only dirty up our lives. Yet, Christ comes for every sinner. His Word of forgiveness holds firm for all to repent and believe in Him. As St. Paul said, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.” This promise able to change lives in Christ is as shocking as the sinful woman bursting into the Pharisee’s home. Forgiveness can raise questions. Startle complacency. Challenge what the Law holds dear. However, the savior proclaims, “Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” Deeper the debt, the more dedicated is Christ to forgive so love can flow forth from faith in Him.

Welcoming Christ with His service of forgiveness changes how we welcome Him and the feet of others. Where the true change happens is not in the house of a Pharisee, but during Passion Week. It is there in the upper room where Jesus takes the role of servant and sacrifice. He humbles Himself by washing the feet of His disciples. He eats with them a meal of His own sacrifice Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. As we come together for the first joint service during these summer months. It is to welcome what we share as a dual parish, which is the unity of faith and life in Jesus Christ as Lutherans. Of course, there are many challenges for keeping the Gospel in our churches. First off, we live in a culture where people want to feel welcome. Behavioral Science and psychology show how different actions bring about different responses. It is why stores many times have someone standing ready to great you with a smile and a, “Hello.” It is why communities hang up banners around town showing the positive acts to display to our neighbors. It is why most entering a church expect to see the same reception right from the start no exceptions.

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Christ continues to serve this way still today. Before anyone else and above everyone else, how do we welcome Him? He washes us clean in baptism to be holy. He speaks forgiveness to our tears by the Office of His ministry. He eats with us offering His true body and blood as strength for the weary. Like the Psalmist, it is to say, “O my God, in You I trust; let me not be put to shame; let not my enemies exult over me.” Having welcomed His forgiveness for our life we are freed to serve others. Small parishes need not have a small Jesus. He healed and helped throughout all of Galilee, but it was in the home where the true miracle of forgiveness was found. This is more than a change in behavior but to rest in Christ who says, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.