

**Reflections on the message by Nolan Bradshaw, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2010**

**"The Woman Who Loved Jesus" Luke 7:36-50**

It is good to go out for a meal. It's good to be invited to someone's house. Out of the goodness of his heart, this Pharisee does it. But why did he invite Jesus? This popular preacher's words were rather close to the mark. Perhaps Simon thought that he just needed channelling. "He could be of use. He might be politically useful. If he could be controlled, he could be won over to the cause." It would be a feather in Simon's Pharisaical turban. Whatever the reason, he was breaking new ground. It would be an event to be talked about, inviting a non-Pharisee for a meal.

Don't go too far in this invitation, Simon. Jesus must have removed his sandals, as was the custom. It was customary to be greeted by the master of the house with kiss on the cheek and the words, "the Lord be with you". It was the custom for a servant to wash the feet of the honoured guests. On this occasion the servant was nowhere to be seen. It was the custom to come to a point at which the head or beard of the guest was anointed. And was the custom for a bowl of water to be brought to wash the hands before eating. What an insult to this Guest! He wasn't welcomed, or anointed with oil. He wasn't given a bowl of water to wash his hands or feet. What a carry on! Simon was patronising Jesus. Perhaps he was manufacturing this event for Jesus to be blessed by being in the house of a condescending Pharisee. Does it seem he treated this Guest with disrespect?

They all knew this woman because Nain was a small place. The text suggests that she was a prostitute. She brought with her a box of perfume or ointment. The woman taken in adultery was dragged to see Jesus. But this woman came in on her own accord. She walked into the place where Jesus was. Probably the leaders of the town were all there. Something had already happened to her. She had already become a new person. She did not come to receive salvation, perhaps she was there earlier that day when Jesus talked to the crowd, saying, "Come unto me all you who are heavy laden..." (Matthew 11:28). Perhaps she just wanted to be near this Man once more and it gave her courage to be there. This Man made her feel strong again. He gave her the courage to start again, when she should have been hiding in the shadows. This outcast had found a Friend for life, and beyond life.

Jesus eats with sinners (Luke 15:2). He is a Friend of sinners. She felt safe with Him. Something had happened to this woman. She had hope again. She would take shelter by this Man's side, in this Man's words, in this Man's promises. Would we take shelter in this Man?

The Pharisee was horrified. She brought her box of ointment. It was the only possession of any value she had, probably. She stood behind Jesus wetting His feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. With an unsuccessful attempt to stem the tears, the inevitable happened. Her tears dropped onto Jesus' feet. What could she wipe them with? Had anyone seen? She must have knelt. The cleanest thing that she had to wipe his feet was her hair. Lower and lower she bent. She wiped the tears off His feet with her hair, then kissed His feet. In love? In gratitude? She wanted to give Him reverence. Was she saying, "You're the only one who didn't turn me away". Finally she poured ointment on His feet. She gave Jesus the best she could. Will she not need the perfume in her profession? No, she had become like a new person and she intends to go back into the streets of Nain as a new person. From now on things are going to be different. She had given even her life to Jesus. "I am not going back to the dark alleys of Nain."

She was determined to see Jesus. Are we also determined to see him? This woman is being changed in front of our eyes. She is being born again. How could not affect the onlookers in the room?

At the head of the table was a scowling Pharisee. When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this, he thought, "If this man were a prophet he would know what sort of woman this was". He could have had the woman ejected, but she was safe in the presence of this Man. The Lord heard Simon's thoughts. He knows the thoughts of man (Psalm 94:11). So Jesus tells a parable, and invites Simon to reply. Careful Simon! Don't be sarcastic with this Man.

Then Jesus turned towards the woman. He didn't turn when the others saw her coming, when they looked at what she did, when they sneered at her, when He felt the teardrops on His feet, when she wiped them with her hair, when she poured perfume on His feet. After all this, then Jesus turned. He didn't turn before because He was expecting her. She was right on time. Imagine saying about the Son of God, "If he knew..."! What an event! What a brave woman! What a miracle had taken place!

Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven". He is looking at her now. "Go in peace." We can say such blessings cheaply. But not when Jesus says it. It means "Go into peace." Jesus' peace is not the peace the world gives. The woman is a new creation. Would you like the same peace? The same courage? Can you say, I will stand by this Man who will shelter me for the rest of my life. He will not thrust me away. I am not going back to my old ways of life. Let us introduce you to a Saviour.

What a night this was. Those present would never forget it. The woman will tell the tale. Jesus has the power and ability to protect you. "I give my life to you, Saviour."