

THE WOMAN IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON Luke 7:36-50

C-1

1. One of the *Pharisees* asked him to eat with him  
and he went into the Pharisee's house and *reclined*. INTRODUCTION  
And behold, there was a *woman* who was a sinner in the city.
2. And having learned, "He is dining in the Pharisee's house,"  
*bringing* an alabaster flask of *perfume*,  
and *standing* behind him at his *feet*, THE WOMAN'S ACTS  
*weeping* she began to wet his feet with her *tears*.  
And she *wiped* them with the *hair* of her head,  
and *kissed* his *feet*,  
and *anointed* them with the *perfume*.
3. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself,  
"*If this were a prophet*, he would have known who and  
what sort of woman this is who is *touching* him, for she *is a sinner*."  
And *Jesus answered* and said to him, DIALOGUE [1]  
"Simon, I have something to say to *you*."  
And *he answered*, "Teacher, speak up!"
4. And Jesus said,  
"Two debtors there were  
to a certain money lender.  
The one owed fifty denarii  
and the other five hundred. A PARABLE  
They not being able to pay,  
he freely forgave them both.
5. Which of them will love him the more?" DIALOGUE [2]  
*Simon answered*,  
"The one, I suppose, to whom he freely forgave the more."  
And *he said* to him, "You have judged rightly."
- 6 a. Then turning to the woman he said to Simon, THE WOMAN'S ACTS  
"Do you see this woman? *I entered your house!*  
b. You gave me *no water* for my *feet*,  
but she has wet my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair.  
c. You gave me *no kiss*,  
but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.  
d. You did *not anoint* my *head* with *oil*,  
but she has anointed my feet with perfume.  
e. In consequence I say to you,  
"It is evident that her many sins have already been forgiven,  
for she loved much.  
f. But he who is forgiven little,  
loves little."  
g. And he said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."  
CONCLUSION
7. Then *those* who were *reclining with him* began to say to themselves,  
"*Who is this* who *also forgives sins*?"  
And he said to the woman, "Your *faith* has *saved* you, go in *peace*."

*The Parable (Mashal) of the Creditor and the Two Debtors  
in its Setting (Nimshal) Luke 7:41-50*

- 1. A **CREDITOR** has two **DEBTORS**: [God is the creditor]  
  - a. One debtor owes 500 denarii [like the woman]
  - b. The other owes 50 denarii [like Simon]
  
- 2. The **DEBTORS** cannot pay
  
- 3. The **CREDITOR** forgives both [Jesus is the creditor]  
  - a. The 500 denarii debtor and [He forgives the *woman*]
  - b. The 50 denarii debtor. [Does he forgive Simon?]
  
- 4. The **DEBTORS** respond with love for the **CREDITOR**: [Jesus is the creditor]  
  - a. The debtor who was forgiven 500 - loves much. [like the woman]
  - b. The debtor who was forgiven 50 - loves little. [like Simon]

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Conclusion: Jesus is saying, "I have forgiven/mediated the forgiveness of this woman's sins. She has offered much love to me. This is appropriate because I am like the creditor in the parable." In the beginning of parable (#1) the **creditor** is clearly God. In #3 the **creditor** is clearly **Jesus**. (In the story Jesus says to the woman, "Your sins *have been* forgiven." The Pharisees then ask, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?") So in #3 Jesus (at least) presents himself as the mediator of the forgiveness of God. In #4, the **creditor** is again **Jesus**. Jesus accepts the grateful love of the woman and blames Simon because he has failed to serve as she served.. Thus Jesus is (at least) saying, "I am the unique representative of God to whom thanks for forgiveness received is appropriately offered." We are indebted to God for our sins ("Forgive us our *debts* [Matt 6:12]"). In some *profound sense* Jesus is here identifying himself with God. This is a parabolic form of John 10:30, "I and the Father are one."

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*Notes on Debts and Sins in the New Testament*

- 1. The Aramaic word **khoba** means both *debts* and *sins*.
  
- 2. The Lord's Prayer in Matthew uses the word *debts*. Luke has *debts* and *sins*.
  
- 3. In two parallel passages in Luke this same pair of words appears. Luke 13:2 has the word *sinners* and Luke 13:4 reads *debtors* (RSV: offenders). The Aramaic word **khoba** is clearly behind each of these words.
  
- 4. In Matt 18:23-35 a servant is forgiven a large debt by his master and then fails to forgive a fellow servant a small debt. The unforgiving servant is punished. Jesus responds, "So will also my Heavenly father do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." The remission of a *debt* is used as a parable about the forgiveness of *sin*.
  
- 5. Col. 2:13-14 uses the symbolism of the canceling of a bond to explain what has happened on the cross. That is, a certificate of indebtedness, a bond = sins canceled by the cross.

## The Theological Themes that Appear in Luke 7:36-50

C-3

1. *Forgiveness and its Effect*: The more forgiveness the believer receives *from* Jesus the more costly love he/she offers *to* Jesus.
2. *Sin*: Types of sinners are clarified. Law-keepers and law-breakers are sinners.
3. *The Cross*: Jesus offers a *costly demonstration of unexpected love* to the woman. In the process he is exposing one of the deepest levels of his saving ministry which climaxes on a cross.
4. *Anger and Grace*: Jesus' hurt (and anger) is expressed in his attack of Simon. This anger is reprocessed into grace for the woman *and for Simon*. Even Simon "is forgiven little." (Simon is dealt with very gently. He is not accused of being a great sinner like the woman.)
5. *Forgiveness, Faith, Obedience, Salvation and Peace*: These five great themes are linked in a single story. The woman is *forgiven* and *saved* (through grace) by a *faith* that is *obedience*. The result of the process of the interaction of these four themes is *peace*.
6. *Women*: The position of women is elevated. Jesus is willing to get hurt to publicly reach out in costly love to this unknown immoral woman.
7. *Prophethood*: Prophethood is clarified. Simon thinks a prophet is one who *avoids contact with sinners*. For Jesus, a prophet is one who *offers costly love to sinners*.
8. *Discipleship and the Suffering of Jesus*: Through her costly obedience, the woman enters into the Messianic suffering of God in Christ. In the process she becomes a model for discipleship.
9. *Christology*: Jesus (like the creditor in the parable) accepts thanks for forgiveness received. Jesus is at least saying, "I am the unique representative of God to whom such thanks is appropriately offered." By her actions the woman affirms that the Divine presence of God (*Shekinah*) is now among his people in the person of Jesus.
10. A *decision* is inevitable. After such a scene, the participant/reader must accept that the divine presence of God is indeed in Jesus or reject that reality and be offended by him. There is no middle ground.

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### Rhetorical Features in this "Apostolic Homily"

1. The passage falls into *seven stanzas/scenes*. (Isaiah 40-66 alone has over twenty such texts. It is a common feature of prophetic literature.)
2. These seven stanzas are *inverted*. (That is, the pattern of the material is A-B-C-D-C-B-A.) I have chosen to call this rhetorical form the *Prophetic Rhetorical Template*.
3. The "*encased parable*." The metaphor in the center is "encased" in a series of semantic envelopes. The first envelope is a conversation (#3 & #5). The second is the actions of the women (#2 & #6). The third is the introduction and the conclusion (#1 & #7).
4. The six lines in #2 exhibit *inverted parallelism*.
5. There is a *straight line* progression of six sets of *Hebrew parallelisms* in #6.