



The Beginning of Hospitality (Luke 7:36-50) Welcome to the Table pt. 2 Pastor Tim Peck

THE BIG IDEA

The beginning of Christian hospitality is welcoming Jesus into our lives. Forgiveness of our sins is the foundation of hospitality, love is the work of hospitality, and peace is the result of hospitality.

OPENING

- What meal etiquette rules did you learn growing up? Which do you still use?

DIGGING DEEPER

- Matthew, Mark, and John all contain a story that's similar to Luke 7:36-50. However, the event recounted in Matthew, Mark, and John describe a different event. According to Bible scholar Luke Timothy Johnson, "*Of some 23 possible points of contact in all four accounts, Luke agrees with the other three on only four: a woman, myrrh (perfumed oil), anointing, rebuke.*"¹ The story in Luke occurs early in Jesus' ministry, while the other story takes place just days before his arrest and crucifixion. Why do you think it is important that this story stands alone rather than being mixed up with these other stories?
- Confusion between these stories has led some people to identify the unnamed sinful woman in Luke 7 as Mary Magdalene. According to the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, "*From about the 6th century...traditions developed which tended to identify Mary Magdalene with the sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50...but there is no historical evidence on which to base such identifications.*"² This sixth century tradition led to the myth that Mary Magdalene was a reformed prostitute. This myth has been preserved through popular worship songs, the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical "Jesus Christ Superstar," and some Christian teaching. In contrast, Luke's gospel presents Mary Magdalene as one of Jesus' most faithful female followers (Luke 8:12), an eyewitness to his resurrection (Luke 23:49-56), and the first to

¹Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke, Sacra Pagina Commentary Series* (Liturgical Press, 1991).

²Raymond Collins, "Mary Magdalene" *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Yale University Press, 2008), Vol. 4, p. 578.



proclaim the resurrection to Jesus' apostles (Luke 24:10-11). Why do you think people might want to question Mary Magdalene's reputation?

- Pastor Tim said that the fact that the guests at this meal were sitting at a table suggests that this was a public banquet, not a private meal. Public banquets were often given for the purpose of debate and discussion about philosophical topics. Why is this an important detail to understand this story?
- Jesus compares our sins to a "debt" in the parable of the moneylender. Read Matthew 6:12, Romans 6:23, and Colossians 2:14. How do these verses help you understand this idea more? To whom is this debt owed? Who pays the debt?
- Jesus tells Simon that the woman's sins "have been forgiven." In the original Greek, this is in the imperfect tense, which means the action (forgiveness of her sins) happened in the past. Why is this an important factor to understanding this story?

PUTTING IT TO WORK

- If someone wanted to welcome Jesus into their lives, how would you help them do that?
- Henri Nouwen says, "*Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place.*"³ How can you create "free space" for people in your relationships?

PRAYER REQUESTS

³Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (Doubleday, 1961), p. 48.