

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JANUARY 9 – 13, 2023

Book of Luke • Jesus' Invitation to Hospitality

WELCOME TO THE TABLE

Epiphany Series
January 8 – February 19

MONDAY

Read **1 Samuel 3:10; Luke 7:36-40, 10:38-42**

Jesus clarifies the point of it all.

Jesus had been invited to the home of Simon the Pharisee, which didn't happen every day. Kudos to Simon for inviting Jesus to his home to have dinner with Him (presuming Simon's motives were pure).

A woman of that town, who led a sinful life, stood behind Jesus with an alabaster jar of perfume. Why Simon allowed the woman to be there, we don't know. Perhaps he wanted to see what Jesus would do and what the woman would do, saying something like this to himself, "This should be interesting. I know about this woman, but I would like to know more about this man Jesus."

When Simon saw the lady lavish Jesus' feet with tears, kisses and perfume, his eyes grew large, and he said to himself, *"If this man really is a prophet that people say He is, He would know what kind of woman she is and keep His distance"* (Luke 7:39 paraphrased).

Jesus replied to Simon's thoughts, saying, *"I have something to tell you, Simon."* *"Tell me, Teacher"* (v. 40 paraphrased), he said. So Jesus told him the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

It reminds us of when the young prophet-to-be Samuel heard God calling his name, Eli the priest told Samuel to reply, *“Speak, for Your servant is listening”* (1 Samuel 3:10). Both Samuel and Simon received God’s input.

It also reminds us of a story just a few chapters later in Luke. Martha invited Jesus into her home, a home she shared with her sister Mary and their brother Lazarus. While Martha was in the kitchen, Mary was listening at Jesus’ feet. Martha became upset that Mary was shirking her duties, as she saw it, and asked Jesus to redirect her to help in the kitchen. Like Simon the Pharisee, Martha had a lot on her mind. Jesus commented on that, and added, *“but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and that will not be taken away from her”* (Luke 10:42).

QUESTIONS

What is the one thing needed, the “better” thing that Mary opted for? Are you concerned about many things or only one? What is your main concern today?

PRAYERS

For His Children

As we begin a new year, pray that the Lord will continue to surround the ministry with people who have a heart for vulnerable children and young adults in Ecuador. Pray for donors, staff, board members, and church partners to be committed to the work happening at FHC and connected in new, fruitful ways. Pray they experience God’s blessings through their service and love to vulnerable children.

TUESDAY

Read **Luke 7:36-50; 18:10-14**

Little did he know.

Jesus is a guest at the home of Simon the Pharisee. And He tells a story about two people, each owing a debt they cannot pay—one, a large amount; the other, an even larger amount. The creditor forgave them both. Jesus then asked a question of His host to whom the story was spoken: *“Which of the two people, unable to pay what they owe, love their creditor more?”* Simon replied, *‘The one who was forgiven more.’* ‘Yes, you have answered correctly,’ Jesus said” (Luke 7:41-43 paraphrased).

Simon the Pharisee thinks he is a good judge of character, but little does he know that the Judge of all the universe is his guest seated in his living room/dining room. And this Judge does not look at the outward appearance, but on the heart.

Now Jesus points out the lady at His feet and recounts how she treated Him in an extravagantly hospitable way, comparing it to the relatively inhospitable way Simon had treated Him upon His arrival. And turning to the woman, Jesus declares that all of her sins are forgiven. He concludes His story to Simon with, *“Whoever has been forgiven little loves little”* (v. 47b).

Will Simon get the point of the story? Who among us have not been tempted to consider ourselves better (to one degree or another) than people less fortunate than ourselves? Does Simon really have less of a debt than this woman? Have not all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23)?

Jesus also brings this point home later in Luke as He tells the "Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector." Both were praying in the temple. The Pharisee, confident of his own righteousness, prayed, *"God, I thank You that I am not like other people ... even like this tax collector."* The tax-collector prayed, *"God, have mercy on me, a sinner."* Jesus said, *"This man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted"* (Luke 18:11-14).

QUESTIONS

What are some practical ways to overcome the temptation to judge other people wrongly? How can we learn to see others through God's eyes of love and mercy?

PRAYERS

For His Children

Join us in praying for the children who are waiting to be reunified with their biological families or welcomed into a "forever family" through adoption. We are praying to see more reunifications and adoptions this year. This process can be challenging for families and children as they adjust and start the bonding process, so please pray in preparation.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Matthew 23:25-26; Luke 7:36-50; Ephesians 4:29**

Be clean inside out.

How did Jesus stay clean on His treks with His disciples around Galilee and beyond? Did He take baths, showers or what? And how did He get clean, fresh clothes?

Jesus was and is the center of a longstanding controversy of what “clean” means. The story in Luke 7:36-50 illustrates this contrast. If we mix metaphors, we know that a little light will banish darkness, but a little poison will infect an entire water supply. Also, a little leaven (“sin”) will spoil the whole lump of dough.

The Pharisees of Jesus’ day had a hands-off, touch-not the unclean thing or person policy. This contrasted with Jesus’ touching lepers, for example, and cleansing them of their leprosy. This “policy difference” is essentially what got Jesus killed, culminating after His cleansing of the Temple.

Even today, the strictest Jewish sects strive to be “pure” and steer clear of impure things and unclean people, considering it part of their devotion to God to have such aversions toward *goyim* (Gentile, non-Jewish) things and people.

The Bible says “to come apart from them, and touch not the unclean thing” (2 Corinthians 6:17), but Jesus also pointed out the hollowness of washing the outside of the cup while leaving the inside dirty (Matthew 23:25-26).

Cleanliness is a virtue. In fact, it is the 11th Scout Law: A scout is clean. What does it mean to be clean? It means he (or she) is clean in thoughts, speech and actions. A Scout tells the truth and doesn't cheat, having a clear conscience.

Simon the Pharisee in our story wanted to remain “clean” in the eyes of society and his fellow religious leaders, not associating with unclean people like the woman at the feet of Jesus in Simon's home. All she wanted was to be made clean. She recognized Jesus as the only One who could do this for her.

In gratitude for Jesus having forgiven her of all her sins and making her all clean on the inside (clean of her sinful past), she went to great lengths to show Jesus her gratitude and love. She loved much, because she had been forgiven much.

QUESTIONS

How are we going to get clean on the inside, and stay that way?

Hint: consider 1 John 1:9.

PRAYERS

For His Children

The past several years have been challenging for the *tías* and staff navigating Covid, protests, and constant changes. Pray for them to experience peace, security and safety while working at the homes and within their own families. We long for them to feel valued and appreciated for their commitment and sacrifice over the past several years.

THURSDAY

Read **Luke 7:36-50; Matthew 22:2-14; Titus 2:14-3:6**

In Jesus we have enough to celebrate for an eternal lifetime.

If Jesus' Father was a poker player (which He is not), then Jesus is the hand He played—He “put all His chips” on His Son, “going all in” on Jesus. He sent Jesus to save us from our sins because He loves us (John 3:16-17; Romans 8:32).

“[He] gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good” (Titus 2:14). Then *“He poured out [the Holy Spirit] on us generously through Jesus Christ, our Savior”* (Titus 3:6), so we could respond appropriately in gratitude. Jesus' Father's going all in on us reveals His complete commitment and total confidence in His project—people whom He created, people to redeem (including us and others).

Jesus is the Bible's cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-5): He is the Inviter, the Invitation, the Host, the Groom, the Banquet itself.

1. Jesus the Host invites us to come and learn from Him (Matthew 11:28-30).
2. The invitation is to all who will come to Jesus (Revelation 22:17). Whenever and wherever Jesus is lifted up, He draws people to Him (John 12:32).

3. Jesus the Groom cherishes and nourishes us—the Church, His Bride (Ephesians 5:29).
4. Jesus is the Banquet (John 6:57).
5. In the Luke 7 story, Jesus ministers to (1) Simon the Pharisee, who needs to hear Jesus and to see Jesus, himself, and others through God's eyes of love, and (2) the lady, who needs to hear Jesus' words confirming the truth of Jesus' gospel of complete forgiveness in Himself.

The lady comes to Jesus' banquet adorned in gratitude, love, and admiration. She demonstrates how to be the proper hostess at Jesus' banquet by washing His feet with her tears, kissing His feet with her lips, and anointing His feet with sweet smelling oil. Simon the Pharisee comes to Jesus' banquet dressed improperly with judgment for the lady and with doubts about Jesus. He has a lot to learn. Fortunately, Jesus is teaching both him and us—we, too, have much to learn.

QUESTIONS

How do you see Jesus? What drew you to Jesus? What form did His invitation to you take?

PRAYERS

For His Children

Join us in praying for the 46 children and young adults at FHC. We pray that this year will bring opportunities for growth and the love of a family for each individual in our care. Pray for them to experience joy, laughter and adventure. Pray for them to feel deeply cared for through their healing, pain, and hardships. And most importantly, pray for them to know and experience the Lord's great love for them.

FRIDAY

Read **Luke 7:36-50**

God initiates in love; we respond in gratitude.

In sending His only Son to earth, God removed something priceless from heaven. He emptied heaven of its most precious Resident. Bruce Larson writes, “That kind of love is the most powerful force in the world.”

After His death and resurrection, Jesus stormed the gates of hell. And He opened the gates of heaven that we may enter the kingdom of His Father and live there with Him. He went “all in” on us, both for us and to satisfy God’s holy justice.

We come to Jesus as we are, but for certain classes of people (those other than us), we ask them to clean up their act first. Our rationale: we do this to preserve God’s honor. What?! We are not His savior; Jesus is our Savior (and theirs).

The unnamed woman in Luke 7 models for us what an appropriate response to God’s incredible initiative looks like. She was overcome with thankfulness. In gratitude she fell prostrate at His feet. She was “all in,” overwhelmed with love and devotion, exuding enthusiasm. This is what true worship looks like. We can learn much from her.

Simon, the Pharisee, could learn much from her example as well. An appropriate response on his part might have been, “I’m so sorry. I didn’t know what I was thinking. I didn’t know what I was doing. I have so much to learn. I need to hang around You more, listening and learning.”

We respond to His love by being thankful. We show gratitude for His hospitality in the kingdom of God by being hospitable toward our neighbors, our friends, our relatives, and others. Every one of us has a lot to learn.

As part of Christ’s Body, the Church, we all have a part to play. Since He is the Head of His Church, He will show each of us what our part is. And while we’re doing our part, or even waiting for His direction, we can encourage others by showing gratitude for what they do—thereby living out the “law of Christ.”

QUESTIONS

How can we respond to God’s unconditional, non-transactional (agápē) love toward us? How can we love others in that same unconditional, non-transactional way?

PRAYERS

For His Children

We have been connecting with adoption agencies over the past year to better advocate for the children waiting to be adopted at FHC. Pray for the opportunity to strengthen existing relationships with adoption agencies in the US and connection to new agencies. Also pray for additional agencies to offer services for adoptions from Ecuador.

Sources

- Bruce Larson, *The Communicator's Commentary: Luke* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1983), page 14.

