

Prayer: 1st John 4:8 – “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

1st John 4:16 – “And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”

We continue the paraphrased biblical account this week with Jesus at the home of a self-righteous, self-important religious leader. A sinful woman, coming to Jesus as he reclined at dinner, breached social protocol and violated ‘religious rules’ by touching Him.

Luke 7:37 – When the woman touched Jesus by kissing His feet and wiping her tears from them with her hair, the host, a religious leader in the Pharisee sect named Simon, looked at Jesus with revulsion. Simon thought to himself that if Jesus was in fact who He was proclaimed to be, He would not allow Himself to become defiled by allowing this woman to touch Him. Jesus, reading Simon’s thoughts, gives a parable of love and forgiveness. Simon responds by agreeing that those who are forgiven much, love much. Jesus then rebukes Simon for the lack of common hospitality towards Him and blesses the woman for her love and faith. You have to get this scene to understand how powerfully the woman experienced Jesus’ love. This woman was a social outcast. For her to touch a Jewish Rabbi was unthinkable. Rather than rebuke her, Jesus defends her and restores her. This is the powerful love of Jesus in action.

Luke 13:10-17 – Jesus is teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath, which is similar to us being in church on Sunday. A woman, crippled and bent over, is there. She has been in this condition for eighteen years. Jesus calls her to the front and heals her. The church leadership rejoices, right? No, they are indignant and the synagogue leader rebukes Jesus in front of everyone for “working’ on [Sunday]. Jesus responds to the leader, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you water your livestock on [Sunday]? Should not this woman whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on a [Sunday]?” The Biblical account calls the leadership ‘his opponents,’ and they are humiliated at the rebuke.

Do you begin to see the pattern of love here? How Jesus *always* defends those who need Him, those who *want* Him – the weak – the beaten – the broken.

Where are you in all this? We must ask God to show us how we relate to others, and not only in their suffering and how we can help, but in the ones who attack us, lie about us, use us, deceive and take from us and how we may forgive them. It is easier to play the wounded victim and desire vengeance when wronged. I know - I have done it plenty. Now, listen to me here – God calls upon us to put a new mindset into place with others and if we choose to do this, we will be tested in it.

Part of the process of renewing our minds is when we are placed in the fire of conflict and actually have to use what we are learning. This makes the lesson stick, proves the reality of the change that is taking place in us.

We must stand strong in the face of all that resists us in this process, for we will be resisted!