

The Right Time for Tears

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Theme: Forgiveness and grief are always close together. When we can shift from anger and resentment to grief, the ability to seek and extend forgiveness gets easier.

Luke 7:36-50

36 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

50 Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Things that jump out at me:

- Simon is named, the woman is not, yet Luke goes into detail describing her, and what she does. Maybe Luke wants to make it easier for us to put ourselves in her place.
- Jesus praises Simon for his ability to judge
- But Jesus honors the woman for her ability to love.

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The choice is between being Hard-Hearted or Broken Hearted

Forgiveness and grief belong together: The gift of being broken-hearted

Grief is the healthy response to sin – Ours’ and Others’

Luke says this woman “had lived a sinful life in that town.” She knew she had done bad things. And she grieved over it.

< **Brene Brown video** >

There’s a lot here, but here’s a couple ideas I want to highlight.

Guilt = I did something bad

Shame = I am bad

Shame is correlated to all kinds of self-destructive behavior, while Guilt is inversely correlated with those things. Acknowledging when we have done wrong is not comfortable or pleasant. But is “adaptive” as Brown says. Jesus calls it faith that saves.

If the woman had stayed locked in shame, I imagine she would not have dared approach this Pharisee’s table. But she moved past shame to grief.

We resist grief and choose other paths instead: The burden on being hard-hearted

Judgement

“If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of person she is.” Judgment. Cynicism.

Hard-heartedness – or defensiveness

If I can put the attention on other’s people’s failures, I won’t have to deal with my own. Which is just another shame coping mechanism.

What keeps us from living in the circle of forgiveness? from getting our sins forgiven? From hearing the pronouncement, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace”? Being blind to the debt we owe. Minimizing our own failures while highlight the faults of others. It was only a few verses earlier – in 6:37 and following, that Jesus compares such people as those who want to help get the speck out their neighbor’s eye when they have a beam in their own. When Jesus says to Simon, “You have judged correctly,” he is being ironic. It’s as if he’s saying – clearly you know HOW to judge a situation when you are on the outside, looking at things objectively. But what about when you inside it?

How can we move from shame and judgement to grief and forgiveness?

Practice intimacy with God

The more aware of how great God is, and how good Jesus is, the more aware of I am not!

God’s Greatness

Sons of Korah Psalm 93

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-PYpyaGXYc>

Practice confession in the moment

Say “I made a mistake” early and often.

Practice empathy toward others – even and especially the Hard-Hearted.

The more we do these two things, the more aware we are not only our debts, but also the debts others carry around. Show me a person locked in fear, blame, judgment, and resentment, I will show a person who is carrying a heavy burden. Jesus didn't shame Simon. He was compassionate toward him – speaking the truth in love. Our ability to see other people's “stuff” and to be compassionate towards them, to not take it personally, will be a critical way for us to be salt and light in the coming weeks and months.

Put shame in a petri dish, says Brown, and it will grow exponentially in the presence of secrecy, silence, and judgement. If you put the same amount of shame into a petri dish and douse it with empathy, it can't survive.

Why this matters right now in light of Covid-19?

This is huge wake up call to humanity, a time for contrition, humility, compassion and broken-heartedness.

Brown: If we are going to find our way back to each other, the vulnerability is going to be that path

Broken heartedness leads to Open-heartedness

God breaks the heart again and again until it stays open.

—Hazrat Inayat Khan