**The Gospel of Luke**

**Witness to the Gentiles - #18**

**Jesus and John the Baptist; Pharisee Plans a Trap**

**Luke 7:24-29, 31-35, 36-50**

**Class Dinner Wednesday, May 6, 6:30 p.m. –** We will have our “end of class” carry-in dinner next week in the E91 Community Room. All are welcome! We will have sign-up sheets in class this week, and we’ll also coordinate by email ([rlwcom@aol.com](mailto:rlwcom@aol.com)). And not to worry, wife Pam is planning this, not me. We do look so forward to seeing all!

**Next Semester –** Lord willing, George will continue teaching this Wednesday class at E91 next fall, most likely beginning in early September, with The Gospel of Luke.

**Jesus’s testimony to John the Baptist**

***Luke 7:24****When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?* ***25****What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts.* ***26****What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.* ***27****This is he of whom it is written,*

*“‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face,*

*who will prepare your way before you.’*

***28****“I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”* ***29****(When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John).*

**Notes and Studies**

1. The whole purpose of this section is Jesus’ own attitude to the curiosity of the crowd. In a moderate rebuke Jesus asks four questions:
   1. What did you go out into the wilderness to see?

b. A reed shaken by the wind? -Something that is not steady.)

c.  What then did you go out to see? -Just addressing their perception.

d. A man dressed in soft clothing? -Is John worth the trouble of coming to see him?

2. Was Jesus sarcastic? Maybe. But there is the religious curiosity everywhere and at every time.

**A Note from Philemon**

**On Visitors to the Monastery of St. Macarius**

“Some heard about the monastery and come to see the ancient churches. Their main interest is in the buildings. So, some of the monks tell something about the buildings and give food and water. Some are fascinated by our way of life. They ask the usual questions: Why did you not marry? How long age have you been here? How do you spend your time? Some of the monks answer in a humble way. But those who come seeking to know about the Lord Jesus, we welcome them and give them attention. There will be always people who have different reasons and we can’t meet all their desires, but those who are seeking the Lord we welcome them. I speak to all about the Lord, but only those who have love for Christ Jesus will listen to me.”

3. Jesus appeals to the Scriptures (Verses 26-28) and the words of Jesus highly praise John. His words are quoted from Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1.

1. John is not just a prophet but a great prophet, to the extent that “*among those born of women none is greater than John*” (verse 28) because John is a “precursor” or the “forerunner” before Jesus.
2. John will see the beginning of the Gospel.
3. This makes anyone who will believe in Jesus is greater because the comparison is between the status of the two covenants. The one that is waning away and the second of the coming of the kingdom.

**Verse 29 -** It is very important to notice that the sinners are declaring that God is “just.” Here “just” maintained its Hebrew origin, which means to do what is right, what is true and has no legal meaning at all.

The sinners, when they heard Jesus talking about John the Baptist as a prophet and he, to get them into the kingdom, baptized them, they recognized the justice of God. This justice brings the broken to life.

**Luke 7:31-35 - Jesus’ description of his own generation**

***31****“To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like?* ***32****They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another,*

*“‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;*

*we sang a requiem sad song, and you did not weep.’*

***33 “****For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’* ***34****The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’* ***35****Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.”*

**Studies and Notes**

1. In verses 31-32 our Lord speaks of his observation of the people who are just curious without commitment. Like children who lack maturity and are just fooling around in a market.
2. They form a kind of a choir and shout to each other: “we piped for you for a common dance in wedding parties but you did not dance.”
3. We sang a requiem sad song, and you did not weep. Still, up to this time in Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, at funerals the family will hire women who chant sad songs to incite the mourners and the grievers to weep and cry out loud.

**Verse 35** is essential for our understanding of justice. Commonly this verse is translated as “*wisdom indeed is vindicated (or justified) by all her children*.” The Greek word ***edikaiothe*** is linked to the major subject of “justification,” as in, wisdom proved to be “Right.” Right about what? Here our Lord says that this generation saw two different forms of ministry, the Baptist’s and His. Both were criticized by their generation, so wisdom is vindicated by doing what wisdom can do; only here children can declare this.

**Luke 7:36-50 – A Pharisee manufactures a trap for Jesus**

**The scene**

***36****One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.*

**The coming of the prostitute**

***37****And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,* ***38****and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.*

**The tests**

***39****Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.”*

**Dialogue to clear up the air**

***40****And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”*

**A Parable rather than a confrontation**

***41****“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.* ***42****When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?”* ***43****Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.”*

**How the parable was applied and how Jesus was treated**

***44****Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.* ***45****You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.* ***46****You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.*

**The parable is applied to the woman**

***47****Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”* ***48****And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”* ***49****Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?”* ***50****And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*

**Notes and Studies: The scene**

1. We can assume that the woman heard of Jesus, and even heard of the invitation. She was known, “a sinner in the city” is the way to say she was in the old trade of prostitution.
2. Jesus was reclining almost round a law table like the shape of the letter U.
3. Normally, a basin of water would have been brought in by the servants or by the head of the house if he wanted to honor his guest for washing the hands and also the feet of his guests. This custom was mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud (Berakot 42-43).
4. The woman was there from the beginning according to the words of verse 37.

**The coming of the prostitute**

1. It is possible that the woman came to offer Jesus a welcome and for this reason she brought with her an “alabaster flask of ointment.” Alabaster is made of soft stone and it was known at that time according to the Roman writer Pliny the Elder that alabaster flasks are the best for preserving ointments. (Natural history, 13:3, 19)
2. She began to cry. Very difficult to guess what was happing inside her:
3. She has heard the gospel of forgiveness that was uncommon to the spirit and the letter of Judaism. George Foot Moore defined repentance in Rabbinic Judaism as: contrition of heart and a confession of sin and offering a satisfaction for reparation as indispensable conditions of divine forgiveness (*Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 1971, volume 1, 514). She has none of these to show and there is no confession of sin in the whole account, nor there is a possibility to
4. It was known that Jesus not only receive sinners but also eats with them and was even questioned, “*why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners*” (Luke 5:30)
5. She must have expected to be received and welcomed by Jesus. This is obvious from the fact of bringing the perfume with her.
6. She saw in him what she missed seeing and could not see in her clients.
7. Deep sense of loss and deep sadness always can overcome any heart that never knew true love. Nothing is more painful for a woman than having someone who devours her body without love.

**The anointing**

1. As Jesus was reclining it was easy to reach his feet rather than his hands.
2. She must have noticed how Jesus was treated in no welcoming manner for no obvious reason.
3. Did this supper include law-keepers only? This is very hard to prove. Were there only Pharisees? Maybe, but what is more clear is that Simon wanted to test Jesus.
4. The Woman stood behind Jesus and her “tears began to moisten his feet” (verse 38), then she kissed his feet.

**The kiss in the Bible: first the OT**

1. The kiss is common in Bible lands. It is one way of greeting. It is on in the cheek, the forehead, the beard, the hands and the feet. Intimate love is on the lips.
2. We have in the Old Testament Hebrew ***naschaq***, "to kiss," used for:
3. Relatives, as the kiss of a brother in Songs 8:1, "*Oh that you were as my brother .... I would kiss you; yea, and none would judgment me."* Also in Genesis 7:26, 27 (Isaac and Jacob); 29:11 (Jacob and Rachel); 33:4 (Esau and Jacob); 45:15 (Joseph and his brethren); 48:10 (Jacob and Joseph's sons); 50:1 (Joseph and his father); Exod 4:27 (Aaron and Moses); 18:7 (Moses and Jethro, united with obeisance); Ruth 1:9, 14 (Naomi and her daughters-in-law, a farewell); 2 Sam 14:33 (David and Absalom); 1 Kings 19:20 (Elisha and his parents, farewell kiss).
4. A kiss expressing friendship and affection; compare 1 Sam 20:41 (David and Jonathan); 2 Sam 15:5 (Absalom and those who came to him); 19:39; Prov 27:6 "the kisses (***neshiqah***) of an enemy"
5. A kiss of love; compare Songs 1:2, "*Let him kiss me with the kisses (****neshiqah****) of his mouth*"; Prov 7:13 (kiss of the feigned love of "the strange woman").
6. A kiss of respect or homage, perhaps; compare 1 Sam 10:1 (Samuel after anointing David king); Psalm 2:12.
7. A kiss of idolatrous practices; compare 1 Kings 19:18; Hosea 13:2 (compare 8:5,6; 10:5); Job 31:27(probably, "kissing the hand to the sun or moon"), compare 31:26,27.

**Second, The kiss in the NT**

In the NT we have "to kiss" meaning "to be friendly," and ***kataphileo***, meaning"to kiss thoroughly," or "to be very friendly." The first appears in Matthew 26:48; Mark 14:44; and Luke 22:47, of the kiss with which Judas betrayed his Lord. This was probably meant to be taken as an expression of special regard, which is expressed by the ***kataphileo*** of Matthew 26:49 and Mark 14:45. The same word is used of the woman who kissed the feet of Christ (Luke 7:38,45); of the father's greeting of the returning prodigal (Luke 15:20); and of the farewell to Paul of the Ephesian Christians (Acts 20:37). ***Philema***, "a kiss" or "a mark of friendship" is used by our Lord as that which Simon omitted to give him (which may refer to ordinary hospitality), but which the woman gave so impressively (Luke 7:45); of the kiss of Judas (Luke 22:48); and of the "holy kiss" wherewith Christians greeted each other, which, according to the general usage we have seen, would be as the members of one family in the Lord, or as specially united in holy love (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14).

**‘Kiss” in Early Church History: In the Liturgy**

“Then the Deacon cries aloud, ‘Receive one another; and let us kiss one another.’ Think not that this kiss is of the same character with those given in public by common friends. It is not such: but this kiss blends souls one with another, and courts entire forgiveness for them. The kiss therefore is the sign that our souls are mingled together, and banish all remembrance of wrongs. For this cause Christ said, *If thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there remembers that thy brother has ought against time, leave there you gift upon the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer your gift*. The kiss therefore is reconciliation, and for this reason holy: as the blessed Paul somewhere cried, saying, *Greet one another with a holy kiss*; and Peter, *with a kiss of charity*.

- St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lecture 23 on the Sacred Liturgy and Communion*

**Kiss for the newly baptized**

In ancient times the newly baptized, immediately after baptism, were embraced by the congregation, greeted and kissed. The best ancient witness is John Chrysostom who gave this instruction to the congregation:

"As soon as they come forth from those sacred waters, all who are present embrace them, greet them, kiss them, rejoice with them, and congratulate them, because those who were heretofore slaves and captives have suddenly become free men and sons and have been invited to the royal table." – Chrysostom,  *Baptismal Instruction 2:27*

**Why the kiss?**

“Since we have made our bodies to be for Christ, let us join souls with one another on that occasion by means of the kiss, so that our gathering becomes like the gathering of the apostles when, because all believed, there was one heart and one soul. Bound together in this fashion, we ought to approach the sacred mysteries. Hear what Christ says, ‘If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, go forth to be reconciled to your brother and then offer your gift.’ He did not say: ‘First offer’; He said: ‘First be reconciled and then offer.’ When the gift is set before us, let us, therefore, first become reconciled with one another and then proceed to the sacrifice.

“But there can be another mystical meaning of the kiss. The Holy Spirit has made us temples of Christ. Therefore, when we kiss each other's mouths, we are kissing the entrance of the temple. Let no one, therefore, do this with a wicked conscience, with a mind that festers beneath the surface. For the kiss is a holy thing. St. Paul says: ‘Greet one another with a holy kiss.’” - John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instruction 11: 32, 33, 34*

**Ambrose explained kissing in a different way: It is a covenant of love**

“What shall I say of the kiss, which is a symbol of affection and love? Doves exchange kisses, but what is this compared to the charm of a kiss of a human being in which the note of friendliness and kindliness is conspicuous, and where is expressed the indubitable sense of our sincerest affection?

“Hence the Lord condemning His betrayer as a species of monstrosity says: 'Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?' That is to say, changing the emblem of love into a sign of betrayal and to a revelation of unfaithfulness, are you employing this pledge of peace for the purpose of cruelty? And thus by the oracular voice of God reproof is given to him who by the bestial conjunction of lips bestows a sentence of death rather than a covenant of love.

“It is worthy of note that it is given to men alone to express with their lips what they feel in their hearts. Hence we make evident our tacit mental reflections with the speech that flows from our lips. What is the mouth of man but an avenue for discourse, a fount of disputation, a reception hall for words, a repository of the will?”

- St. Ambrose, *Six days of Creation 6:68*.

"Soul also desires many kisses of the Word, so that she may be enlightened with the light of the knowledge of God. For this is the kiss of the Word. I mean the light of holy knowledge. God the Word kisses us, when He enlightens our heart and man's very governing faculty with the spirit of the knowledge of God. The soul that has received this gift exults and rejoices in the pledge of wedded love and says, 'I opened my mouth and panted.' For it is with the kiss that lovers cleave to each other and gain possession of the sweetness of grace that is within, so to speak. Through such a kiss the soul cleaves to God the Word, and through the kiss the spirit of him who kisses is poured into the soul, just as those who kiss are not satisfied to touch lightly with their lips but appear to be pouring their spirit into each other.”

- St. Ambrose, *On the Soul 3:8*

**Was Jesus defiled by the kiss of the woman (Luke 7:38)?**

1. Three improper and acceptable behaviors the woman did: to loose her hair, to kiss the feet, and to wipe her tears with her hair. All three were abhorred in the Babylonian Talmud (Berakpt, 14a).

2. It is well known that spittle or the salvia of the mouth of a woman is defilement (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 47a).

3. All these made Simon ask the question: if Jesus was a prophet he would not have allowed her to violate the laws of purity.

**Dialogue to clear up the air**

1. Pharisaic criticism of Jesus accepting sinners appeared early in Luke (5:30).
2. Jesus wanted to teach Simon and the crowd around the table. Jesus accepted what the woman did. He clears himself and the woman by this parable.

**The Parable**

1. Sin and debt has one name in Aramaic, ***khoba***, and this word appeared in the Aramaic text of the Lords’ prayer in Matthew 6:12: debt means what was given and was lost and thus it became a debt. What was lost was the divine image. It was given to us as a gift. Luke used the same word for sinners as debtors in Luke 11:4.
2. In Matthew 18:23-35 the wicked slave was forgiven large debts by his master, but when he did not forgive a small debt of his fellow slave, he was punished (v35)
3. Our debt was not “paid” by Jesus on the cross, but was cancelled:

*“… and you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.” (Col 2:13-14)*

**The Creditor and the Debtors**

1. In Matt 18:23-35, the master is God. Here, in Luke 7:36-40, Jesus hints to Simon and also to the woman.
2. Simon and the woman can’t pay their debt.
3. Two debtors, the first has a debt of 500, the second has only 50. The second debt is 1/10 of the first debt.

**Who is the Creditor?**

1. Certainly is not God but Jesus because he told the woman your sins are forgiven.
2. What can Simon say? “*I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And Jesus said to him, “you have judged rightly.”* Then Jesus declares himself God: “*Your sins are forgiven.*” And this is followed by “*And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’”*

**The reaction of the invitees**

1. Luke 7:49 “Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this, who even forgives sins?’”

2. Jesus did not win those who were there, but Jesus gained at least one person: the prostitute and made Simon think about his attitude.

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