

## Not Good Enough

Luke 7:36-50

April 15, 2018

Thea loved Wreck-it-Ralph for a while. This was one of those movies where she watched it over and over again; I bet I've seen it at least 20 times or it's been in the background while I was emptying the dishwasher, folding laundry and so many other household tasks. The movie focusses around a video game called Wreck-It-Ralph. Ralph's the bad guy and every game he tries to collapse the building where all the little workers live. The good guy and your job in the video game is to rebuild the tower before he takes it down. And this is the story of what happens at the end of the day in the arcade when the video games go to sleep. Ralph is a normal person and doesn't like to be the bad guy. I like this movie for kids because it features a strong, big male character who just wants to have friends, pie and a home. And in this scene, it shows a very vulnerable Ralph not feeling good enough in the world that he lives in. He's shunned by all possible friends, his house doesn't live up to any standards, his job is a disaster and everyone around him tells him what he can't do.

That's really the eternal struggle isn't it. Overcoming what the world says about us and finding true contentment. To not judge our home based upon others, to move beyond our past or histories to be something better, to forgive those that judge us all around and to forget the anger that so easily can swell up when we are shunned, abused or hurt.

### **WE WANT TO BE WORTHY.**

***I will never be good and that's not bad.*** (Wreck-It-Ralph)

That's exactly where we find ourselves this morning. Taking a true look at who we are, not based upon everyone else around us, or our pasts or what others say we can and can not do. But who does Jesus say we are. This morning's scripture comes from Luke 7:36-50. In the middle of Jesus' ministry, word is spreading around the area about who he is. He's been healing and preaching and now people are starting to flock to him. Because he is also getting a reputation as a very good rabbi, high society wants to invite him over for dinner. You would be talked about in a very good way by your friends and the elite if you had a famous rabbi over and so in this scripture, Simon the Pharisee, a high up religious leader invites Jesus over for a meal. But this meal doesn't quite turn out the way Simon expects. READ Luke 7:36-50.

***One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. <sup>37</sup> When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. <sup>38</sup> Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. <sup>39</sup> When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!" <sup>40</sup> Then Jesus answered his thoughts. "Simon," he said to the Pharisee, "I have something to say to you." "Go ahead, Teacher," Simon replied. <sup>41</sup> Then Jesus told him this story: "A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. <sup>42</sup> But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?" <sup>43</sup> Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he***

**canceled the larger debt." "That's right," Jesus said. <sup>44</sup> Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. <sup>47</sup> "I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." <sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven." <sup>49</sup> The men at the table said among themselves, "Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?" <sup>50</sup> And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."**

Houses of the wealthy in that day were built around a courtyard and if you were very wealthy, with a fountain of water in the courtyard. Simon, being a Pharisee, was high up in the Jewish faith and had a very good income. He would have been respected by the other religious leaders and the Romans who were ruling the land. So, Simon invites Jesus over for dinner. We don't quite know why; some commentators speculate it is because Simon wanted to one up not only his neighbors by having Jesus over, but by one upping Jesus as well. In Luke, we see Jesus trying to be trapped by the Pharisees in miniscule details of the Law. If Jesus answered wrong to their questions, then they figured they could discredit him among the people who help Jesus in very high regard. Jesus is invited into Simon's home and as was the custom, they would have eaten in that courtyard at a low table. In the Ancient Near East, when you ate dinner, you sat on a pillow and your feet reclined behind you. Cleanliness laws were very important, and feet were considered unclean. Sandals in that day were merely a strip of leather for bottom tied around the foot and ankle, you can imagine in the dusty climate what a person's feet might look like. You basically hid those at dinner by sticking them behind you.

Because Jesus was a rabbi, Simon would have been required by custom to allow the poor and other people to come into the courtyard to hear Jesus preach and to eat the scraps left from dinner. This is where the woman enters the picture. Now right off the bat, we learn some very valuable information. ***When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. <sup>38</sup> Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping.*** That immoral woman. That's translated in other versions as sinful. Tradition has her defined as a 'woman of the night.' And most likely she would have been a member of the world's oldest profession. Later she is depicted with her hair down; in that society, a woman never let her hair down except in the confines of her own bedroom, which also leads us to the conclusion of how she earned her money. Either way, the NIV translates it very well to indicate her life, "A woman living a sinful life." And here is this woman, who by custom is allowed to come to the feast to hear the rabbi and get something to eat, has the audacity to get close to Jesus and then even kneels beside him at his feet weeping.

Just imagine this scene for a moment – this is a very formal, fancy dinner. This is at one of the wealthiest, successful men in town's homes. This isn't your everyday ranch house. This is on the fancy street, uptown Hershey going towards Palmyra with all the fancy Victorians and here comes the local prostitute. Custom allows her to be there, but can you imagine what everyone else at the table was thinking when she gets so close to Jesus and then begins to wash his feet with her tears. Entirely unacceptable.

She has been judged by society as not good enough. For whatever reason that led her to it, her job is immoral. She's been shunned by the rest of the community for years, she lives on the edge of society and everybody has something bad to say about her. Now I know at this point, you may be wondering what this woman and you have in common. We live in an awesome township, most of us like our jobs or we're happily retired and we aren't shunned by our community. And yet, remember Wreck it Ralph, sometimes we all just don't feel good enough. We don't feel like we can go one more day, or we are welcome here because of, you fill in the blanks, or if people and God really knew about those skeletons in the closet... Here's the thing, while the rest of the world is judging the woman around the table, only Jesus truly sees her. In fact, Simon thinks exactly what many of us would if we saw this woman. **"If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!"** And yet, Jesus never judges this woman. He doesn't throw her out of the banquet, he doesn't shove his feet up underneath him to get them away from her. Instead, he graciously receives her beautiful gift. And that is exactly how Jesus waits to greet each and every one of us. He doesn't review our past with a checklist, he doesn't look scornfully upon who we were/are, he doesn't judge us because whatever. Instead, he welcomes us just as he welcomed this woman of the night thousands of years ago.

#### **JESUS DECLARES WE ARE WORTHY.**

**"A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. <sup>42</sup> But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?"** (Luke 7:41-42 NLT)

Our role is simply to take the opportunity. This woman didn't let what anyone else said about her stop her from going to Jesus. She didn't let her station in life, or her terrible job interrupt her. She went to him and offered everything she had. That alabaster jar of oil, it was worn around her neck. In that day, it would have been the only thing of value in her life. That last vestige of worth. And instead of selling it to elevate herself or get herself a good house for the week, instead she offers it to Jesus. She takes that oil and washes Jesus' feet. She offers everything she had to her Savior. And that is exactly what Jesus wants for our lives. You see, Simon sat back and watched this entire scene play out and he judged this woman. All he could see was a woman who didn't live a good life, who didn't have the perfect family and wasn't welcome at the table. When the world judges us. When we look in the mirror and see only age lines or one extra pinch of fat, Jesus sees who we really are. When we look at our pasts and our regrets overwhelm, Jesus welcomes us with open arms. When our families only remember who we were, like Simon only saw her by her immorality ... Jesus knows exactly who God created.

That's the absolute trouble living in this world, there is always something else to compare ourselves too. And like Simon, we want to look down on the other instead of seeing exactly who God created. I see it in my daughter at school. When one of her little friends isn't feeling good enough, they will put someone else down or take joy in the other boy being sent outside the classroom that day. That's Simon saying **"If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!"** ... And really, isn't that so easily us. Did you see what so and so wore. Can you believe they would live there? Have you heard that they are having marital problems? Do you know how she used to make her money? ... But

Jesus puts no class on any of that. In response to Simon and his judging and ours in our classifications, Jesus tells a story to teach us all about the Kingdom of God.

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Jesus knows who we are, and he still welcomes us into the Kingdom and he still forgives all of our debts. That's the glory of the Kingdom of God. Sometimes we feel like the woman. We look at ourselves and just think to our core how disastrous a day or time. We see the flaws and only the flaws. We carry the baggage of the past. Or we even judge someone else and point a finger knowing all the while that there are four fingers pointing back at us.

But with Jesus there isn't finger pointing. In the Kingdom of God there is no concept that we aren't good enough. Instead, the veil has been ripped from his very presence. That's exactly what we celebrated over Holy Week and Easter that because of Jesus' absolute undying or dying love for us, we are truly loved and absolutely in his presence. That no matter where we've been, who we've been with, what we've done or not done. Who we've put down or stepped on in the process. What we've thought. Our addiction, our debt, our sin or our skeletons, we are absolutely and wholeheartedly forgiven.

Now earlier I asked you to imagine the scene with a prostitute walking into a feast and washing Jesus' feet with her tears and last bottle of oil. Instead, when Jesus offers her forgiveness at the end of this passage, can you imagine how she left that place. Jesus says, ***"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*** Now imagine Jesus, the Son of God, King of Kings, Prince of Peace looking wholeheartedly at you and saying, knowing who you've been and what you've done, "Your sins are forgiven." Imagine the joy that would flood your soul. Imagine the elation and weight that would be lifted off your shoulders. Imagine how you would respond. Would you go tearing out of that place telling everyone the joy you experienced? Would you just silently walk away, breathing the deepest sigh of relief? Would you stop, pull up in awe and leave with a smile that went from ear to ear?

**GO IN PEACE.**

***"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*** (Luke 7:50 NLT)

While the scripture doesn't say it, I know without a doubt that that woman left that feast with a changed life. She was and is a child of God. She is forgiven, no matter where she'd been. And her elation, well allow that to be yours this morning. Because he indeed offers that to you. As you go, how will your life embrace that difference this week?