

JESUS: HEALER FOR THE STIGMATIZED

Open

In Middle Eastern cultures, extending hospitality is obligatory. People follow formal codes of conduct. What is the value of extending hospitality in your native culture? What codes of conduct are hosts expected to practice?

Context

Israel's religious leaders believed God only cared about those who obeyed his laws. When Jesus extended love and acceptance to "tax collectors and sinners," they bitterly complained (Lk. 5:30; 7:31-34). Jesus responded by telling them he came to help people who knew they were sick: "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Lk. 5:31-32). Jesus did not declare the religious leaders healthy, but pointed out that they saw themselves that way.

Read Luke 7:36-50 (NIV)

^{7:36} When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸ 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 people 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 forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

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

"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—as her great love has shown. But whoever 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."

Discuss

1. Traditional Middle Eastern village meals were often held in an outdoor courtyard and were observable to uninvited villagers. How does Simon receive Jesus into his home? What does the woman offer Jesus that Simon fails to provide?
2. How does Simon react to Jesus' acceptance of the woman's actions? How might you have reacted?
3. In verse 40, the phrase "I have something to say to you," is an expression that introduces direct speech that the listener may not want to hear. How does Jesus urge Simon to reconsider his views?
4. What does Jesus say to the woman (vv. 48, 50)? Why does his proclamation surprise the others (v. 49)?

Reflect

Our story's "sinful woman" shows love, gentleness, humility, gratefulness, and selflessness toward Jesus. However, the respected religious leader Simon views her with contempt and Jesus with indifference.

- How are you like or unlike Simon and the woman in our story? How might your attitudes reflect your spiritual condition?
- Who are the "stigmatized" in our society today? How are they typically seen and treated? Does this story of the sinful woman and Jesus affect how you view and treat them? Why or why not?

Pray

Sit in silence and listen to Jesus' words. Confess any judgmental attitudes. Express your love for Jesus with praise and thanks.

