

LUKE 7:36-50
VALUES

Treasure

I have a box with some items in it, a sort of treasure chest; I need some children to come to discover what's in my treasure chest and then the congregation will vote on which thing is the most valuable!

1. £50 note
2. gold watch
3. Car keys (and car to go with it!)
4. my Camera
5. A Cassette
6. Millionaire starter kit

Now the congregation will vote on which of these do you think I would want to keep most. Which is Jim's most valuable possession?

The real answer is the cassette tape; it looks a bit old and scruffy and we can hardly find a machine to play it on now, but it is recording of music that my son has written! It is not the only one, but it is a recording of the first time one of the pieces he had written was played in public.

What is treasure? Not all treasure is money or gold! Some things are more important to us than money: faith in Jesus; the people we love; the love that God shows us – some of these are more important than all the money in the world.

Jesus came to show us how much He loves us and that He cares for us and that He came to help us understand what is important in life. He died on a cross and that seems to be worth nothing, as if He failed, but by His love, by His giving of Himself He has given us lots of blessings, lots of good things; lots of treasure! He showed some of this to the people that He met and in a moment we're going to hear a story of one of these people.

Perfume fills the air

Imagine yourself in the room. You are invited to a meal with your friend Simon; he told you that Jesus is coming so you're excited to meet so special a man; you've heard a lot about Him and want to meet Him. We sit down round the table and the meal begins and there is a bit of chat about the weather – "it's been a hot day; I'm glad to get inside where it's cooler, to get my feet washed, to get rid of the dust!" We talk about other things: about the Romans and the amount of tax we have to pay; last week's church service and how many people were there; the work that's being done on the roads to make them better; there are all kinds of things to talk about.

The room goes totally silent; a woman has come in off the street; people could do that then. Most people in the room know her; they know that she has done lots of bad things in her life. They're not sure that they want her in the room, but nobody says a word. We're watching her to see what she will do. She's carrying something; it looks like a jar; what's she going to do? She's heading straight for Jesus; surely He will know what she's like; He knows everything and He must know that she's a bad woman; will He tell her to go away?

No! He's not saying a word. She's just broken the jar and the smell of perfume fills the air; the jar was full of perfume, and she's broken it. She's also crying and her tears are going all over Jesus' feet; His feet are getting wet, but she's wiping the water away with her hair! Now she's pouring the perfume on his feet! What is going on here? Why does He not stop her and tell her to go away; He's a good man and she's a bad woman! When He does speak to her, Jesus says "*Your sins are forgiven..... Your faith has saved you; go in peace.*"

Her life has changed. She has learned that God loves her and forgives her bad life and because God loves and forgives her she comes to Jesus to pour perfume on His feet to say thank you. She comes to show her love for Jesus by pouring this perfume on His feet; her tears show that she is both sorry for her bad life and glad that Jesus forgives her sins and she says thank you by pouring perfume on His feet.

By singing songs, by praying, by living our lives in the right way, we say thank you to Jesus for loving us and caring for us. Jesus loves us, forgives us, helps us, cares for us, answers our prayers – and we say thank you.

East and West

Which way is East? Which way is West? This is the east wall of the Church building; this is the west wall. Tell me somewhere to go East? Portobello. And somewhere to go West? Balerno. Somewhere further away? East – Russia, China, Japan; West – USA, Canada, Peru. You can keep going East or West and keep going and going and going. If you go North, you can only go so far before have to go over the top and start to come South again, but East and West, we can keep going indefinitely. Going East or West never comes to an end; they are always opposite directions.

"How far has the Lord taken our sins from us? Farther than the distance from east to west!" (Psalm 103:12) Imagine: I'm standing at the west wall of the Church and all my sins and faults and bad habits and wrong choices and times when I've turned away from God – all of that is a big bundle in my arms and Jesus takes that bundle and moves it over to the East wall. I'm not holding it any more and I have a sense of relief; it was heavy, but Jesus has moved it from one side of the church building to the other and I'm not carrying it anymore. That's fine! But then imagine that I've gone West, to Balerno say and I'm carrying that bundle with me and Jesus has come and has taken that bundle and left it at Portobello; now I can't even see it, it is out of sight! He has taken it away. Now imagine that I've gone to Canada carrying that bundle and Jesus has come and taken that bundle away from me and left it in China: it is now thousands of miles away; I can't see it any more and I don't even know where it is and I have no chance of finding it!

The woman with the perfume jar had been forgiven; her faults and mistakes were all wiped away by Jesus; they were gone and she was free and she was delighted. She couldn't understand why Jesus should do this, but she knew that He had; so she said "thank you, Jesus, for loving me". Of all the blessings that God has for us, the one above all the others is forgiveness; it is where all the others start. We have not lived our lives perfectly; we will not live our lives perfectly; we will get things wrong, we will mess things up, we will make mistakes, but Jesus says to us "Your sins are forgiven." When He died on the cross, He took that bundle from our arms and took it away; He took it away so far that we'll never find it again; He took it away so that it is gone completely and we need not be afraid! We are free! We rejoice!

The most valuable thing the woman possessed was her alabaster jar of perfume. It was special to her. But she broke it and gave it to Jesus because He had given her something more valuable, something she treasured more – forgiveness and faith. Paul said that there were things in his life that he once thought were important, but he now realized that the best treasure of all was knowing Jesus. There is nothing more important, nothing more valuable, nothing better than knowing Jesus. Lots of things are important to us in life; lots of things matter to us, but best of all is knowing Jesus; because in knowing Jesus we have all the other blessings that God wants to give us: forgiveness, peace, hope, love, joy, grace. Which is most important to you?