

**Sunday Update**  
**6<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

**Luke 7:36-50**

*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 money-lender. 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 towards 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.'*

There was a disturbing piece on Monday's BBC Scotland News about human trafficking. This is a subject that we don't talk about much except a mention in our prayers for others from time to time as we pray for people and groups trying to bring it to an end. We think of this as an issue in places like Cambodia where children are trafficked into the Bangkok brothels as their parents are offered money that will help them deal with their poverty. But this news item was about Scotland: "more than 80 women and girls were brought into Scotland this year as victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation already this year." The police consider this number to be an under-estimate. All of this is happening despite the Covid travel restrictions and is big business for organised crime. "Home Office figures show that 214 victims between the ages of 15 and 35 arrived in Scotland in 2019 from Vietnam alone." "One victim was sold in a city centre street in Glasgow for around £10,000."

This is the dark side of our society. We prefer not to know about it, perhaps; we pretend that these things don't exist in Scotland, but the evidence tells us otherwise. This is business that goes on in the dark, so often hidden, so much of it out of sight. Maybe we prefer it that way, then we don't have to think about it too much. But consider what it must be like for these 214 people brought to Scotland last year from Vietnam: they are living in the dark, kept out of sight, hidden away to do the work for which they were brought here. They are prisoners, slaves even. They have no freedom to do as they please; they are the property of other people! Those who work to help these women are running a risk to their own safety as they try to intervene and bring healing and recovery to those who are living in the dark.

I write all of this because most commentators on today's story from Luke chapter 7 will say that the woman in that story has been a prostitute. She had been living on the dark side of town, hidden away

perhaps; certainly, she would be avoided on the streets by all the upright people of the town. But the background to this story is a woman coming out of the darkness into the light; if she had used that language, she might well have said that "Jesus is the light of my life!" She comes into the room where Jesus is having dinner with Simon, the Pharisee – that was nothing unusual; houses were much more open then than ours, and it was not unknown for people to wander in off the street to take part in the dinner-time conversation. She came into the house and interrupted dinner by taking her most prized possession, a bottle of expensive perfume oil and breaking it over Jesus' feet, wiping his feet with her hair as the tears rolled down. It was an act of sheer devotion, of extravagance, to someone who had saved her life. She wanted to say "thank you" to the light of her life.

Simon wasn't so sure. This raised questions in his mind about Jesus. *"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."* (verse 39) He obviously disapproved of the woman and her past lifestyle; the Pharisee in him could never condone what she had been, what she had done. Now he has questions about Jesus because Jesus is letting this woman touch Him, cry over him and pour perfume over him. The smell of the perfume would be filling the house by now, but all that this was doing for Simon was stoking the fire of indignation in his heart; Jesus was going down in his estimation! So Jesus told Simon a little story about 2 men who owed money, one more than the other; they both had their debts written off. *"Now which of them will love him more?"* The obvious answer is the one who had the bigger debt cancelled and Simon can't miss that point. Jesus contrasts the way Simon treated Him when He came to dinner with the woman's behaviour. Which of them loves Jesus more?

The language of darkness and light is not used in this story, but the story is all about a woman who lived in the darkness of sin, a prisoner to her lifestyle, being set free, forgiven her sins and brought to live in the light of forgiveness and love. Her life was transformed by Jesus; we don't know how or when; we don't know if it was an encounter that Jesus knew about or something that had happened in a crowd. Whatever had happened, this woman has a new life; her faith has saved her and this love and devotion to Jesus is a sign of her forgiveness, not the cause of it. *"Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you; go in peace."* (verses 48,50) For Jesus, there was grace for both Simon and the woman: Simon's heart appeared closed, full of suspicion, while the woman's heart was wide open, glad to receive all that Jesus wanted to give her.

Forgiveness is a tricky gift. The Creed invites us to say "I believe in the forgiveness of sins" and we say that with confidence; it is a general statement of Bible truth and we're happy with that. God forgives sins! But to say "I believe God forgives my sins" is altogether a different proposition; that becomes a personal declaration of faith. There's a psychology behind these words that make them hard for us to say and even harder to admit and accept. Sure, there needs to be genuine repentance, acknowledging our sin, faults and mistakes, and the willingness to change our ways; having done that, we should be able to enjoy the freedom and delight of "I believe God forgives my sins!" Are we frightened of being presumptuous? Are we concerned that we might be wrong? Or do we still harbour the lingering notion that God doesn't really forgive us until we've proved ourselves to be good people! That's not the gospel; the good news is that Jesus forgives sins and does so on the basis of His death on the cross and on that alone. We don't need to prove ourselves to Him before He forgives!

Joy, delight and devotion are 3 words at the heart of today's story. There has been lots of devotion to be seen in 2020 by lots of people devoted to caring for our society. There has not been too much joy and delight! Yet all 3 of these emotions are the result of Jesus being the light of one woman's life. Darkness will touch our lives in different ways; there will be sin, faults and mistakes in all of our lives,

just as in hers; we will be afraid and anxious about different things; there are aspects of all of our lives that we will want to hide from other people and not talk about them. Darkness is still around in our world and it will invade our souls too from time to time. We're being invited to "share the light" this Christmas; we can do that in all sorts of ways, but today's challenge is to enjoy the light and to be able to say "Jesus is the light of my life!"

*Prayer: Father, thank you for the love, joy and devotion of the woman in today's story; thank you for her response to Jesus, that He had turned her life from darkness into light; thank you that He was the light of her life. Make Jesus the light of our lives, O Lord; fill us with joy, delight and devotion because Jesus forgives us our sins; help us to walk in the light of the Lord.*

*Day by day, dear Lord of you*

*Three things I pray:*

*To see you more clearly,*

*To love you more dearly,*

*To follow you more nearly,*

*Day by day.*

Please take time during the week to pray for the people referred to in these topics:

- For victims of human trafficking and slavery across the world; for those who live in Edinburgh, forced to be here by those who "own" and control them; Lord, set them free and bring them from darkness into light; may they find Jesus and His love.
- For those organisations and individuals who work to set victims of trafficking free and who work to try to bring this whole activity to an end; who put their lives at risk when they put themselves in the way of organised crime; for CHO in Cambodia involved in this work.
- For effects of lockdown again, new measures and their impact; pray that they work to curb spread of Covid, let numbers go down again and people be safe; let our society be open again and let us be free from fear and anxiety. For the plans centred on Christmas, that the nation will stay safe and people will respect the need to keep other, more vulnerable, people safe.
- NHS staff as the numbers in hospital start to climb again; for care home staff such as Lorimer House, those caring in the community – God keep them safe.
- For the vaccine, giving thanks that it is becoming available; for wise use of the first doses, given to people in greatest need across the world.
- For the way we and others behave with regard to Covid, to be careful and not reckless; for people to be wise in the way we behave, to observe social distancing and to take notice of people who may be weaker and more vulnerable.
- Those still working from home – what does the future look like? Is this the way they will do their work from now on? Others deeply wishing they were back in an office; some facing a long prospect of this continuing into 2021; may they be healthy in body, mind and spirit.
- People whose hearts and minds are feeling "shut-in"; some coming to the end of furlough, going back to work; others having lost their job and feeling a lack of purpose in life; people for whom the physical lockdown is affecting their mental health and sense of well-being and freedom. For victims of domestic violence, with nowhere to escape to.
- Our community, caring for vulnerable people, helping those in need, for resilience and strength.
- Our political leaders, trying to make difficult decisions in the right way.
- For one another, sustaining our faith when there is nothing of the outward life of the church.
- People who are weak and vulnerable today, those who mourn, those who are sick, those who are isolated and lonely; those in hospital; those who are still shielding; pray for people you know by name.

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love; go and have a listen. (Some of the links look a bit different this week, but they should all work as usual!)

Make way, make way	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aICQ7fb0hEA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aICQ7fb0hEA</a>
People look East	<a href="#">CAROL OF THE ADVENT-PEOPLE, LOOK EAST - YouTube</a>
From heaven you came	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VeQrWmvCms">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VeQrWmvCms</a>
The race that long in darkness pined	<a href="#">The Race That Long in Darkness Pined - YouTube</a>
We are marching in the light of God	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SOWN0_0lrk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SOWN0_0lrk</a>

Remember the prayer e-mail line at [prayerigpc@gmail.com](mailto:prayerigpc@gmail.com)

#### Some other resources:

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the “sermons” tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – [www.igpc.org.uk](http://www.igpc.org.uk)
- If you have a smartphone, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)
- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#

**DAILY BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS** The next issue of “EVERY DAY WITH JESUS” Booklet for November and December 2020 is now available and please contact Ian Aitken for a copy. Also, new issues of the “WORD FOR TODAY” Booklet and “WORD 4u2TODAY” Booklet for Young People for November and December 2020 and January 2021 and “OUR DAILY BREAD” for December 2020 and January and February 2021 are also available and please contact Michael Merriman for a copy.. Let the Bible feed you.

**Communion:** this Sunday’s service will include the celebration of communion; please bring some bread to the service and some wine, or juice or water, if you want to take part in that part of worship.

#### Christmas Events:

**Service for Remembering** on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December at 3pm; a quiet time for reflection with music, readings and prayers for people who have been bereaved.

**Family Carol Service** on Christmas Eve at 6.30pm; bring a tea-light to bring some sparkle to Christmas Eve as we hear our favourite carols and find hope in the coming of Jesus.

**Christmas Day Service** for all the family at 10.30am; bring a present to the service; let’s rejoice in the coming of Jesus to the world to bring light and joy.

All of these services will take place on Zoom: here is the link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83064379290?pwd=UUx4QmRJZ1hhdHp3VnpCbkpjcllxZz09>

**Bring some sparkle to Christmas:**

**The Star:** download a star from [www.jgpc.org.uk](http://www.jgpc.org.uk) and colour it in, then place it in your window; when you're walking through the community see how many stars you can find; Christmas is not cancelled!

**The Pebble:** find a pebble and draw a character from the nativity story, then place the stone on the steps at the front door of the church; let's see what we can create there to remind the world that Christmas is not cancelled.

**The Nativity Trail:** some members of the nativity cast have been let loose in the shops and businesses in Juniper Green; see if you can find them; there is a guide to download on the church website.

**#CommunityChristmas**



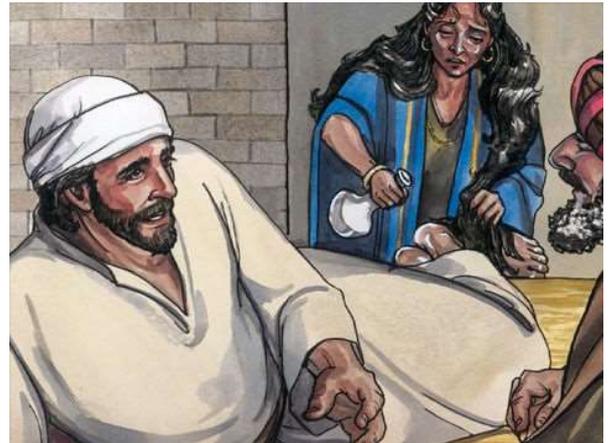
## Make way

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

### Prepare yourself...

Today is the second Sunday of Advent. This second candle represents peace. You may want to light a candle in your home as you say this prayer together, then leave it lit as you do the rest of the activities together. (Remember to blow it out at the end!)

Lord Jesus,  
call us to a quiet place,  
an open space within our hearts  
to be with you.  
Amen.



### Play together...

Play a "guess the smell" game. Find items around the house then ask others to close their eyes and try to guess what they are smelling. Are they good or bad smells?!

### Question...



If someone was coming to your home, how would you prepare? How would you welcome them and make them comfortable?

### Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in Luke 7:36-50. You can read them in a Bible or find them here: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+7%3A36-50&version=GNT>

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage.

You can watch a video of the story here: [Jesus and the sinful woman](#)





## Talk together...

Jesus visited the home of Simon the Pharisee. Pharisees were Jewish leaders who liked to obey the rules. Sometimes they followed the rules so much that they forgot to think about God. The rules became more important than God, and more important than other people. They didn't value people who didn't obey the rules like they did.

- How do you think Simon should have welcomed Jesus into his home? What should he have done? (have a look at verse 44-46 for clues!)
- Why do you think the woman was there when she hadn't been invited and wasn't liked by Simon and the other Pharisees?
- The Bible says the woman "lived a sinful life", what does that mean?
- What do you think happened after Jesus' forgave the woman?
- What differences can you see between Simon and Jesus? What about between Simon and the woman?

Simon thought it was the woman who needed forgiveness, Jesus taught him that he needed forgiveness too. We all need forgiveness. How do we receive forgiveness?

- How do you welcome Jesus into your life day by day?

## Praise together...



"Adore" by Chris Tomlin:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pa-kaUWSbvo>

## Pray together...

Worship is about giving Jesus our all, giving him everything. Jesus pointed out that Simon had not done that, yet the woman had given all that she had in response to Jesus' love. We can come to Jesus any time, no matter what is going on in our lives. No matter what we have done, Jesus wants us to come. We can come to Jesus with our worries and concerns and he will give us his peace. He wants to bless us. Spend time sharing any worries you have and take them to Jesus in prayer.

## Make together...

What do you think it would have smelled like in Simon's house after the woman poured a whole jar of perfume on Jesus' feet?

Try making your own perfume. You can find lots of ways to do that online ([Here](#) for example!) or get creative and make your own blend! You could use herbs, flowers, fruit, essential oils to create something unique.

## Do something...

Take turns washing each other's feet. You don't have to use your tears or your hair but how could you show the person that you care for them? Could you make them smell nice?

In Jesus' day they would have worn sandals and walked along dusty roads. They would have had very dirty feet which is why they always washed them on entering someone's home. Do you think you would have liked to wash their feet?