

A sermon from June 12, 2016

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A sermon given on June 12, 2016 based on Luke 7: 38-8:3 and 2 Samuel 11: 26-12:10, 13-15

In the past week or two many women have been on my mind. Women in very different places in their lives.

- Some women who are powerful and strong.
- Other women who are suffering and struggling.
- Women in all kinds of life circumstances and yet, women who have struck a chord with me.

1) In the past 10 days I have had two scheduled meeting with two Seattle City Council women to talk about funding SHARE and getting our homeless shelter back in our building. (please click on to read more)

While one of the meetings was canceled, with the promise of being rescheduled - we did meet with Councilperson Sally Bagshaw. I was impressed with her leadership, commitment and the depth of her caring and concern for those who face homelessness.

2)

Another woman who has been on my mind may have been on yours as well. This past week a letter was made public. It was the letter written and read in court by the woman at the center of the Stanford rape case. How many of you read it online? As you probably know, she read her letter to her attacker as they both sat in court. It was extremely brave, powerful, intelligent and articulate, and gave a voice and identity to a woman who had been denied one.

Here is just one brief paragraph that highlights her voice, the voice of a survivor:

"In newspapers my name was "unconscious intoxicated woman", ten syllables, and nothing more than that. For a while, I believed that that was all I was. I had to force myself to relearn my real name, my identity. To relearn that this is not all that I am. That I am not just a drunk victim at a frat party found behind a dumpster, while you are the All- American swimmer at a top university, innocent until proven guilty, with so much at stake. I am a human being who has been irreversibly hurt, my life was put on hold for over a year, waiting to figure out if I was worth something."

1)

This leads me to another woman, who has been in the news. Another woman in quite a different situation. Hilary Clinton. Now, no matter your politics, you have to admit that an historical event took place when a woman, for the first time in our countries history, secured the Presidential nomination of a major political party. This is what a friend of my posted online about how this event affected her,

"My daughter will not remember a world before there was a woman candidate for president. She will not have known a world before an African-American President. In all the fears I often carry for this world, these two beautiful things are true. And I am thankful."

2)

Two of the other women who have been on my mind this week are Nicole and Alex. Our two high school graduates whom we celebrate today. As they graduate, they end one chapter of their lives and, full of promise, enter into another one. We couldn't be more proud of these daughters of our congregation and we rejoice with you at your bright and promising future.

3)

The last women I want to mention are the ones in our scripture passages this morning.

Both of them are not named. From our Old Testament reading the woman is only referred to as "the wife of Uriah." We know that this is Bathsheba. Bathsheba who has been much slandered over the years as a temptress and a wanton woman. But in reality, Bathsheba has much in common with the survivor of the Stanford rape case.

When the God-ordained king and your husband's military commander sends for you to sleep with him, you DO NOT have a choice in the matter. Bathsheba's horror continues when she discovers she's pregnant and King David has her husband murdered to hide his crime.

In the reading we heard today the prophet Nathan comes to David and says to him: "God sees what you have done. God sees the death of Uriah and the rape of Bathsheba and God will not be silent."

God sees Bathsheba. And she matters to God.

The woman in our gospel reading is not named either. Instead she is referred to "a woman in the city, who was a sinner." Like Bathsheba, this unnamed woman has been much slandered over the years. Folks assume that she MUST be a prostitute or an adulterer – after all if she's a woman her sin MUST be sexual. (Please hear the sarcasm in my voice.) This woman, upon learning that Jesus was eating at the home of Simon the Pharisee, buys an alabaster jar of ointment and goes to the house. She approaches Jesus, weeping and bathes his feet with her tears, dry's them with her hair and processes to kiss her feet and anoint them with oil.

Now, of course, this causes quite a stir and Simon the Pharisee thinks to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner."

Jesus uses this as an opportunity to talk about forgiveness and how this unnamed woman understands forgiveness in a way that Simon the Pharisee, and others like him, never will.

"Then turning toward the woman, Jesus said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. 45You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. 46You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." 48Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

It is no accident that Jesus starts off by saying to Simon, "Do you see this woman?" Because he knows that Simon does not, does not truly see this woman. Not as a person of worth. Not as someone who has value in that society. And certainly not as someone who matters to God.

Jesus says, "Do you see this woman?"

Jesus does see her. Truly sees her. Not as a prostitute. Not as an adulteress. Not as a victim. He sees her as a beloved child of God.

God sees all of the women that I have mentioned this morning, for they all matter to God. And more than that, they are all seen by God as beloved.

Just as YOU are.

I'm talking to Nicole & Alex, but I'm also talking to young girls in our congregation: to Naya, Kacey and Zoe. And to Britt and Marie and Stella.

But really I'm also talking to the young boys in our congregation: to Spencer and Zach. And to Adam, Henry, Nataile and Trayton.

Ok, I'll admit it, I'm talking to all of you.

God sees all of you and regards you as beloved, special and precious.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Regardless of your gender, your sexual orientation, (I'm looking at you, Orlando!), your ethnicity, your age, your income, your education, your mental health status, how you dress, how you perform in school. Anything.

God sees you. You matter. You have worth. God loves you. And you are beloved in God's sight.

Yep, it's true, God loves all types of folks. Always has and always will. God loves all types of folks, everyone as a matter of fact. Even folks that aren't Jewish or Christian. Gasp. Can you imagine?

May we remember that God is not limited by our small ideas and narrow ways.

May we remember that God loves all, even, especially, the unnamed, forgotten and marginalized.

And may we remember that we are dear to the heart of God and beloved in God's sight. Amen