

Secrets to Bringing Life Into Dead Places

Note: This is the second of a two-part article. For part one, [click here](#).

In Luke 7, there is a story of a sinful woman who is forgiven. The story illustrates a passionate worship and devotion of Jesus.

Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

So he said, "Teacher, say it."

"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"

Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Then He turned

to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (Luke 7:36-50, NKJV).

The sinful woman is probably, but we can't be certain, Mary Magdalene, as Luke 8:2 mentions her just after this story. Mary comes uninvited, and pours an alabaster flask of fragrant oil on Jesus' feet. She lets her hair down, using her hair to wipe his feet of the oil.

Understand how scandalous this was, for it was shameful for women at that time to let their hair down. Despite the judgment of Simon and others in the room, and contrary to cultural norms, she displays a passionate worship of Jesus.

Simon the Pharisee thinks to himself that Jesus can't be a prophet; for Jesus should know this woman's character. Keep in mind that it was also not acceptable for a teacher to be close to women or those considered sinners at the time.

But Simon is the one with the poor hospitality and lack of devotion to Jesus. In the culture of that day, one would greet the person with a kiss, provide a basin of water in which to wash the feet, and provide olive oil to anoint the hair and

freshen up. Simon didn't have much love for Jesus, let alone common courtesy. Anglican scholar N.T. Wright makes this assertion regarding Simon:

He is the one who is guilty of poor hospitality—almost as much of a social blunder as the woman's letting down of her hair. The Pharisee has never come to terms with the depths of his own heart, and so doesn't appreciate God's generous love when it sits in person at his own table. For Luke, true faith is what happens when someone looks at Jesus and discovers God's forgiveness; and the sign and proof of this faith is love.

This woman, whom I will assume is Mary, is a worshipper at heart. Why? She appreciates God's generous love for her, and she isn't ashamed to display her love to Jesus because she has been forgiven. She has discovered God's love and forgiveness, and the proof of her faith is a passionate love shown toward Jesus. She overcomes shame and religious judgment because she embraces God's love and peace. She is willing, publicly, to display worship and devotion of Jesus because of the forgiveness and salvation she has received.

Luke further writes in Luke 8:1-3:

Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

Again, we don't know for certain, but it seems most probable that Mary Magdalene is the woman in Luke 7. What we read is that Mary wouldn't leave Jesus' presence. Mary had received

healing and deliverance from the Lord, and she is grateful for her forgiveness and freedom in Christ. Mary, who is just like many of us, starts her relationship with Jesus from a place of brokenness and need.

For many, the journey of intimacy and fulfillment with Jesus begins from brokenness and desperation. As we journey with God, He invites us to deeper levels of relationship based upon love and desire for Him, not simply our need. To grow in our understanding of the depths of God, it requires intimate knowledge of Him that only develops through spending time with Him.

The intentional pursuit of knowing God as a friend moves us beyond superficial worship and relationship into a realm of God's presence that transcends earthly understanding and living. We begin to live and move and have our being as one with Him!

Mary and these other women traveled and ministered with Jesus. Their worship was demonstrated in being with Him, loving His presence and by helping to spread the Good News of the kingdom. True worshippers carry the heart of revival and awakening!

In John's Gospel, we read of Mary's devotion to Jesus at the tomb:

Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying

there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.

But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' "

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen

the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her (John 20:1-18, NKJV).

Notice that in verse 1, Mary had to be with Jesus. She didn't know about His resurrection; she just wanted to be with Jesus, even if it was just His tomb and dead body. But when she discovers the tomb is empty, she runs to the other disciples to tell them Jesus' body is gone and that the tomb is empty.

But notice in verse 10 that when Peter and John (the disciple whom Jesus loved) see that the tomb is empty, they go home. One could infer, they gave up.

Question: How do you respond when it seems God is gone, distant and not there? Like Peter and John, many give up and go home. When promises are delayed, prophecies continue unfulfilled and revival seems distant, don't give up and go home—continue steadfast in your worship and devotion of Him! When you lose the element of intimacy with God, you begin to lose faith and transcend into religious activity.

But notice in verse 11 how Mary stood outside the tomb weeping? She sees two angels but doesn't seem to be affected; she just weeps for her Lord. *All she can think about is where Jesus is. This is the heart of worship and devotion. This is where revival and awakening begin!*

We read in verses 14-18 that she is still weeping, longing for Jesus. Jesus then reveals Himself to Mary, who naturally wants to hug Him for joy, but:

Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'" (John 20:17, NKJV).

Scholars are divided theologically on what occurred in this moment. *But the passage implies that Jesus interrupts the*

redemption of mankind to minister to the one who would not let go! Let that sink in—Jesus, prior to ascending to the Father, stops to comfort Mary, this devoted worshipper!

God looks for loyal hearts that He can reveal the depths of His love to (2 Chr. 16:9). Those to whom He can pour forth His Spirit upon and through to revive and transform our world. How much do you long for Jesus today? He is whom we are after—not just His gifts, benefits or even revival—we desire Jesus!

As we abide in Jesus and fellowship with the Holy Spirit, we are revived and renewed.

“In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11). Jesus said He would send us another helper. *Another* is from the Greek word *allos*, which means “another just like me.” The Holy Spirit daily wants to revive and renew us; we need to drink of His river continually!

We are empowered.

Jesus said in John 14:12, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.” As we abide in Christ, His finished work and ongoing work of the Spirit releases His might through us to do what we cannot of ourselves!

We become a vessel for God to touch others.

You and I were destined to be a river of blessing to others. It is not accomplished in our human effort alone; rather, as we walk with God faithfully and rely upon His Word and the Spirit, we begin to bring life to dead places! We have become the temple of God, and the river of God’s presence is bursting forth through those who are yielded to God’s mission and purpose!

Church, God invites us into another outpouring of His Spirit. He will pour water on a dry and weary land when God's people worship Jesus with hearts of sincere devotion! {eoa}

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