

“The Humble”

In this **“The Outsider” Worship Series**, today’s focus is on being **“The Humble”**. With reference to this theme, the Threshold Moment explained, “So often, we find ourselves judging the sinners among us, forgetting our own sin and failures. The woman who comes to Jesus in today’s passage presents herself humbly at his feet, perhaps the most vulnerable position possible. Her love and humility open the door to a relationship with Jesus, one of forgiveness and grace.” **“No matter our sins, no matter the sins of others, those who follow Jesus are filled with humility and love and receive God’s forgiveness removing their ‘outsider’ identity.”**

Rev. Dr. Virginia McDaniel in her sermon, “Jesus and the Outcasts: The Humble”, said, “‘Why be humble?’ you ask.”

McDaniel answered the anticipated question, **“Humility is the doorway that leads to an honest relationship with God.”** “Through honest self-searching, we set ourselves on the path of reconnection, reconciliation and personal and social transformation. Humility allows us to open ourselves to the healing, transformative power of God’s spirit.” **“And as you drop your defenses and your posturing, remember that God’s bias in favor of sinners is so immense that we will be surprised who we find redeemed, forgiven and embraced in the arms of God.”** McDaniel concluded, “Isn’t that good news?” (“Jesus and the Outcasts: The Humble” the Rev. Dr. Virginia McDaniel)

Before we zoom in on our Scripture Reading, let me briefly share with you two examples of where Jesus either instructed people to be humble or called them to follow his humble example. The first example comes from **Luke 18:9, 13-14**: ***“Jesus also told this parable to people who were sure of their own goodness and despised everybody else. ... But the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his face to heaven, but beat on his breast and said, ‘God, have pity on me, a sinner!’ ‘I tell you,’ said Jesus, ‘the tax collector, and not the Pharisee, was in the right with God when he went home. For those who make themselves great will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be made great.’”*** Jesus told the parable of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee to those, who liked to puff themselves up and humiliate others, to challenge their whole world view. They frequently humiliated others with no cost to themselves but, on that occasion, Jesus defended the targets of the ridicule and belittling by the Pharisees and their proud legalistic brethren. His public defense was a bold challenge against the hypocritical actions of the humiliators!

In the Gospel of John, Jesus called his disciples to follow his example of humble service. After Jesus washed his disciples’ feet on the night he was going to be betrayed, he explained in **John 13:14-15**, ***“I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another’s feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you.”*** Just because you and I were not among Jesus’ Original Disciples does not exclude us from being called to follow his example of being humble servants of one another. His example and call apply to us, to all his followers, and indeed, to All people.

In our Reading, Simon the Pharisee – the host thought both Jesus and the woman at his feet, should be looked down at – should be humiliated – humbled. Simon did not think of humility as a virtue. Indeed, even today, being humble is often thought to be a bad thing – it is being weak, guilty, and imperfect. However, Jesus had and has a different point of view on being humble. **Looking closer at**

our Reading, let's note how Jesus revealed Simon's hypocrisy and how the humble woman was already living out the New Relationship with God, which is given by our Divine Parent.

Remember, Jesus was a guest in the home of Simon the Pharisee. As we discover from what Jesus told him, Simon had been a bad host. Shockingly, a woman, who knew she was being looked down upon by Simon and most of his guests, came out of love and thanksgiving for Jesus – God's Son to show that love and thanksgiving by anointing his feet. She was already living the New Relationship with God! Simon's thoughts were disclosed in **verse 39**, *"When the Pharisee saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man really were a prophet, he would know who this woman is who is touching him; he would know what kind of sinful life she lives!'"* In his thoughts, Simon tried to humiliate both Jesus and the woman. Obviously, from what Jesus went on to say, he knew what Simon was thinking. I have no doubt the woman also knew of Simon's and his friend's humiliating thoughts about her.

Jesus challenged Simon's and his friend's desires and actions intended to humiliate both himself and the woman. **In verse 40**, *"Jesus spoke up and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to tell you.'"* Jesus began to tell him a brief parable about two debtors, who were unable to repay their debts, and he concluded in **verse 42**, *"Neither of them could pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Which one, then, will love him more?"*

Luke told us in **verse 43a**, *"I suppose," answered Simon, 'that it would be the one who was forgiven more.'" Luke reported in verses 43b-47*, *"You are right," said Jesus. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your home, and you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You did not welcome me with a kiss, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since I came. You provided no olive oil for my head, but she has covered my feet with perfume. I tell you, then, the great agape love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But whoever has been forgiven little shows only a little agape love.'" As Jesus compared and contrasted the actions of Simon and of the woman, he defend and praised her putting agape love into action, while simultaneously, he exposed Simon's failure to show agape love because he did not provide hospitality.*

Unfortunately, there are a multitude of persons like Simon the Pharisee! They see themselves as "insiders" with God and welcome the opportunity to humiliate others – to humble them through rejection, stares, and lack of hospitality! **God and Jesus have provided us with Their Humble Examples of Agape Loving All People – Inviting and Welcoming Everyone into the New Relationship with God.** Jesus Christ was sent to reveal God's Invitation and Welcome into the New Relationship with God and with All People. Jesus came to prove God's Agape Love for us as manifested through his Life, Death, and Resurrection, as well as, through God's Forgiveness, Invitation, and Welcome.

Being humble and agape loving – demonstrates we are listening to Jesus' Message about how God has changed us from "outsiders" to "insiders" – joint heirs in the New Relationship with God formed by our Divine Parent's Agape Love, Forgiveness, and Grace – joint heirs as sisters and brothers in the Body of Christ – the Church – joint heirs as citizens of God's Kingdom! **If you know of someone who has been humiliated, then humbly share with them the Good News of God's Agape Love and the Invitation and Welcome into the New Relationship with God and All People for we are All Agape Loved, Forgiven, Invited, and Welcomed! Amen.**