

Coming Clean; Proclaiming His Promises 6-12-16

Lord Jesus, open our ears so we may hear You speaking to our hearts. We need a divine touch from You. We need to know, really know, who we are in You. We long to walk in Your ways so the world may know that You are love; You are mercy; You are compassion; You are God. Amen.

This past week, Ed & I told our grandson we'd give him some money toward his airfare to RC. He responded, "Wow! Thanks! I'll pay you in hugs when I get there." I played w/that idea in my mind for a bit. How much is a hug worth? Is it possible to put a money value on it? I responded to him, "Hugs are priceless. I'd be happy if you ate your vegetables!" Then I texted again & said, "That doesn't make any sense. Guess it boils down to you can't pay for gifts. But hugs are nice!" The point is we love our grandson. We like helping him. But one can't connect money w/love or hugs. & much as he needs to eat his vegetables, it can't be a payment for a gift. We simply love each other & that's enough!

The prostitute in our Gospel lesson expressed her love for Jesus. She poured out her heart to Him in a very tangible way. The woman wasn't following a guide-book on how to express love to Jesus. She wasn't trying to make Jesus love her – she already knew He did. She was uninhibited as she washed His feet w/her tears; she wiped them w/her hair; she anointed His feet w/expensive oil; she didn't stop kissing His feet. This wasn't seduction or sensuality! This was pure spontaneous love -her response to the presence of Jesus. In the presence of Jesus, one knows they are forgiven. His words to her, "Your sins are forgiven," were important – she would

need those words echoing in her ears when the enemy would whisper, “You’ve made a fool of yourself! There’s no way your sins (which were shameful) could be forgiven.” Lies! She was forgiven! She needed to hang on to that truth. Jesus explains her outlandish behavior “One who is forgiven much, loves much.”

Imagine yourself at the Pharisee’s home. You’d probably pick up that Jesus was very comfortable w/a woman of ill-repute demonstrating such love. He most likely looked at the host – a Pharisee - & thought. “hmmm, he’s having a problem w/this. But it’s his problem – narrow-minded, judgmental, hypocrite! Jesus also saw the woman’s heart – He wasn’t afraid.

Isn’t loving Jesus; loving others our ultimate goal? Loving freely! Loving w/o strings attached! Unafraid to demonstrate it! spontaneous! How do we become people like that? First of all we have to come clean – be genuine, face ourselves w/o prettying up the picture! When the Holy Spirit brings conviction, we need to own our behavior – not try to hide it (as if God doesn’t know!), excuse it (I wouldn’t have done it, but you see, someone made me angry), minimize it (you know everyone is doing it – no big deal). David is a good example of someone who was blind to his actions, & how they had displeased God. He’d committed adultery; had Bathsheba’s husband killed, had taken her as his wife. She was pregnant w/his child. No one would know how he’d handled the situation, right? Wrong! God knew & David needed to be humbled – he needed to come clean. Through Nathan’s allegorical story, God was able to

convince him that he had sinned big time. David knew he'd sinned against the Lord. His heart was finally right w/God. Even though there were many consequences to his behavior, God still loved David & forgave him. The final word on David is "a man after God's own heart." That's the way he is described in the NT.

David was acutely aware of the damaging effect of un-confessed sin. In Ps.32 he said, "When I kept silent, my bones grew old (other translations say, "my bones rotted!) God's hand was heavy upon him – it zapped him of his strength until he confessed. I can't read this Psalm w/o thinking of our friend who took out a 2nd mortgage & a new credit card to pay his on-line pornography bill – all unbeknown to his wife. Not only did his bones rot, so did his mind. Today he sits in a nursing home obsessing over having to go to the bathroom! If you'd known him 20 years ago, you would say, "Not him!" Yes, him! Very sad! Un-confessed sin is serious.

Ahhh, but then there's confessed sin! David said, "Blessed is he whose sin is forgiven!" Blessed! Happy! Content! No more hiding! No more deceit! Peace! Healthy bones! You know how far a sincere apology goes in relationships we have. When someone apologizes – taking full responsibility for their actions, it clears the air! You respect the person. How much more of a blessing to know that the King of Kings, God Himself forgives us! He doesn't hold our sin against us! We are clean! Forgiven! Free! It opens something in us that frees us up to love – unabashedly love! Chances are not literally, but we kiss feet!

We can love like the woman in our Gospel when we truly know who we are! If someone were to ask you who you are, how would you answer? You'd most likely give your name, your occupation, the name of your spouse. You may add that you have children, grandchildren, sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews,.. you may include that you are the son or daughter of your parents. Our relationships kind of define us. Ed & I became great-grandparents Tuesday & word is out that we will have a new grandbaby in early January. But, do you know, none of these relationships are enough – they don't guarantee success or joy. They can be wonderful or painful, helpful or toxic. They can change. We may love all of our relationships, but we don't find life there. If we try to get our life from our family or friends, we end up sucking them dry. They have only so much to give.

But when we remember who we are in God, then we have life! Abundant life! You are the child of a King! God can meet all your needs – physical, emotional, spiritual. You are loved by the Almighty God! God is your father. Now I know if you've had an abusive relationship w/your earthly father, that may be hard to hear. If your father abandoned you, belittled you, beat you, was never pleased w/your accomplishments, you have issues w/your father, & it may be difficult for you to comprehend a loving, heavenly Father who loves you. This is a huge issue. You need to talk about it, pray about it, get counseling for it. A trusted friend can help. You did not deserve to be

mistreated – that was your father’s problem. Don’t let it prohibit you from having an intimate relationship w/God.

My dad was kind & good, but not perfect. Before he died, he told me how much it meant to him when I was born – he was 46! It was good to hear, but it would have been good to hear before I was 31. But some Swedes are not good w/words – I forgave him. I knew he loved me. He realized he’d left discipline up to Ma. He knew he shouldn’t have done that. I could pester my mom till she gave in. But when she wasn’t home, if he didn’t want me to do something, all he would say is “No.” He wouldn’t budge. But it’s easy for me to go from loving earthly father to loving heavenly father. I realize that is a blessing.

When you realize you are loved by the creator of the universe, what can man do to you? Will a snide remark send you into a tailspin? No, you are anchored in His love. Someone being mean or abusive – will that destroy our day? No, we may need to get out of the vicinity – we don’t have to passively take it. But we belong to God. God is love! He loves us! We need to know this love on a regular basis. When we yearn in ourselves for something, our hunger is for God. We go every place else first – TV, food, drink, work, friends. Let’s pray this week for a fresh touch of God’s love – not just once, but at least daily! Be quiet! Get into His Word. Let Him love you just the way you are! You are forgiven! God’s love is a gift – you can’t pay for it; you can only receive it. Then loving others will be as natural as can be. God’s love will spill out on

those around you! Miracles happen. Others are touched! Healed. There is no other
God but our God! There is no other Name than Jesus that sets you free!