



Near and Now

When I am Called in the Ordinary – Woman who anoints Jesus' feet
By Amanda McVann

Warm-up Question

*When has someone else's worship to God challenged your own?
Through praying aloud or silently? Lifting up one's hands in worship?
Showing emotion during prayer or praise?*



Photo by Nathan Dumlao on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

She Began to Bathe His Feet

Read [Luke 7:36-50](#)

Bible Story Reflection

Despite what most believers think, Jesus was regularly in conversation and relationship with the Pharisees in his community. Rather than being in opposition to one another, they engaged in rabbinic dialogue and discourse over matters of Torah and faith practice. Pharisees, much like Jesus, sought ways to bring the priestly roles of the religious elite within the temple out into the everyday lives of Jewish people in Israel. However, clashes between Jesus and his religious peers arose when it came to the matter of recognizing the grace of God towards those “othered” in society.

In this passage, we see how Jesus is extending the grace of God to a woman whose only defining characteristic is her sinful status. Her reputation precedes all other aspects of who she is, including her own name; the weightiness of her sin and past mistakes has made her a pariah within her own community. So much so, that Jesus’ host, Simon, wonders just how knowledgeable Jesus truly is: “I mean, how can he *not* know about *her*?!” But unlike everyone else in her life who openly whispers her mistakes and sins around her, Jesus acknowledges the depth of her heart and its overwhelming desire to be truly, finally, and restoratively forgiven. He accepts the messiness of her tears, the tenderness of her hair, and the extravagance of her alabaster jar’s contents as her own sin offering before the altar of his humble feet.

It can often be uncomfortable, exposing, or even embarrassing to bear our souls, especially in public worship, to God; it can even be a cause of criticism from others. But the only form of worship that matters is from an authentic heart – all other voices and distractions fade away.

Discussion Questions

1. Why was the woman allowed into the Pharisee’s home, especially with her reputation?
2. Like the woman in the passage, when have you felt marked by your past mistakes?
3. When have you passed judgment against someone else? What did you learn?
4. When was the last time you needed to be forgiven? What was the response?
5. What is something precious that you are afraid to surrender to God?
6. When have you last poured your heart out to God? What did it look like?
7. How might we live in response to God’s forgiveness? What would it look like to “go in peace”?
8. Who is someone in your life that needs forgiveness? How best can that be offered to them at this time?

Activity Suggestions

Share a time when you pre-judged someone based on what others told you about them. What did you later learn about them that made you change your mind? How did it affect how you view other people? How do you view yourself?

Think of someone in your life who has offered you forgiveness at a time when you least expected it. How did it make you feel? How have you passed that same forgiveness onto others?

The woman in the passage offered her very heart to Jesus in ways that made others uncomfortable due to her vulnerability. What is a way that you've been challenged to worship or pray differently that challenged you?

Prayer Concerns

To those who await forgiveness that they may be forgiven; to those who struggle with judgment that they will gain compassion; to those who yearn to pour out their heart to God that they will be liberated.

Closing Prayer

Show me what I am called to do today, O God, so that my life can show forth your praise. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

