

1 Timothy 4:14-16

¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. ¹⁵ Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Psalm 111:1-5

Luke 7:36--50

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. ³⁷ And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. ³⁸ She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said 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." ⁴⁰ Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." ⁴¹ "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman, he 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. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with

ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore, 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.” ⁴⁸ Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” ⁴⁹ But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

“Olney is kind”, has done some amazing work during the pandemic. Taking people to appointments, shopping, supporting people in need of various types of help, and now Naomi Brock and her partners are fundraising to help with winter fuel bills for the most disadvantaged.

Kind and kindness are lovely words and describe a lovely concept

“Kindness is a type of behaviour marked by acts of generosity, consideration, or concern for others, **without expecting praise or reward**”.

Looking up quotes about kindness I found “Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle.” — **Plato**

In the story of Jesus at a meal, we see his wonderful human kindness to a socially disreputable woman who offers him a gift and also his Godly power to forgive her.

Kindness is a characteristic of God. Proverbs uses the word *kind*, of God several times “Whoever is kind to the needy honours God.”

Jeremiah says, “I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth.” 9:24.

Jesus is invited to a meal by one Simon - a pharisee and, given other behaviour by pharisees, it may well be to test Jesus, or show off that he, Simon, has been gracious to a wandering preacher.

But he is only going to do the minimum. He shows none of the usual courtesies, a greeting, washing of feet, no oil as a gesture of welcome. I wonder if he put Jesus near the door!

Jesus just settled himself (remember they lay down propped up on an elbow with heads towards the centre food table).

The meal was not in a closed dining room, but perhaps in a shaded courtyard outside the house where the passers-by could see the generosity of the host (that's a bit cynical). However, it meant that a woman who was prepared to see Jesus was able to approach him, with her perfumed oil, and pour this expensive gift over his feet, shed tears, and wipe his feet with her unbound hair.

All very improper. Why did she do this?

Perhaps she or someone she loved had been healed accepted in a way not known by them before. She is described as a sinner, which probably means prostitute really, really shocking that she should approach Jesus in this way..

And Jesus allows her to do this he does not reject her offering. He shows kindness in his acceptance, and the pharisee is furious, and to him this non rejection of a sinner discredits any claim Jesus might have to be a prophet.

So, Jesus tells the parable of the two debtors. Whom will the creditor forgive more, the greater or the lesser debtor? Reluctantly Simon suggests the one who owes most can be forgiven most.

Where does love begin and end, where does kindness begin and end? As well as repentance and forgiveness.

They are all bound up together. The woman is repentant, she shows love, faith, worship even, Jesus' kindness accepts her for who she is and the offering she brings and is able to forgive her even her many sins.

Jesus says, “her sins which were many have been forgiven, hence she has shown great love.”

The critical guests question Jesus’ power to forgive, not the only time in the gospels

Accepting people as they are especially if they have wronged you is not at all easy Kindness may take some effort. But our model is Jesus who showed great kindness to those in any kind of need, and forgave to his last breath. God’s character is to be boundlessly kind and loving. Only he can forgive sins against himself, but he gives us the ability to forgive others, who have wronged us.

Jesus said to her “Your faith has saved you.”

The faith of this unknown woman is at the core.

She must have had great faith to approach Jesus, to want to love him worship him in the way she did. He showed her human kindness and Divine mercy as he forgave her, allowing her the chance to begin anew way of living. He can do that for us, every day.

[Janet Lawrence]