

She Stepped Out of Her Place

Scriptures: 1 Kings 21:1-10, Luke 7:36 - 8:3 Ord 10C

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Scripture: 1 Kings 21:1-10

¹Later the following events took place: Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. ²And Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house; I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." ³But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance." ⁴Ahab went home resentful and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him; for he had said, "I will not give you my ancestral inheritance." He lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and would not eat.

⁵His wife Jezebel came to him and said, "Why are you so depressed that you will not eat?" ⁶He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it'; but he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" ⁷His wife Jezebel said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." ⁸So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal; she sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who lived with Naboth in his city. ⁹She wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the assembly; ¹⁰seat two scoundrels opposite him, and have them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out, and stone him to death."

Luke 7:36 - 8:3

³⁶One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. ³⁷And 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. ³⁸She 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. ³⁹Now 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." ⁴⁰Jesus 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. ⁴²When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?” ⁴³Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt.” And Jesus said to him, “You have judged rightly.” ⁴⁴Then 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. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore, 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.” ⁴⁸Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” ⁴⁹But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

8 Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, ²as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

Proclamation of the Word

In a time of cultural and church upheaval, Anne Marbury was born in England over 400 years ago. The daughter of an Anglican minister, she was well-versed in Scripture and theology. She later married William Hutchison, and they became part of the Puritan movement. Anne Hutchinson continued to be serious about her faith and study of Scripture.

As we know, the Puritans were harassed and persecuted for their faith- it was a great time of change and reformation in the Church of England. Searching for religious freedom, at age 43, Anne, William and their 14 children sailed for Massachusetts to join the Puritan colony there. She began holding a weekly Bible study for women in her home. The study grew and eventually included men-uncommon in that day.

The leaders of the colony began to be afraid of her influence over so many people. She was accused of heresy. One described her: “She is a woman of ready wit and bold spirit who brought over with her two dangerous errors.”

One error was her notion that the Holy Spirit dwells within us. The second is the belief that we are saved or justified by grace through faith not by our works, but only by God's grace and mercy. Does that sound radical to you??? Probably not. Well, that is exactly what Presbyterians believe.

1. We are saved by God's grace and not by anything we can do on our own.
 2. And the Holy Spirit lives and moves in and among God's people.
- We believe that Christ alone is Lord of the Conscience which is why the Puritans were seen as subversive to the authority of the Church of England.

Anne was excommunicated from the church and again moved with her family to Rhode Island where others seeking religious freedom had come to dwell. She and 5 of her children died in a conflict between settlers and Native Americans. She was 52.

The charge that led to her excommunication from the Puritans reads, ***"You have stepped out of your place, you had rather bine a Husband than a Wife and a Preacher than a Hearer."*** Anne Hutchison has been described until recent history as the "American Jezebel." As we read in 1 Kings Jezebel orchestrated the stoning of Naboth when he would not sell his vineyard to King Ahab, her husband. Throughout history Jezebel has been the archetype of deception and many women have been persecuted in her name. But in the last century some have reclaimed Ann Hutchinson's story as martyr to intolerance and a heroic defender of women's rights and of people of religious conscience.

Another says, "In fact, Anne was neither devil nor angel, neither Jezebel nor a hero."¹ She was a woman of clear and sure religious convictions. She knew who God called her to be, and

She stepped out of her place,
the place carved out for her by society and the church.

She knew the Holy Spirit at work in her devotion to the study of Scripture.

Today's Scripture speaks of another woman who stepped out of her place. She is described as a sinner- a Jezebel of sorts. Jesus has been invited by Simon, the Pharisee, to a banquet and this uninvited woman shows up. She knows Jesus is going to this house, and she shows up with an alabaster jar of ointment. She wants to see Jesus. She is drawn to him and senses his love and forgiveness as one who "eats with tax collectors and sinners."

She knows that at table with Jesus, grace is served in huge helpings.

Overwhelmed by his message of grace and salvation, she begins to weep at his feet then unbinds her hair and wipes his feet- an act of service and love- an act normally offered by the host of the banquet according to the rules of hospitality. We remember Jesus turning toward his disciples in humility and washing their feet. The Pharisee offers Jesus nothing of the sort. No servant washes Jesus' feet in the home of the Pharisee.

The sinner woman begins to kiss his feet and rub them with soothing ointment.

“Appalling!” thought Simon, the Pharisee, to himself, “surely Jesus being a prophet would know what kind of unclean woman this is.” But Jesus allows the woman to show her devotion and accepts her offering. Jesus also knows what Simon must be thinking. He offers a riddle about debtors. And Simon is pulled in by admitting that the one who is forgiven much debt is the one who will be most grateful and love the forgiver the most.

Jesus has him now saying, “Simon, do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.”

Reformed Christians like Presbyterians believe first that we, all of us, are sinners only able to be saved by grace through faith. Somehow in this story Jesus reminds Simon that he is unable to recognize his need for forgiveness and salvation because he is a seemingly righteous man. Simon loves little because he has experienced so little of God’s love, perhaps too caught up in living out God’s laws. The unnamed woman, on the other hand, knows her need and can only respond with overwhelming gratitude to the truth of God’s grace. While Simon receives Jesus’ judgment, she receives salvation. Jesus says, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

I imagine that Anne Hutchinson was a woman of conviction willing to be persecuted for the sharing of God’s word and the message of God’s grace because somehow she had experienced God’s love and forgiveness in such a powerful way.

Why else would she have the faith to withstand such judgment? She stepped out of her place.

And so did the sinner woman.

We step out in faith not in order to find God’s favor, but in response to the God who loves us beyond our deserving. Our Reformed Presbyterian theology can be summed up in three words GUILT, GRACE, GRATITUDE.

- We are sinners all- all have fallen short of God’s glory
That’s **Guilt**
- We have been saved by God’s mercy and nothing we can do on our own-
That’s **Grace**
- We can only respond in thankful living and our actions will reflect it- That’s **Gratitude**

Where are you...

...where are we being asked to step out of our place in response to God’s good news of salvation and forgiveness?

- To see the sinner woman the way Jesus does and not as Simon the Pharisee does
- To step out and leave a secure place to be open to God's leading in our lives...to take a risk.
- To step out and take a stand for convictions however unpopular in order to be faithful.
- To respond in unashamed love because we, too, have experienced so much of God's love that we cannot help but share that love with others, even those deemed "sinners" "unworthy" "less than" "the least of these"
- To allow God to change, re-form, and make us into something new
- To step out of the confines of these walls and share the good news of Salvation with our neighbors by building houses, serving in our community, sharing our food and resources, and knocking on a door and invite another to worship.

The Sinner-woman stepped out of her place...responding to her salvation and the grace offered by Jesus to her.

May we have the courage to follow in her steps
 Marching beside the one who calls us forward in faith,
 in rhythm
 and in step
 with Jesus.

¹ Dena Williams, *She has Stepped Out of Her Place*, from *Lectionary Homilics*, June 2007. See her sermon from which this title and historical account was taken.