

Tears gathering dust. (Original Version)

In this story I start out with the biblical verses of one of the most remarkable women in the bible. (my opinion) I find her such because in the biblical narrative she never utters a word and yet humbles herself in such a deeply emotional way that Jesus proclaims her sins to be forgiven. There is something about her story which has always fascinated me, for it is not only hers I tell, but in its own way, it is also mine. I can only hope in my retelling of this story after the biblical verses are read that you might have at least a little idea of why I love it so.

Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is-that she is a sinner." Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me teacher," he said.

Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Jesus said to the

woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

My mind was racing, and the words were tumbling around in my head. There were so many things I wanted to say-so much I just had to say. Even though I had much to say, unfortunately I still did not know how I would say it. All I knew for sure was he would be here soon and then I would get my chance to speak. I had learned earlier in the day that Jesus would be dining here. He had been invited to dine by the master of the house, a man who went by the name of Simon. He was a Pharisee, and I knew I would not have been welcome in his home. Yet I knew Jesus would be here and so I came anyway. What I had to say could not wait.

I knew the judgment that the town had passed on me. I felt the sting of this condemnation always when I went out. Yet their condemnation was not as severe as what I passed on myself when I was alone. Ohhh! And how I hated to be alone.

It felt as if I were dying in my own prison. It was a prison I did not want to be in, but I knew of no way out. I was living a life that was slowly killing me. The road I had been on all my life was taking me to its destination. This was a road where joy did not exist, a road of hurt and loneliness, of pain and despair. A road that led to death. I did not have any real expectation of what would happen when I saw Jesus, or for that matter when he would see me. If only I could tell him I was sorry, sorry for the way my life was wasted, sorry that I could not call myself a daughter of Abraham.

When I had arrived at the Pharisee's home and stood at the entrance to his home, I was very nervous. I knew it was likely he would send me away. When he saw me at his door, he was both surprised and scornful. I pleaded with him to allow me to see this one who went by the name of Jesus. He just stood there listening, his eyes condemning me in an all too familiar way. At the end of my say though, it was my turn to be surprised. For whatever reason he consented to let me into his home. Yet to me I did not dwell on the why, just that soon I would see the one I came for. I was told to wait in the dining area although I was not offered anything to eat. That was okay though as food was not my reason to be here.

Other guests showed up and I saw Simon bring water for his guests in order to wash their feet, which were covered in dust from their walk to this home. I looked down at the dust covering my own feet and saw how unclean they were. In despair I realized, I had no right to be here, for as dirty as my feet were, they

became a reminder of how unclean I was on the inside. I started to second guess myself. Perhaps I should just leave. I did not belong in this house with such holy people. Yet I had come this far, and I still needed to talk to Jesus, moreover it seemed like my heart would soon burst open if I did not get a chance to talk with him. I willed my feet to stay in their place, and I just listened and watched. I saw how Simon spoke with his honored guests as he poured a small portion of oil on their heads and gave each one a kiss on the cheek. He lowered his voice, and I could not hear what he said, but the way his eyes darted at me, I knew I was the topic of their conversation. He was no doubt explaining to his guests, why he let me into his home. They glanced over my way also and if I was not mistaken, I thought I saw a small smile form on the mouth of one of his guests. I did not know exactly what was said, but for whatever purpose was on their minds I seemed to become a welcome part of their plan for the evening. Even so, not one of the guests spoke with me. Why should they I reasoned, I was far short of deserving their notice. They were people who knew God, and they would have no time for one such as I. Again, I felt this urge to flee from this house, I should not be here! My eyes turned down again at my shame, my eyes once more seeing the dust and dirt that covered my feet. I closed my eyes, squeezing them tightly shut, not wanting to see anything at this moment. I was wholly unclean, and I knew the jar of perfume I had brought with me would not get rid of the stench of my sin.

What am I thinking? I no more belong here than these men belong in my home. I was out of my mind to think that I should be here. I started to panic, even if I was to see Jesus, he would not want to see me. I did not deserve to stand in his shadow much less his light. I had heard about Jesus, he was a man who performed miracles of all kinds. He was a man who spoke about God with authority. He was as many had concluded, a man of God. Some even said that he was the Son of God, the Messiah that was to come. This was no doubt why he had been invited into this home. I needed to leave for I had no business being among such great men, not to mention the possible Son of God. I was becoming frightened beyond anything in my life. Then I heard another sound, and I reopened my eyes. He had arrived. It was Simon who let him in and led him to the dining area where he offered him a place to recline while he ate. Slowly I managed to turn my head towards him and force myself to look upon him. When I saw him, my fear disappeared, there was nothing special about his appearance that should have told me he was anything extraordinary.

Yet in the moment his eyes met mine I understood in that very instant, he knew me! He knew my life, and still his eyes did not condemn. Furthermore, as I slowly

approached him, I recognized him. Though I had never seen him before, I knew this one called Jesus. A realization struck me at this moment. I came here in search of him and without knowing why, I came to believe he had been searching for me. Now as I got closer to him my vision started to fade. The tears in my eyes were making it difficult to see. It seemed an eternity as I closed the short distance that separated us. The tears began to form, and I opened my mouth to speak, but no sound came out. I kneeled before his reclining feet. So much I wanted to say and yet my tongue refused to speak. Now my tears were streaming over my face until they gathered enough to fall off my cheek. I saw the first one splash across the feet of this Son of God. As it landed, it rolled across his foot like it had my cheek earlier, but as it rolled, it also gathered the dust with it, clouding the tear and leaving a streak across his foot. When this happened, I lowered my face even closer, and I kissed his foot. More tears were coming and splashing over his feet, and they like the first continued to gather dust in them as they rolled across his feet. Then before it occurred to me to do so, I grabbed hold of my hair and started wiping his feet with it. I was barely even aware of anything else going on in the room around me, the conversation they were having while eating their meal was drowned out by the continued outpouring of my tears. Years of a life misspent were in those tears and they found themselves on the feet of this man who came from God. My hair which was my crown and glory before, I also laid low before this man as I continued to wipe his feet with my hair. Though no words were able to come from my mouth, I could not stop myself if I tried from kissing his feet. I reached for the jar of perfume I had with me, and I poured the contents of the jar over his feet. The scent of the perfume entering the room for all to smell. Just then I thought I heard Simon say something to himself, so low in tone that I could not hear what he said. I was not even sure Jesus could have understood it, but he did seem to respond to what was said. He said, "Simon I have something to tell you." "Tell me teacher," he replied.

Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her

hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”

Then Jesus said to me, “Your sins are forgiven.” The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” Jesus then said to me, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

I got up at that point and looked through the tears of my eyes and into the eyes of Jesus. I could tell the words he spoke were true. What he said was spoken by one who had the authority to condemn or forgive. And now I was forgiven. I managed a look around the room. All eyes were on me at this moment; their faces all had the same look. A look of shock and dismay. Then I heard them muttering among themselves, who is this who even forgives sins? I left the home of Simon at that point and as I was walking home I thought on all I heard and all I had just experienced. It was a life changing moment for me I knew as I walked along. My mind recalled how I knelt at the feet of the Savior and had done all the things I had done, which were not at all how I had intended. I wanted to say I was sorry, but my tears spoke on what my mouth could not. My lips uttered no sound save the sound of gentle kisses. My crown was laid low for this King of kings. The perfume intended for his head had instead found its way at his feet. Though I had said no words Jesus understood everything. The parable he spoke on was about me; my large debt had been cancelled.

My sins were forgiven; I was at peace. For the first time I could remember in my life, I was at peace. It was more than I could have ever dreamed possible.

I started thinking of the question that some of Simons guests had asked among themselves. “Who is this who even forgives sin?” Was it possible, I wondered as I walked along, they did not recognize who was in their midst. It was an astounding thought. Who indeed can forgive sin, but God himself.

As I stepped into my home, I looked down at my feet, they were dirty and dusty from the walk there and back, but never in my life had I felt so clean. As I readied myself to go to sleep and sat at the end of my bed I thought more of this encounter and then as I lay back, I wondered where my life was going to go now that for the first time in many years I felt fully alive. I wondered if my path would

once again cross the path of the Savior. I fell asleep realizing that the road I was on now was not one where I walked alone. I was on his road and surely, I would see him again.