



Glenn Brown telephone 970-434-1377
441 ½ Lark Drive
Grand Junction, Colorado 81504

December 2008

DO YOU SEE THIS WOMAN?

That is the question Jesus asked of Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7:44. You remember the story: Jesus was invited to Simon's home, and a certain woman came in, started weeping and washing Jesus' feet with her tears, and she broke an alabaster flask of very expensive perfume and anointed his feet with the fragrant oil. Simon was incensed. He thought to himself, "If Jesus knew who this notorious woman is he would not permit her to touch him. That just proves that Jesus is not really a prophet."

Jesus then posed the question to Simon. (Except I think there was an emphasis in His question that does not appear in the text.) I think he asked Simon the question this way: "Do you see this woman?" That was the whole point. Simon didn't see her at all. He saw a sinner, an inferior, a non-entity who was intruding on this "holy" gathering. But Jesus saw her. He saw a broken-hearted woman, repenting for her sins. He saw a person whose heart had been overwhelmed with the revelation of who Jesus was, and in gratitude she was pouring out her valuable ointment, her heart, and her life. He saw a woman whose life was being transformed - - and He forgave this woman of all her sins, which caused a further problem at the dinner, "Who is this man who acts as if he can forgive sins?"

Many times you and I have probably acted more like Simon than Jesus. We look through people without seeing them at all, or we look at the surface and instantly pigeonhole them: That's just a teen-ager, or a fat slob, or a foreigner of a certain color, or a homeless man, or an old person. As a guy who is a little past middle-age, I have on occasion been treated with less than the respect I deserve. Ha! Sometimes clerks, sales people, receptionists (ladies) will call me "Honey," and communicate to me in baby-talk, as if I have Alzheimer's. And many young people, young men and especially young women, treat me as if I am invisible. Sometimes I hurry to a mirror to make sure I'm still here. "There you are, you good-looking rascal!" But I do not register on their retina, they do not see me.

One of most amazing things about God is that He sees us, each of us, every one of us, and He values each of us. He is no respecter of persons. I used to wonder why the Bible took so much space with the endless genealogical lists (*Ram begat Amminidab, Amminidab begat Nahshon, Nahshon begat Salmon, Salmon begat Boaz*, etc., etc., ad infinitum.) Some of these lists take up several chapters. Why? Because God sees each individual, and each is infinitely important to Him. I have four children, and I love each one as if he or she were the only one. I don't just love my kids, I love Terry and Jeannine and Chet and Matt, and my grand-children, Josh and Johnny and Jo Lee. I love each one, and pray for each one individually.

It is impossible to fully comprehend, but God sees each one of us like that, and even more so. Jesus said, "*Even the hairs of your head are all numbered.*" (Luke 12:7) Jesus said that. And David wrote under divine inspiration, "*How precious are your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them they would be more in number than the grains of sand on the seashore.*" (Psalm 139:17) And Jesus revealed at the end of John 17 that His Heavenly Father loves each of us as much as He loved Jesus, His Son!

We have this terrible habit of judging God and thinking He is not good. Actually we inherited this habit from our first parents, who unfortunately listened to that snake in the garden. We listen to him, too. I went through a long phase where I secretly thought that God had a big problem with egotism. "Why does He want us to praise Him all the time? Isn't that conceited and self-centered?" Finally I started to understand that God is the only one who doesn't have a problem with egotism. "God is love." The more love you have, the less you are focused on yourself. God is totally love. He knows that our problem is egotism, self-focus, self-centeredness, and the only way we can be delivered from that fatal flaw is through praising Him, and loving Him, and loving others. He can absolutely handle our praise without getting big-headed about it. We can't handle much adulation at all, or at least I can't.

Do you know how God spends His time? Thinking about you. He's not thinking negative thoughts, "Oh, look what that jerk is doing now!" That's not the way I think about my children, and it is not the way our Father thinks about us. He is so proud of you. He has compassion when you mess up, and He thinks of ways to encourage you and strengthen you to do better. If you wander off to the far country, He sits on the porch, loving you and yearning for the day you will come home. His heart is grieved when He sees you and me messing up. Grief is a love word. At times I have grieved about certain things in the lives of my kids, as my dad and mom grieved over me at times. I never once had thoughts of condemnation, but I grieved and worried and prayed because I knew that if their path did not change they would destroy themselves. I am sure that God has let us be parents so we can understand, at least dimly, His great, loving heart for His children. And if He sees you coming, even at a great distance, He runs to meet you and throw His arms about you, and welcome you home. And when you overcome some obstacle, even a little one, He is so proud of you. The Good News is that He is for you, not against you, all the time.

For a number of years I prayed that God would give me a special anointing so that when I prayed for groups, congregations, etc., as I do frequently in my ministry, that many would be healed and set free all at once. There are

simply too many to pray for individually, and it wears you to a frazzle to pray for people one at a time. Then one day I woke up and realized that Jesus taught people in crowds, but He prayed for people one at a time: the blind man, the demonized man in the tombs, the leper, the woman with an issue of blood, etc. So I guess if Jesus spent a lot of his time praying for people one at a time, maybe it is not too much for me to do the same. The truth is, God has the time and capacity to think about you, to hear your prayers, to watch over your life, as if you are the only one around. In the past I heard many times that the Father would have sent His Son to die for you if you were the only person on earth. I sort of took that teaching with a grain of salt. But I have come to believe that it is absolutely true. That is how much He loves you and me!

GOD'S HEALING IS USUALLY A PROCESS

I just reread Francis MacNutt's classic book, The Power to Heal, and he reminded me of some important insights about healing. For instance, he points out that in praying for healing usually people are not completely, instantly healed by prayer, but they are improved. Most things are that way. Healing through medicine is that way. We go to a doctor and come away happy as long as healing has begun and improvement has been shown. We are delighted if the doctor holds out hope that in a week or a month our body will be restored to wholeness. But in some teaching about healing there is a kind of absoluteness that makes it imperative that all healing through prayer be immediate. "Can you claim your healing now!" puts sick people in a bind. They want to show faith in God by saying yes, but they want to be honest, too, and say, "But I still can't walk so I'm not sure." Remember that even Jesus prayed for a blind man twice (Mark 8:22), and the ten lepers were healed "as they went."

Francis points out that (1) there is a time element in most healing. Even in healings that seem instant there is at least a period of minutes in which the change takes place. (2) There is also an element of more or less power, more or less authority in me, since I am not God. Faith is of course a key element in all healing, but in some mysterious way our relationship with God, our faithfulness, our character, also seems to be a key. Remember the seven sons of Sceva that tried to use the name of Jesus to heal a demonized man, but the demons in that man recognized that the seven men didn't have a relationship with Jesus, so they beat the skunk out of those men. (Acts 19:14)

One of the big problems is that people confuse the logos (written) Word of God, with the rhema (spoken, heard Word of God). Some preachers and teachers insist that if something is in the Bible, a logos word, we can claim it by faith. But remember the time that Jesus invited Peter to step out of the boat and walk on water in a raging storm? That invitation to Peter was a rhema, "now" word, and not many preachers would insist that we can claim that word for ourselves. Yes, we are told to go forth and do the same works Jesus did, and Jesus' final words to His followers (Mark 16) were that those who believe would lay their hands on the sick and they would be healed, and God, in His grace, heals people again and again as we pray for them. But we need to distinguish between faith and presumption. For instance, we should never assure people

that they have been healed and can throw away their medicine just because we have prayed for them, unless we, or the sick person, has received a rhema word from God.

GRAVITY

Albert Einstein set forth the Theory of Relativity about 100 years ago, so I am way behind the curve in catching on to his insights. Probably everyone who gets my newsletter already understands this, but I'm reading a book about the cosmos and just now understood about gravity. I always assumed that matter has a tiny bit of innate pull or force toward its center, and the more mass, the more cumulative force of gravity, which is why the earth has more gravity than the moon. Not! Einstein said that: *Since gravity and acceleration are equivalent, if you feel gravity's influence, you must be accelerating. Therefore, you and the earth and all the other things we usually think of as stationary are accelerating upward! And why are we accelerating upward? Because space is warped or bent.* Well, duh! It's so obvious once someone points it out. Next month I will explain quantum mechanics and string theory, unless you figure it out for yourself in the meantime.

DON'T GET DEVOURED!

Peter warns us that we have an adversary, the devil, who is wandering around seeking someone to devour! I've been thinking about that lately and observing how it works out.

- A certain man had a terrible problem with anger and alcohol, and many years ago he "confessed Christ as his savior," but after a brief interlude he went back to his previous pattern of anger and substance abuse. As the years passed, his anger became focused more and more on his wife. It was as if his anger was fanned into a hotter and hotter flame. Criticism and blame grew into vile words, threats, cursing, violence. His whole life and personality are now defined by an irrational, murderous rage. He is sick physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He is full of demons. His wife is also sick. He has been "devoured" by the devil, and unless he repents (I suspect that his opportunity for repentance is past, but only God knows), eternal judgment awaits.
- I could of course use the example of pornography and sexual sin. Every week, it seems, there are examples in our small community of people who have been devoured by the devil in this area. Last week there was the story of a teacher and community leader who was arrested for a pattern of pedophilia, and thousands of images of child sex abuse were found on his computer. He is in jail and will go to prison for the remainder of his life. Think of the examples of priests or pastors who apparently felt a calling of God, but the weakness they refused to deal with eventually consumed them as their thoughts and their entire life became focused on perversion.
- We are beginning to see the fallout of millions of people who have given their souls to Mammon, love of money, and as the storm of financial collapse inundates our society, those whose lives are built on sand will be washed away.

2 Cor. 7:1 exhorts us to "cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." We are responsible to do it! 2 Timothy 2:19 says, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ (CHRISTIANS!) depart from iniquity! It goes on to say, "Flee youthful lusts, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Colossians Chapter 3 is a detailed teaching on how go about it. The point is, it is up to us to do it. Salvation is free, but entering into the promised land, our destiny, our blessing, is a lot of hard work. (See the following article about John Wimber.) The Bible says again and again, "If"....."Then." If you will obey the Lord and die to the flesh, then God will bless you. We make these choices every moment.

QUOTED FROM JOHN WIMBER

"The problem is we think that the key for maturity and power is to be 'good.' We then focus on our behavior, but our behavior never meets the high standard of Christ's righteousness. I did this for years. By focusing on my behavior, I was in constant turmoil, because my behavior was never good enough to meet God's standards, or my standards, of righteousness. I first believed in Christ because I was not good, yet after becoming a Christian I still struggled in my own strength with not being good enough, so I was always under conviction, always struggling with guilt. Finally I heard God say to me, 'The issue is not being good, it is being God's. Just come to me, and I'll provide goodness for you.'

I did not fully understand his words. I was confused, so for the next five years I tried to be good in my own strength. I became more and more despondent. As I sought God, he explained that He had good works prepared for me, but they were his works, and I could not do them for him. He told me that I needed to begin to listen to his voice rather than try to distil the Christian life down to a set of rules and principles. I began to listen more during my prayer and scripture study times, and more consciously talked with him throughout the normal activities of the day.

Then something interesting began to happen. He put new desires and attitudes in me. His Spirit began to strengthen me to do things I previously had no desire for. I began to hear his voice throughout the day. And good works were multiplied in my life. Today I no longer focus on trying to be good, instead I am primarily concerned with doing God's bidding: What he commands, I do. Now my life is more conformed to his character than it used to be, and following his commands doesn't leave much time for sin."

Along the same line, author and counselor Henry Cloud points out the flaws in the classic Christian accountability model. He says, 'accountability' has come to mean for many: asking each other if they are living up to the standard, offering forgiveness if they have fallen short, then encouraging each other to try harder. Cloud says, 'This common evangelical mode of operation is a good picture of the law at work.' This style of accountability can expose problems but it doesn't fix them. What we need instead is a relational 'atmosphere' of grace and truth, where we are not condemned, even in failure, and where we hear the truth that we can never become all that God intends just by trying harder. This kind of relationship continually inspires us to deepen our moment-by-moment dependence on God, rather than causing us to fix it for ourselves. It's only through our connection with God that we receive the power to genuinely change.

Merry Christmas
and
a Happy New Year

Glenn

Web-site: www.glennbrownministries.com

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.
If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions, you may send them to:
CANON VIEW VINEYARD CHURCH
736 24 ½ Road
Grand Junction, Co. 81505



