Reflections for Holy Week

Monday 14th April - Monday of Holy Week

Welcome

Welcome to our reflections for Holy Week, these are taken from the book 'Touching the Hem' by Jeannine Davies - today we look at Simon the Pharisee and Mary:

Moment of quiet and opening prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
in this week as we enter into your passion,
help us to learn of you, and know you,
and find a sure ground for faith,
a firm support for hope,
and the assurance of sins forgiven. Amen.

Reading

Luke 7:36-50

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. 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. 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. 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." Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." 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. 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. 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." Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Reflection

I thought I had made it – having Jesus at my house for supper. I felt proud and grand . . . important. Then she walked in. How she managed to slip past the doorman, I don't know – but in she came – bold as brass, holding on to her pot as if her life depended on it.

I knew her, of course. – didn't we all? Though none of us would dream of admitting it in public. Anger coursed through me. I tried to catch my servants' eyes to tell them to evict her, but they were all watching her. With disgust, I looked towards her . . . she was kneeling at Jesus' feet, crying. Her tears spilling on him, – and she didn't even have a cloth to wipe them away.

Instead, she used her hair. She touched Jesus' feet, so gently, so reverently, so lovingly. She broke her precious pot, and poured the costly perfume on his feet. Such extravagance, such expense . . . everything poured out for Jesus. He looked at Mary, with such love in his eyes, a deep, peaceful love, all embracing. It was as if she was the only one in the room.

I looked at Jesus wondering why he was allowing her near him. Why, if he knew so much, hadn't he recognised her for what she was? And then he spoke to me – pointed out all the love this lady had given to him – and how she had bathed his feet with her tears – and I, who had so much, had failed to offer my honoured guest the cool freshness of water as he entered my home.

Through my own self-importance, I had failed in my hospitality. In trying to get it so right for myself, I had failed in what Jesus was looking for above all else – love. I had not given myself – only my wealth.

I have been humbled beyond measure, but the lesson is well learned – for I saw myself as Jesus saw me, though his rebuke was kindly said . . . and love shone in his eyes as he explained about forgiveness – and judgement.

Now my life has changed. I welcome my guests with warmth rather than pomp . . . I offer them water for their comfort. Everyone is invited. Now I love them with my heart – the way Jesus showed me his love for me.

Time for reflection

Spend some time reflecting:

What struck you about the passage?
What surprised you?
How does it speak to you?

Prayer

Lord God, thanks you for loving me and for your guidance – for my humbling moments and lessons learned. Dear God, thank you for being gentle with me. Amen.

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