

“The Flask”

December 2008

Hymn “Creating God we give you thanks... VU 292

Scripture Luke 7:36-50

Verse 40: Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”
“Tell me, teacher,” he said

Prayer Let us pray – Maker of all things, loving parent to all mankind, startle us with your truth and goodness this day. Open our minds and our imaginations to the working of your spirit in us that we may receive you and one another with joy and fellowship, through Jesus our Guide. Amen.

Lesson This passage is a model of story-telling which contains the Christian faith in capsule form. If all the rest of the gospels were lost and this preserved we would have the good news – the gospel.

We have three figures on the stage. Jesus pairs off with Simon the Pharisee, Simon pairs off with “the woman” and “the woman” pairs off with Jesus and we learn from each encounter. Simon can be compared with a ‘door slammed’, “the woman” with a ‘flask broken’, and Jesus with a ‘hand extended’.

From the start of his ministry Jesus gathered people into a family. So had the Pharisees. For Jesus the family was **inclusive** – “Whosoever will – let them come.” The Pharisees were **exclusive**. Simon knew about “this kind of woman” – not one of “our kind”. Jesus knew that poor Simon could not see the woman. He could only see his own labels – she is a sinner, a hippie, a radical. I don’t know her parents; she’s not from around here. She doesn’t belong. Simon was a door-slammer.

There is a difference between a church and a secular club. Private secular clubs have every right to limit membership, to set the standards they wish. But the church is God’s family on earth and every human creature is a part of that family by birth. The church is a gathering place for those who acknowledge themselves a part of that family. God made the church to be home for all his children. Jesus was a door opener.

“The woman” was invited by Jesus to come through ‘the door’. Once through she showed extravagant generosity in using her greatest material possession, the ointment from her flask, to bathe Jesus feet. Jesus was drawn to her because this was so much like what he would do. He valued reckless generosity. The flask – the beautifully, extravagant, spontaneous act of self-giving.

Jesus loved them both. He loves the Simons just as he loves the great giver. But the flask broken is the symbol for all time of love outpoured. Yet the hand of Jesus, extended to lift a “sinner” is a more powerful symbol yet. “The woman” was capable of love. Jesus was the source of love. That hand – reaching – made her love complete. Anne Murray sings of it in, “You needed me,” with one line, “you gave me dignity”. May those who come seeking find it in our churches and in our AOTS clubs.

Based on material from “a present help” by Robert A Wallace

Discussion Discuss the relationship between Jesus and Simon.

Discuss the “openness” of your AOTS club. Are there “outsiders”?

Prayer Let us pray – Blessed are you, O God, our creator, that you have given us life itself, this world in which to live, new life in Christ, and life everlasting in your glory. As we look to our life together in this season of Advent and Christmas and the year that stretches ahead of us, we seek direction from your spirit. Grant us sensitivity to the needs of those around us. May we not look on the world’s pain with dry eyes. Grant us wisdom to choose new ways of service, courage to walk in those ways and the constant challenge of your spirit to teach out to others in loving acceptance. Through Jesus, our guide. Amen..

Coming events See www.aots.ca coming events section

Book of the month **The gospel according to Luke.**