

You may have noticed that there is no SermonNotes page this morning. It felt strange to not to prepare one for today, since I have done that every Sunday for the past several years.

But it is summer, the time for doing things a little bit different. And today I just want you all to relax, lean back, maybe close your eyes now and then – Wally, you can close your eyes, but stay awake! – be comfortable and listen to a Bible story...

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It is the story of Simon. The name Simon is Hebrew and it means “to hear and to be heard.” Or: to have a reputation. There are several Simon’s in the NT with a reputation.

- Simon Peter. He was bold, aggressive, spoke first and thought later. As brave as he was, when push came to shove he was pushed away from Jesus by the crowds, and denied Jesus three times.

But when Jesus recalled this Simon, he went on to be the example of what Jesus calls us to: which is faith in Jesus. It is this Rock of faith on which Jesus builds his Church. Simon Peter had a reputation.

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- Simon of Cyrene. He was in the crowd when Jesus stumbled and fell while carrying his cross. This Simon was compelled to carry the cross of Jesus the remaining distance to Golgotha. *“Take up your cross and follow me...”*

When Jesus said we must take up our cross daily, maybe Jesus wanted us to have a vision of this Simon who walked with Jesus. Simon of Cyrene had a reputation.

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And then there is the Simon I want to remind us of this morning. Two things defined this Simon.

1. He was defined by keeping **the law**.

The law we are talking about is not the laws of stopping at stop signs, or the law of not jaywalking at corners, or the law of finishing eating everything on our plates.

But if we were talking about those laws, you would notice that there was no such thing as a rolling stop for Simon. You would notice that he stayed always within every crosswalk.

Simon had a reputation of keeping all of the religious laws. And here is why Simon kept all of the 621 religious laws: so that he could be near to God, and away from sinners. Plain and simple: to be near to God and far from sinners. His religion was all about ***what Simon did***.

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2. Simon was also defined by **being clean**.

The clean we are talking about here is not showering twice a day, and using the newest deodorant and body washes.

But if we were talking about those things Simon would have showered 6 times a day and used enough frankincense to smell him coming from the end of a long hallway.

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What we would have noticed about this Simon was his hands. His hands were always a red and rosy clean. It was a religious cleansing.

Here is why Simon kept himself ceremonially clean: so he could be near to God, and away from sinners. Plain and simple. It was all about ***what Simon did***.

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If Simon had a theme song, it would be this...

**D**                      **Em G - D**  
*It's all about me, Simon.*  
**Em - C**      **G**                      **G**  
*And all this is for me, for my glory and my good.*  
**Em - C**      **G**                                      **C**  
*It's not about you, as if you could be good like me.*  
**G**                      **D**                      **C - G**  
*I draw close to God by being good.*

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Well, it was not a very good song. It did not rhyme. But it defined Simon.

Simon, however, must have still been searching. When he heard about Jesus he invited him to come and have dinner with him.

Now, what do you do when you invite someone to dinner? Let's do the checklist

- Clean the house.
- Make the meal.
- Greet at the door.
- Direct them to the best seat in the Living Room.
- Ask if they would like a beverage, and if they are comfortable.

There were three things Simon should have done when his guest Jesus arrived at his door that day.

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1. Simon should have provided a basin so his guest could have washed his feet. The roads were dusty and shoes were just soles held on by straps. To be able to wash one's feet was a gracious gift of accepting your guest.

Simon did not do that. It was what Jesus meant when he said a little later, "Simon, you gave me no water for my feet." The first way Simon showed that Jesus was not a special guest in his home and life.

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2. Simon should have placed a hand on Jesus' shoulder given him a greeting kiss on his cheek. That was the custom of that culture. It was their handshake.

Simon did not do that. It was what Jesus meant when he said a little later, "Simon, you gave me no kiss." This was the second way that Simon showed that Jesus was not a special guest in his home and life.

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3. Simon also should have either burned a little incense or placed a drop of sweet smelling oil on the head of a guest. That drop of oil sounds weird to us. If I came to visit you and you dripped oil on me...

It was a time of many smells. Animals and people mixed in close company. Stockyards and cooking fires were close by. A drop of sweet smelling oil was considered a gracious way to welcome a guest into your home.

Simon did not do that. It was what Jesus meant when he said a little later in the story, “Simon, you did not anoint my head with oil.” This was the third way that Simon showed that Jesus was not a special guest in his home and life.

And I hope that as I shared those three social snafus of Simon, that you have been looking at your own welcoming of Jesus during the past week. Did Jesus find that he was a special guest in your home and life?

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Into the story comes a woman. We tend to think of the woman as the centerpiece of this story. But the story is really about Simon – and about you. It is about how we welcome Jesus into our homes and lives, or how we reject him.

The woman is the example of how to welcome Jesus into our lives. Her song in life is very different from Simon’s. Her song in life goes like this:

**D**                    **Em G - D**  
*It's all about you, Jesus.*  
**Em - C**      **G**                    **G**  
*And all this is for you, for your glory and your fame.*  
**Em - C**      **G**                              **C**  
*It's not about me, as if you should do things my way.*  
**G**                    **D**                    **C**                    **G**  
*You alone are God, and I surrender to your ways.*

Because the woman knows that it is all about Jesus and his love for her, this is her response.

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### **1. The woman boldly comes into the presence of Jesus.**

Jesus and Simon are having dinner together in a place in the home where passersby are welcome to stop and listen in.

It is like my Dad and his front porch. Dad has this large screened in porch that faces the busy street. People who pass by know that they are always welcome to come in and sit down and spend some time. The woman knew that she could enter.

We can come boldly into the presence of Jesus as well. We do not need a pastor to do the introductions, or a bishop to organize the meeting. This was Jesus in the middle of a busy day and a woman in the midst of a hectic week. The opportunity is there and she takes it because she knows she is welcome.

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## **2. The woman washes the feet of Jesus – with her tears.**

Why? She knows her need for Jesus. She knows her deeds: good and bad, true and untrue, caring and thoughtless. She does not hide these things from Jesus. He knows... He knows... She leaves them at the feet of Jesus.

Simon has no water for the feet of Jesus, but the woman does: she welcomes Jesus.

## **3. The woman then kisses the feet of Jesus.**

It is another sign that she welcomes Jesus into her life. Simon had no sign of welcome for Jesus, but this woman does.

## **4. The woman anoints the feet of Jesus with oil.**

The welcome that Simon should have offered Jesus is now offered by this woman. What Simon would not do, the woman does.

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Simon was a Pharisee. The word means *to be separated*. He wanted to draw close to God by being separated from sinners.

What he did not acknowledge was that he was a sinner. He needed Jesus. He needed to be reminded that it was not about him, but about the love and forgiveness of Jesus. Jesus does not separate himself from us, but comes to us as dirty and unclean as we are.

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Consider the Bible story this morning a gentle reminder that it is not about you. It is about the one who came to fetch us and bring us home again.

- As you come to this altar railing this morning for Communion, will you come as Simon, or will you come as the woman?
- Is it all about you, or is it about Jesus in your life?

**SONG: "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."**