Luke - Commentaries by Grandma Smith

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 2, Feast for Jesus, A

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Simon the Pharisee liked to listen to new stories, just as the rest of us do. He found it so interesting to listen to Jesus that he invited the great prophet-healer to his house for a feast, and Jesus came.

Simon's guests had walked the dusty streets in sandals. It was common courtesy in those days for servants to bring water to wash and cool their guests' dusty feet. Then the host would kiss each guest's cheek and add a touch of perfumed ointment to their heads. These courtesies made the guests feel comfortable and welcome.

Jesus came into Simon's house as an invited guest and took His place at the table. However, He was not given the common courtesy of comfort and welcome.

There was a woman in that city who was sure of two things. First, she knew she was a sinner, and second, she knew that only Jesus could forgive her. Perhaps in those two things she knew more than Simon did. Do you know that those two things apply to you too?

The woman brought an alabaster box of special ointment and stood behind Jesus. She had tears running down her face, because she knew she was a sinner. She began to wash His feet with tears and wipe them with her long hair. Then she kissed His feet and poured her precious ointment on them.

Simon did not say anything to the woman, but he was busy thinking. He had no idea that his wonderful guest was the One who knows all our thoughts and why we think them. Just think! This story is two thousand years old, but you and I know what Simon was thinking that day because God recorded it in the Bible. This is the God that you and I must meet someday-joyfully or in terror!

Simon had thought that Jesus was a prophet, but now he wondered why Jesus didn't seem to know what an awful sinner the woman was. Simon thought she was so wicked that she had no right to touch Jesus.

Oh, didn't Simon know that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15)? No, Simon didn't know. Simon was a religious leader in fancy robes, but he didn't really know who Jesus was. He didn't know that it's only sinners who are invited into Jesus' presence. Many of us can gladly say, "I know! I came to Him, and He is my Savior now!"

Then Jesus told Simon the story of a man who had two people who owed him money. One owed five hundred pennies (which was a huge amount in those days), and the other one owed fifty pennies. Sadly, neither one of them had even one penny to pay the man. Then the man said, I freely forgive you both.

Jesus asked Simon, Which one will love him most?

I suppose the one to whom he forgave the most money

Maybe Simon was pleased when Jesus told him that his answer was correct. But there was more for Jesus to tell Simon: You see this woman? You did not give Me water for My feet, but she washed My feet with tears. You didn't give Me a kiss, but she has kissed My feet many times. You did not put oil on My head, but she has poured special oil on My feet.

Jesus was truly a prophet, but He was far more than that. He knew all about the woman's sins, and still He turned to her and said, "Thy sins are forgiven."

No one else has the right to say this. If you want forgiveness for your sins, you must go to God Himself for this. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark 2:7).

Simon had nothing more to say. And the woman said nothing either, but the guests were all filled with thoughts. We don't know that woman's sin, but we know what the guests were thinking: Who is this prophet who also forgives sins?

Do you know who He is? He is Jesus, the eternal Son of God, the One who took my sins upon Himself when He died for me. Then He, and no one else, has a right to say what He said to that woman at His feet, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

What about your sins? Have you come to Jesus for forgiveness?

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 2, Carpenter's Son, The

The stories of Jesus are full of surprises. Maybe you have read many storybooks that have surprises, but no one ever wrote a story like this one. It is from the Bible, so it is all true!

When Jesus was a boy, He lived in Nazareth with His parents and brothers and sisters. There were five boys in the family, and Jesus was the oldest. We don't know how many sisters He had, because the Bible doesn't tell us. When He was about thirty years old, Jesus went to live in Capernaum, but then He returned to Nazareth where He had been brought up. He went to the usual place of worship and stood up to read.

What book would He read? The Scriptures, of course. It is the only book to show us the way to God. The attendant gave Him an old book—a scroll of Isaiah—and He read the wonderful words from chapter 61, “He hath sent Me to [heal] the brokenhearted.”

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if some doctor lived near you who could heal the brokenhearted? Someone who could also open blind eyes to see and set prisoners free? There was Someone right there in Nazareth who could do all those things, and all for free. It was Jesus, the very person who was reading to them. They enjoyed the message and His gracious words of hope.

Then Jesus reminded the listeners of the days of hunger long ago when God had sent Elijah to a Gentile country to a widow who received from God enough food to feed Elijah and her family too. And He reminded them of Naaman, that poor army captain of a Gentile country who had leprosy and was healed completely through Elisha. Those were miracles, but that was not the way they wanted it. Those miracles to Gentiles hurt their religious pride, and they were furious with Jesus for reminding them.

God tells you the same message today. Never mind where you were born or your pride in your religion. Religious or not, God wants to save you, no matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, because “Christ Je-sus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). Jesus wants to save you so much that He died for you. Does this make you happy? or angry? or do you say, “Who cares?”

The crowd that day decided to get rid of Jesus. Their plan was to take Him to the top of a cliff and throw Him over it. Perhaps you have another way to be rid of Him - just leave Him out of your life, and out of books, and out of schools, and out of Sundays. Whatever your plan is, it won’t work because Jesus loves you, and He wants to save you from your sins right now. After you leave this life, you are going to meet Him, either as your Savior or as your Judge.

The crowd took Jesus to the hilltop that day, but He passed right through the middle of them and went on His way. They could not destroy Him then, for God’s plan was that Je-sus must die on the cross for sinners, and the crowd could not change God’s plan. Jesus’ love took Him to the cross to be the Savior for you and me today.

About a year later, Jesus returned to Nazareth. They were amazed at His wisdom and His wonderful works, because they said that He was just the carpenter’s son and they knew His brothers and sisters. So how could He be so wonderful? They didn’t believe that He was the Son of God.

Yes, our Jesus is wonderful! He was a real man, and he got hungry and thirsty just like all of us do. But He was also the Creator God, and this power could be seen in everything He did. We can’t begin to understand everything about Him, but we can understand that He loves us very much. Romans 5:8 says, “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” And 1 John 3:16 says, “Hereby perceive [understand] we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.”

Whether you will have Him or not, He is still the Savior of sinners and the Judge of all the earth. He has saved many of us from our sins. Will you let Him save you?

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 2, Why Are You Sad?

There were eleven apostles in the room that morning and others with them, and they were very, very sad. I think you could have heard them as they mourned and wept. They felt as if they could never smile again.

Maybe that’s the way you feel right now. Has something gone wrong in your life? Is it something that seems as if it could never, ever be repaired? Then listen to this story . . . God meant it just for you.

These eleven men had lived with Jesus for three years, and they had seen His wonders of love and power. They had seen Him healing people, feeding thousands and raising the dead. They had listened to His stories of seeds and weeds and fish and trees and pearls, and they loved Him. Peter had already told Him, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16), and they felt sure that Jesus would always be with them.

But now He was dead.

Joseph of Arimathea had buried Him in his own new tomb and rolled a great stone over the opening. It was all over. No wonder they were sad. . . He was gone. I cannot imagine how deep their sorrow was, for I have never felt for a moment that Jesus is dead. Have you? They knew that Jesus was not popular. The crowd had crucified Him like a criminal! So they shut the doors of the room where they were gathered, so that none of Jesus’ enemies would find them.

And then suddenly, without any doors opening, Jesus was there in the room with them! Of course they would be glad . . . but no, they were terrified! How could He be real? But He was real, and He told them, “It is I myself: handle Me, and see” (Luke 24:39). And that’s what they wanted - the real, living, loving Lord Jesus, and their hearts were glad.

The risen Jesus had a real body of flesh and bones, with real nail marks in His hands and feet, and a sword wound in His side. There is no mention of blood. His precious blood had flowed from His wounded side to save those men . . . and me! Can you put your name there too? Was it for you He died? Yes, if you want Him. Yes, if you are a sinner, because He died for sinners. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Those men were glad, and I am glad too. Are you?

Forty days later, He lifted up those nail-pierced hands and blessed His disciples and went right up into heaven . . . just like that. And He is there now, a real, living Man, the only One in heaven who has a real, human body. Never, never will He die again. It was once for all.

There are many who have placed their trust in Jesus and who are with Him now, but only their spirits. Their bodies are here on earth, buried or burned or drowned. God knows exactly where those bodies are. When Jesus comes on the cloud to give His great shout for all who trust Him, then those bodies will rise and be made new, and we who are alive will rise in new bodies too. “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and

remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Will you be glad? Perhaps “glad” is too small a word to use for the joy of seeing Jesus, your Savior, for the first time. Or will you put this paper away and say, “No, not for me”?

Why not look in God’s Word, the Bible, and see if what we have said is true.

“Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh” (Matthew 24:44).

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 1, Tree Climber, The

No doubt there were lots of trees growing outside the city of Jericho that day, but there was one that was very special. It was a sycamore tree, but it was not the big leaves or the sweet fruit that made it important. You might have walked down the road and thought the trees all looked the same, so what was so special about that one? Let me tell you the secret of that tree.

A great crowd of people were coming out of Jericho one day. They were crowded around a man named Jesus who could do wonderful things that nobody else could do. But there was one man, just one, who wanted to see Jesus for a different reason. He wanted to see who Jesus was - not what He looked like or what wonderful miracles He could do, but who was this man?

Have you learned who Jesus is? Jesus will never disappoint you if you really want to know. Once when He said, “I AM,” all His enemies fell backward to the ground. But they didn’t really care who He was. They got up again and took Him away to crucify Him. Now, if you really want to know who He is, He will show you.

The man who really wanted to know who Jesus was realized he was just too short to see Jesus above the crowd. But that did not stop the man. He ran ahead and climbed up into that sycamore tree and looked down on Jesus from the branches. Now do you see why that tree was so special?

Of course, Jesus knew he was there, just as He knows where you are this very moment. Jesus stood still and called the short man by name - “Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.” Now the secret was out, and the surprised crowd saw Zaccheus slide quickly down the tree and stand before Jesus. Zaccheus knew he was a sinner, but he was still joyful at the thought that Jesus was coming to his very own house.

Can’t you just hear the voices of the people crowded around? Their little trip was ended, and I can almost hear their mutterings: “Jesus has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner!” And that was true, but they seemed to forget that they were sinners too, every one of them. And not one of them had received Jesus joyfully as Zaccheus did. Have you?

Zaccheus was a rich man, and he was also important where he worked, but he had not been an honest man. It seems that Jesus did not say anything about this, but Zaccheus was feeling guilty about his dishonesty in the presence of Jesus. He said to Him, “Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation [dishonestly], I restore him fourfold [give back four times as much].”

It is good to make right the wrongs we have done to others, but this does not wipe away the sin. It was Jesus who wiped away all Zaccheus’s sins that day. This is what Jesus said: “This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.” Jesus was explaining that Abraham was a man who believed God, and Zaccheus did too. Do you?

Then the Lord Jesus adds the words that show that this story is for us too: “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Can you answer, “Yes, Lord, I’m a lost sinner too”? And will you receive Him joyfully, since He came to seek and to save lost ones like you?

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 1, Story of Two Men, The

There were two men who went up to the temple to pray. That was a good religious thing to do, and they went to the right place to pray, and they offered their prayers to the right Person. That’s a good start, isn’t it?

God tells us stories like this to show us what happens to our prayers. We are praying to someone we can’t see, and if God did not tell us, we might never know what happens in heaven when our prayers get there.

It doesn’t take long for one little prayer to go up from one little child right to the throne where God is sitting. God has no problem with distance or sound waves. This story brings things clearly into focus so we can see what happens.

The first man was a Pharisee, one of those people who liked to wear religious robes and make long, public prayers. He was looked up to as a leader of religion, and he prayed like this: “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, [cheaters and full of sin].”

What would God think of a prayer like that? This man did not seem to think that he was a sinner, but God says that “all have sinned” (Romans 3:23). And God says that all the world is guilty before Him (Romans 3:19). We know for sure God heard his prayer, because He records every word of it in Luke 18:11, and you may read it.

The Pharisee continued praying, telling God that he was not like the other man, who was a publican. Then he listed his fastings and givings, which are things people should not brag about.

Are your givings secret? God has an unpublished record of things done for His sake, but perhaps you think your record is blank. It is only things done for Jesus' sake that He can reward. Even if you can't remember what's on your record, don't worry. You don't have to remember everything, because God does not forget.

Then the other man prayed. Being a publican, nobody liked him, because he was employed by the Romans to collect taxes. Tax collectors were dishonest, and this man had a bad conscience about it. Perhaps he had taken money dishonestly from people and could not begin to pay it all back.

The publican could not even look up to heaven when he prayed, but he struck himself on the chest and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

We will not ask your opinion about those two prayers, because God has already told us how He received them. He says, "This man [the publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other." Justified. That's a big word. If you say you are sorry, someone might forgive you, but if you are truly guilty, only God can say, "Justified"! This means that you stand before Him as righteous in His holy eyes! No one but God could do this for you.

That guilty publican went down to his house justified, and we know this because God says so. Perhaps you are in your house now, or perhaps in a hospital or in a prison or on the street. You can pray that same prayer as the publican did, with the same answer from the same God, for the Lord Jesus has died to redeem you.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 3, Story of Ten Men, The

They were ten unhappy men. Unhappy because they were not only sick, but their disease had no cure. The law said that anyone having the terrible disease of leprosy must not come near to anyone, not even to their own family, because others could catch the disease. Each of those ten men had the miserable, lonely disease of leprosy.

At the time those ten men lived, there was no cure. There are doctors now who have wonderful success in curing leprosy, but they can never restore what the disease has done to a person's body. Only God can do that.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem when the ten men saw Him. Nobody else knew what would happen to Him in that city, but Jesus knew. It was just outside that city that there was a place called Calvary where He would die on a cross for sinners.

As Jesus came to their village, the ten men were near enough to see who was coming. They shouted with all that was left of their voices, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us"!

Jesus saw their misery, and He knew that their problem was deeper than leprosy. "Go show yourselves unto the priests," He told them.

Now, if you have read the law of God, you will know that the priests' duty was to say whether or not it was really leprosy, but the priests could not heal the disease. If the sick person really had active leprosy, he was shut out. And that's exactly the best any person on earth can do for a guilty sinner. Are you a sinner? Then nobody can do anything for your sins. Nobody but One! Only God! And Jesus is God.

As those ten men went to find a priest, every one of them was cleansed completely with not a trace of leprosy remaining. What excitement went right through them! They knew the priest had not performed the miracle of curing them - that was impossible, for they had not even seen him yet.

Now what did they do with their cured, healthy bodies? Well, what are you doing with yours? or what would you do if you had one? Maybe you can think of lots of ways to have fun, and lots of friends to go out with, and ambitions to work on. We don't know what nine of them did, but there was one—just one -whose heart was full of praise to God. Only one.

That one man turned back and with a loud voice glorified God. He was not ashamed of being the only one, for his voice was loud. And he not only glorified God, he fell down at Jesus' feet, thanking Him.

Jesus was glad, but He was sorry too. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Jesus asked. Sadly, none of the other nine returned to give glory to God and to thank Jesus.

God wants to give you far more than a healthy body. He wants to give you the forgiveness of your sins, and He will do this if you will call to Him.

Are you wondering, If Jesus is in heaven, how can I call to Him? Do you know about the Bible verse that says, "Christ died for our sins. . . and. . . He rose again" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)? He is alive in heaven, and His hearing is so perfect that He can even hear you think! Distance is nothing to Him. Call out to Him wherever you are, and He will hear and He will forgive every one of your sins. When He has forgiven you, get down on your knees and thank Him, and then tell others about Him.

Then Jesus said to the cleansed man at His feet, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith [has] made thee whole." We can't tell you where he went or where you will go after you are forgiven, but the wonderful news is that Jesus will never leave you or forsake you. Never! Not even if you die.

Think About God's Word!

1. How many returned to thank God?

2. How have your parents trained you to be thankful? What did Jesus thank His Father for in Luke 10:21?

Project: How many different things do you have to thank God for? You might start your list by reading Ephesians 1 and writing down some of your spiritual blessings.

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 2, Mary, Help Me!

Jesus was a foot-traveler, as poor men sometimes are. He came to the village of -Bethany where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house.

That was a good welcome, wasn't it? Perhaps if you wanted to receive Jesus into your house, there might be a few things to do first. You might need to tidy up and put some things out of sight, quickly turn off the TV, and be careful of the language you use. But it seems that Martha did not need to do any of these things. And what good would it do anyway? Where can you put things that Jesus will not know that they are there? Let's always remember Hebrews 4:13: "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

It is wonderful to welcome Jesus into your home. It is good to always have things in order for Him. Will He take all feeling of stress out of your life and bring peace to your home? No, not really. The stress remained in Martha's home and perhaps grew even greater. We will tell you the story.

Martha was a busy hostess. She wanted to do things just right for her special Guest, until she was quite stressed about it all and so upset that she became a fault-finder. Do some of you today feel the same way? Are you trying to do your best and others are not helping as they should, and you are upset and stressed about it? Martha was, and Jesus understood.

Martha had a sister named Mary who wanted to hear Jesus, and she did not want to miss a word. She sat at His feet and listened to all He said. Jesus was the Giver, and she needed Him. Do you need Him too?

But Martha was so upset with Mary that she asked Jesus, Don't You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to help me.

If we talk like that to Jesus, we have not learned to know Him. Yes, He cares about every detail of our lives, as only perfect love can care. Martha thought that the problem was her sister, but it was really in herself. The same perfect love and wisdom looks at you today and says, as Jesus said, "Martha, Martha." Just imagine Him saying your name like that, with double tenderness and understanding. He did not scold her, even though she had tried to correct Him. He put His finger on the real cause and told Martha, "Thou art careful and troubled about many things. . . but. . . Mary [has] chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Mary heard this promise, and although she said nothing, Jesus' words stayed with her. She was a listener, and this would not be taken away from her.

Maybe you know some busy ladies whose helping hands have served many, and those hands lie idle now and can't do anything. Those very same ladies now can be listeners like Mary, and what is learned will carry over to heaven. Sickness or age may stop our busy hands, but nothing can stop our learning more and more about Jesus and His love.

It is good to have busy hands in the service of the Lord, but only if those hands work in obedience and love to the One to whom we belong. Depending on Jesus gives us peace in our daily duties on the road to heaven. And nothing else gives us this peace. "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

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