



SERMON RECAP

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025

Change happens with Creativity

Series: The Change Makers

Scripture: Luke 7:36-50

Jesus told a lot of stories. He rarely answered questions directly, and he rarely explained his stories. He was a creative teacher who allowed his stories to work in the imagination of those who heard them. In this passage, he told a story that reframed the situation he was in, and he didn't even offer it as a direct response. He simply understood what was happening in the room, and told a simple story that reconfigured the room. Then he went on and reconfigured our understanding of the room again.

Think about the context of this story. Jesus is with Pharisees having dinner. He was gathered with men of status. They were ready for a nice, stimulating meal. They would discuss the Law, the intricacies of interpretation. They would talk about various teachers and schools of thought. There would be some challenges, possibly even tension, but it would be intellectual tension.

Then a woman comes in and breaks up the party. She is not named, but there are three marks against her. She is a woman. She is a sinner. She is from the city (some argue this is a euphemism for being a prostitute, but this is disputed). She disrupts everything. She lets down her hair - unheard of. She touches Jesus' feet - unthinkable. She kisses him, cries, and shows an outpouring of emotion - shocking!

Everyone witnessing this display and everyone hearing this story would be shocked. The Pharisee thinks to himself exactly what everyone else was thinking. Parables are meant for the hearers to place themselves in the story. And while this isn't the parable, every reader and hearer of this story is meant to identify with the Pharisee whose thoughts we are able to read - this is a scandal. Jesus should know better.

Then Jesus tells a parable about debt. Who loves more, the one who was forgiven a small debt or the one who was forgiven a large debt? The answer is obvious, the one who was forgiven a large debt would be more grateful. This seems to be the point of the story - to remind us that we are all debtors.



I said it reconfigures the room because it puts everyone on the same side. What was once Pharisees on one side and the sinful woman on the other, now becomes a room with all sinners only separated by degree. Jesus has properly reconfigured the room to explain why what she was doing was appropriate - not shocking. She was simply expressing the deep gratitude of being forgiven (even though she never asked for forgiveness).

Then Jesus keeps talking. At this point, it is easy for us to remain in the posture of the shocked Pharisee, but at least we have some empathy toward the woman because of Jesus' story. But Jesus reconfigures the room again. Jesus points out the lack of hospitality of the Pharisee. He didn't even give Jesus water for his feet. He didn't greet him with a customary kiss of friendship and peace. He did not provide him with oil - which was a normal show of hospitality.

Suddenly the room was reconfigured again. Instead of seeing the woman as the great sinner and the Pharisee as the one with a small debt, the truth is revealed. The Pharisee is actually the one who owed much. This is the creativity of the Kingdom of God. This is the new reality that Jesus was bringing to the world.

This is the power of Jesus' story telling. First he puts both the Pharisee (and us) and the sinful woman on the same side of the debt. Then, when we think we think the difference is just a matter of degree, he flips that too. The outside with three strikes against her understands the hospitality of the Kingdom of God more than anyone.

Jesus changes the perspective - twice - and creates a new order that is the Kingdom of God. This is the creativity of Jesus, and this is our calling as the Church - to think creatively as we make change. We can create spaces where stories are flipped, roles are reversed, and the Kingdom of God is made known.