

Weaving the Word

Simon the Pharisee

Part 51 – November 22, 2015

Welcome to where we're learning to ask and seek and knock, and search with all our heart

Solomon said, "It's the glory of God to conceal a matter." (Prov 25:2)

Moses said, "The secret things belong to the Lord, but the things revealed belong to us." (Deut 29:29)

And, Jesus said, "Everything concealed is meant to be revealed." (Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17)

God conceals His glory; what do we conceal?

Our sin! Not only from others, but ourselves!

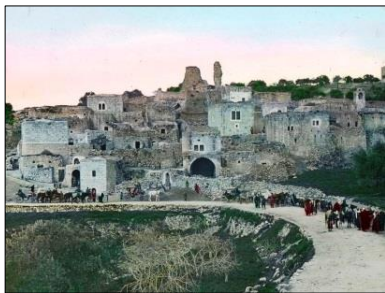
So, beware: if we conceal our shame, He can't reveal His glory ... *and set us free.*

We left off at the Leper Supper (the last supper before *The Last Supper*) at Simon the Leper's, a rich man in the tiny town of *Bethany*.



Remember "TahMAY!" the Leper, covered head-to-toe, who fell at Jesus' feet and begged for mercy, saying: "Lord, *if you are willing ...*" (Mat 8:2) "Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured." (Mark 1:42)

It's the *only recording* in the *entire Bible* of a miraculous healing of a Jewish man suffering from leprosy. *How very singular.*



The hillside city of Bethany c. 1890

Then Jesus ordered him, "... go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded ... as a testimony to them." – Luke 5:14 NIV

Now, "Moses commanded" that a live bird be bound to cedar and hyssop with scarlet yarn, and dipped in the blood of another bird, killed over clear water in a clay pot, outside the camp, and released in an open field. *And, that's just a fraction!* (Lev 14)

This "them" that Jesus refers to are the Priests and *Scribes*. And, the **Scribes are "graduate school" Pharisees, who search the scriptures diligently to try and interpret prophetic imagery.**

Two years later, a week before the cross, *Simon the Leper* hosts a dinner in Jesus' honor, which could only happen if he was *cured*. I think Simon is the leper that Jesus cured two years earlier.

I said it was *two days* before. (Mat 26:2-6; Mark 14:1-3) I was *wrong*. John goes on to say, the next day is Jesus' Triumphal Entry. (12:12-13)

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, [where we're told He slept each night (Mark 11:1; Luke 21:37; Mat 21:17)] where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor [“in the home of a man known as *Simon the Leper*” (Mat 26:6; Mark 14:3)]. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary [their sister] took about a pint of pure nard, [in “an alabaster jar” (Mat 26:7; Mark 14:3)] an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. – John 12:1-3a NIV

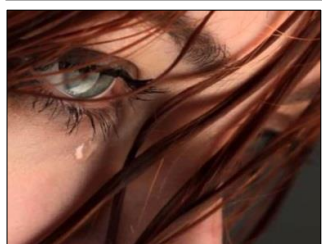


And, everybody gets upset because it's *crazy-expensive*! There's another supper, so similar to *this* dinner, it's often confused as one and the same; and, *then said* to be *contradictory*.

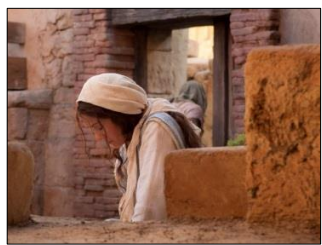
But, it's not this *last dinner* in His *honor*. In fact, it appears to be **the first dinner held for Jesus, and designed to dishonor**. And, the way I weave it, this comes **just before the showdown in the synagogue**.



Now one of the Pharisees [whose name is *Simon* (7:40)] invited Jesus to have dinner with him, [Why *this* particular “one of the Pharisees,” (who has such contempt for Jesus that he won't even offer him water to wash *His own feet* when He enters (7:44))? Must be the *top dog*] so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, [myron: myrrh oil; she comes to honor Jesus, and is quite upset when she sees how He's being treated] and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, [“Ah-ha!”] she began to wet his feet with her tears. [Making little smears in the dirt, and making clear the *dishonor* He's receiving at this dinner in the home of a rich man known as Simon the Pharisee] Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. [That had to break Jesus' heart: “She's trying to cleanse Me.”] – Luke 7:36-38 NIV



You see, **she's aware of her sin**. But, instead of driving her *away*, it drives her *to Him*. Why? **She's more aware of her Savior**. So, she offers *her sinful self* at His feet for His honor.



She's more concerned with His glory than her own shame.

Don't you wish we could know if “that town”, where Simon the *Pharisee* is hosting this first, bookend dinner, is *Bethany*?! *We need to find that sinful woman!*

[John writes] [Lazarus] was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume [myron: myrrh oil] on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. – John 11:1-2 NIV

But, how can we know that John's not referring to the later, Leper Supper? *Because ...* at Simon the Leper's, Mary pours *litra, myron, nardos, pistikos, polytimos, polyteles*, (John 12:3; Mark 14:3) a spikenard mixture, *so rare and valuable* the guests *and the disciples* try to stop her.

So, they're in *Bethany*, early in ministry, which fits in Jesus' journey at His 2nd Passover, just before the showdown, where the wolf pack Pharisees ignore Moses' warning and reject Jesus. Moses prophesied that a prophet like himself would come, (Acts 3:22-23) and if the leaders rejected Him, they'd be cut off from their people, as Miriam was when God struck her with leprosy (Num 12:1-13).

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a **prophet**, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a **sinner**." – Luke 7:39 NIV

Simon the Pharisee is in the right place at the right time with the arrogance it would take to be the top dog at the showdown. **When we downplay our sin, we dishonor God's glory.**

Which leaves us feeling more unclean, and even more unwilling to come clean, and more judgmental of the uncleanness of others.

Jesus answered him, [That's funny. Simon said inside his head, "He's no prophet." And Jesus answered him] "Simon, I have something to tell you." [i.e. teach you] "Tell me, teacher," he said. [lit. "Teach on, teacher." Ooh. That's not a receptive heart; that's a dare! And, that's permission!] – Luke 7:40 NIV

I think Simon the Pharisee is struck with leprosy to reveal God's glory, as a living testimony, of Moses' prophecy! You don't have to agree, but you *do* have to think! I'll make my case and you decide: is it wild speculation, wise extrapolation, or simply seeking and finding God's glory in the story?

Mary honors her Savior with her sinful self at His dusty feet. And, I think Simon will *find himself* shunned and weeping at Jesus' feet. It sure explains why he puts his face in the dust at Jesus' feet and begs for mercy, saying, "Lord, if you are willing ..." (Luke 5:12) But, he didn't need to beg; Jesus came to save *us Pharisees too*.

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" – Mark 1:41 NIV

He wasn't being punished; he was being saved! If Jesus were to say, "I have something to teach you," what would it be? Back at the dinner, Simon has no idea what he's about to learn.

"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. ["Oh, have you judged correctly! That's the lesson you need to learn. Shall I prove it?"] Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? [He doesn't. He only sees her sin. We do that. It helps us ignore our own. I struggle with this at Walmart when it's busy. "Simon, do you even comprehend what she's doing?"]

I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. **["You have poured contempt all over me"]** Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." **["You just need to see what all you're concealing on the inside; so, let's move it to the outside. So, you'll let me heal it"]** Then Jesus said to her, **"Your sins are forgiven."** The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" **[At this point, they're genuinely curious about His identity]** Jesus said to the woman, **"Your faith **["in Me"]** has saved you; go in peace."** – Luke 7:41-50 NIV

Just a few weeks after that leper returns as a testimony ...

... a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." **[Seems the leper's testimony had an impact]** And Jesus said to him, **"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."**
– Matthew 8:19-20 NKJ

But, He did; He lived in Capernaum. (Mat 4:13) That's where His base of operations was – His "fox hole". And, His entourage "nested" outside the towns where He taught, so they could get some rest. But, **He did need a place to stay near Jerusalem for the feasts.** And that last week, He laid His head, every night, in Bethany. **Was Simon the leper a Scribe, who opened his home to Jesus?**

If that one recorded leper was a "graduate school" Pharisee, who searched the scriptures diligently to interpret prophetic imagery, it'd sure explain why *he* was chosen to go offer the testimony. Right place. Right time. And, this time, right heart.

Because, ***"Everything concealed is meant to be revealed."***

But, one thing still bothers me: why was Mary allowed at the Pharisee's table?

Now, of all Jesus' parables, the Rich Man and Lazarus is the only one where Jesus uses an actual name. *How very singular.* And, Lazarus, who has leprosy, lies outside the rich man's home, longing for the scraps that fall from his table. (Luke 16:19-31) And, in the parable both die. And, the rich man asks if Lazarus can be resurrected in order to warn his brothers. And, Jesus does exactly that with the *real Lazarus*. But, is Lazarus the only real person in the story?

If Martha was serving at Simon the Leper's, she was likely serving at Simon the Pharisee's ... *if it's the same guy.* Was Mary allowed to fetch scraps for their brother? At the Leper Supper, in Bethany, six days before the cross, who's now reclining at the table with the rich man? *Lazarus.*

Wouldn't that be just like Jesus: to not only bring Lazarus back from the dead, but to save the rich man from hell in the process! And when Mary pours out her extravagant spikenard, pretty much everyone rebukes her ... except for Simon. He learned *his* lesson.

The more we realize how profoundly indebted we are, the more overwhelmed we'll be with His mercy and grace, and the more we'll just have to extend His compassion and love to others.