

Week of March 11-17

## **PIGEONHOLED**

**Scripture Reading:** Read Luke chapter 7

**Note:** *Three years ago, I preached a sermon from the section in this chapter where a sinful woman approached Jesus and washed his feet with her tears. Today's devotional is based on this message.*

Reputations, once gained, are difficult to shake. Such is the case with the woman in our story. She had a reputation. She had spent enough years plying her trade that perceptions had hardened and become crystallized. She was now known only as "sinner" to the Pharisee who had invited Jesus to his home for dinner. She had no name that he called her, only a reputation that described her. He pigeonholed her and failed to consider the possibility for change.

Jesus, however, was a different story and the sinful woman sensed it. She had to or she would not have risked greater ridicule by coming to the home of a Pharisee. Perhaps she had heard Jesus speak. Maybe she had seen him perform a miracle. Who knows? But something in Jesus drew this sinful woman to him. She just knew that he was safe to approach.

Her goal apparently was to anoint his feet with perfume. In the process, she seems to have become overwhelmed with emotion. Perhaps Jesus had looked at her with eyes of love - healthy love - a love that said "I accept you as you are and I invite you to a new way of life." Such overwhelming grace and love was too much for her and tears flowed freely down her checks. They splashed on to his feet, his dirty and dusty feet. Embarrassed perhaps, she began to wipe the tears off with her hair. Instead of rebuking her or humiliating her, however, Jesus continued to extend grace. She, in turn, responds with loving kisses on his feet followed by the sacrifice of perfume poured out on them.

What follows in Jesus' discussion with Simon the Pharisee sheds incredible light on how Jesus viewed sinners. All Simon could do was focus on what the woman was. He let her sin define her. Jesus focused on what the woman could become. He let God's grace define her. In so doing, he did what Simon could not possibly do. He freed her from her life of sin and gave her a way out. He released her from the shame, guilt and the reputation. He sent her away in peace and gave her a brand new start. Jesus still meets sinners the same way today.

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Ask yourself two questions: Have you ever felt pigeonholed? Have you ever pigeonholed someone else? If you answered yes to either or both questions, it's time to take today's lesson to heart. If you've been pigeonholed, reject the Pharisee's reminder of your past and come in faith to Christ to experience forgiveness and freedom. If you have pigeonholed someone else, commit to seeing them through the eyes of grace.

**Take-a-way:** *The world focuses on what we were, but Jesus focuses on what we can become.*