

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

The Uninvited Guest Luke 7: 36-48.

What do you think Jesus' feet would have been like after walking on the dirt roads?



Who would be comfortable to take off their shoes and socks and allow me to wash their feet this morning?

We read of this woman, a gate crasher to the party, letting her hair down and washing the feet of Jesus. In the culture of the time, a woman would only let her husband see her with her hair down as it was something secret, intimate, and special.

We are told that the woman was of the village, the town harlot, an immoral woman. There is no indication that this woman was Mary Magdalene or Mary, the sister of Martha although John's Gospel suggests the latter.

How do you welcome your guests as the host? Do you shake their hands, hug them, or give them a kiss; do you take their coat, give them a drink and a seat?

As I mentioned last Sunday, there were various social systems in place when hosting a gathering. Yet Simon had committed several social errors. He neglected to wash Jesus' feet; anoint His head with oil and offer a kiss of greeting.

Did Simon feel he was too good for Jesus, taking the credit for inviting Jesus, a prophet and rabbi to his house – look at me, see who is eating at my table?

Have you ever attended a function where seats were allocated, according to the status of the guests? I have experienced being one of the “in” people, seated at the front and being one of the “out” people, relegated to a table at the back.

To be honest, I felt more comfortable being at the back than the front as it felt that I had to “put on a show” for those attending, rather than just being myself.

This woman came to Jesus, exposing her guilt and shame. Occasionally our poor decisions, terrible mistakes and shameful actions find themselves “out there” for others to know.

This woman modelled how her sin and shame – all of it – can be taken to Jesus. He is the one who already knows every single dark corner in our lives.

How did Simon and the other guests react? They were shocked and appalled that Jesus would allow this type of woman to touch Him and kiss Him and anoint His feet. Their hurtful words were thrown around too easily. How would you have reacted to this situation if you were one of the invited guests?

**Perhaps you know what it is like to be pushed away.**

Tim Costello shared a story from when he was working with prostitutes and drug addicts in Melbourne. Tim had shared the same passage and one of the prostitutes said: “Jesus must have been a good bloke.”

She went on to say that, due to her occupation, she could fully relate to the woman’s treatment and repulsion by other guests;

she could feel the threat of violence and understand how much the woman must have loved Jesus.

In 2004 artist Michael Gough created an exhibition entitled: "Iconography." It showed Jesus in 1950s clothes, in London, wanting to interact with people. But the people were all too busy, attending appointments, meetings, having lunch, making deals. The only person who had time for Jesus was the hostess of a strip club. She recognised Jesus from a small image she had kept from childhood, an image of Jesus.

### **Do you have time for Jesus?**

Jesus uses a story to explain the actions of the woman as well as Simon's actions. The principle is simple – if someone forgives you – you will love them. If they forgive you lots – you will love them lots.

The woman clearly demonstrated her love for Jesus deeply. She had a strong sense of her brokenness, she knew her life was a mess, yet she sees Jesus as someone who accepts her anyway.

Simon, on the other hand, hadn't shown the same courtesies and despised the woman. Simon is a legalist and that is how he has structured his world. He thinks he has invited the righteous, but Jesus reveals his definition is upside down. Jesus sees the heart of the woman and the heart of Simon and He is more disgusted in Simon's heart than the woman's.

Behaviour always comes from the desires of the heart.