

## Pastor Roy's Sermon from June 12, 2016

Children—for what are you thankful?

What is grace? Why do some people get it? Why do others not receive it? Is grace mainly about being forgiven for sin? Or might grace be more about understanding, accepting, embracing the deeper rhythms of creation, of love, of mercy, of the interrelatedness of all of life. This woman who anoints Jesus feet with ointment and dries them with her hair. She appreciates and cares deeply for Jesus. She doesn't care about what anyone else thinks. Their opinions don't matter to her because. . .they simply don't matter.

She is filled with gratitude. Gratitude is not about impressing, or getting what we want. Gratitude is not about surviving or making sure justice is served. What is gratitude? Why did this woman love Jesus while this comfortable, popular religious man not particularly care so much? We know his name, Simon. We have no idea what her name is. Isn't that the way they preferred it? Oh, that's Simon, he is a good man. We wish we were like him. He's a good man to invite to a ceremony or a party.

And, "Oh, she carries the sin of the town around with her. We try not to notice her. What a mess. Her name? She gets called many things. She seems sad, while Simon seems happy. She cares about many things, but when we see her, we stay away, we don't know what to say and we don't want to be reminded of the pain. We're glad we don't have to walk in her shoes. We kind of wish we had Simon's shoes in which to walk.

How is it that in her pain and suffering, in her despair, she is deeply, deeply grateful for whatever good that comes her way. Who would guess? And why is she grateful? Why does Simon need to be asked if he is grateful? How did Jesus know?

Was it love? Had Jesus found that gratitude is obvious for the love that possesses it? The nameless, almost forgotten woman loved. Simon loved little. Poor Simon. And yet, most of us at times impulsively prefer the life of Simon, because of its ease and seeming goodness. We don't want the pain of the anonymous woman.

Sooner or later, we learn pain's lesson, we learn to be grateful—hopefully. We learn to love. We learn to receive grace where it is offered—to share it when we can.

Do you think Simon thought he deserved the life he lived? And did the woman know that it wasn't about her? Did pain teach her to hold on to her life very gently, to watch, to listen, to observe? Did pain teach her to be wise? Perhaps there are many teachers of wisdom. Many ways to learn gratitude.

I'm pretty sure gratitude is more learned by love than law. That's what Paul taught. Christ died for love, not to satisfy some law, but to show love. His mercy teaches us likewise. And we can do likewise. We can share the gratitude we have and cultivate it, help it to grow, by expressing it as the woman did. To let go of our pride and concern for what others think and simply live in the joy of gratitude and love.

Thanks be to God who fills us with gratitude and joy. Amen.