

“STAY IN TOUCH”

Luke 7:36-50

**THEME: What it takes to sustain a close relationship with Jesus Christ.**

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The most powerful form of communication known to mankind is touch.

It's said that people comprehend things they see much better than things they hear. And if you can get them to see and hear and involved in some way, the level of comprehension goes up exponentially.

But nothing measures up to the power of touch. It goes all the way back to our infancy.

Communication is essentially the meeting of meaning. I am able to get something that I mean across so that it means the same thing to you.

Saying, "I love you" means nothing to a baby. It's about as effective as asking, "Are you wet again?"

A baby's senses are undeveloped and untrained to respond intelligently to information.

So we communicate with babies through touch—skin to skin. Holding, cuddling, tickling. That's the most rudimentary and the most powerful kind of communication in the world.

There is a psychological dynamic in touch that nothing in the world can equal. It is so potent, that you can abuse it and use it destructively.

Throughout our lives touch remains the most powerful and the most intimate medium of communication.

When our Lord Jesus Christ gave his disciples the bread and the cup he said, "do this in remembrance of me." He said "this is my body." Maybe he wanted it to be a symbolic way of touching him—of intimate communion with our Lord. It's a way to help us to stay in touch with our Lord. I think as a church we are supposed to feel closest to Christ at the Lord's Supper when we take the bread and the cup in our hands—in remembering him. There's nothing magical about it. It's a powerful symbolism. Our Lord Jesus Christ chose to put the element of touch into it.

- Listen, please, as I read the account of a woman who touched Jesus and a man who kept a safe distance from him. It's Luke 7:36-50.

<sup>36</sup> *Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.*

<sup>37</sup> *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,*

<sup>38</sup> *and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.*

<sup>39</sup> *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."*

<sup>40</sup> *Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.*

<sup>41</sup> *"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.*

<sup>42</sup> *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?"*

<sup>43</sup> *Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.*

<sup>44</sup> *Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? 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.*

<sup>45</sup> *You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.*

<sup>46</sup> *You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.*

<sup>47</sup> *Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-- for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."*

<sup>48</sup> *Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."*

<sup>49</sup> *The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"*

<sup>50</sup> *Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

This incident took place in the home of a Pharisee, a religious leader. This man was not a friend of Jesus. Jesus' nastiest detractors were Pharisees.

Jesus did have friends. They were people the Pharisees despised—Jews who collected taxes for the hated Roman government and others called "sinners" (cf. 7:34).

- This Pharisee’s large home was built around a courtyard, which was an all-purpose space for cooking, dining, and visiting.

If a visiting rabbi was the dinner guest in such a home, it was quite common for the public to come in uninvited to listen in on the conversation.

One of the people who came into the courtyard uninvited was this woman. The original text says she was “a sinner in the city.” That’s a euphemism for a prostitute.

- A quick explanation, if you’re trying to picture this. At dinner people would recline on their left elbow on a couch with their feet stretched out behind, away from the table.

The woman stood behind Jesus as he reclined and she wept, and her tears soaked his feet.

She didn’t say anything to Jesus. She was not standing in front of Jesus where he could watch her every move.

This woman and Jesus connected through touch.

The incident in Luke 7:36-50 shows us some **signs of spiritual intimacy** by which we can measure our relationship with Christ.

## I. HUMILITY

The woman was humble; the Pharisee was arrogant. He considered himself superior to Jesus.

He presumed to pass judgment on both Jesus and on the woman.

Maybe he was actually glad when this woman showed up, because she gave him an opportunity to find fault with Jesus.

<sup>39</sup> *When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this (the woman touching Jesus), 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."*

Simon considered himself too righteous to allow such a sinful woman—human vermin—to get close enough to touch him.

He didn’t welcome Jesus as an honored guest.

<sup>44</sup> *Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? 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.*

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Simon the Pharisee was merely curious about Jesus who was causing such a stir throughout the Judea and the surrounding country (17).

Why not get him to come to his home where he could interrogate him?

- But what about this woman?

She was honest and transparent. Her ego-defense mechanisms had been completely dismantled.

Her tears of gratitude fell onto Jesus feet.

Without intending to call attention to herself, she couldn’t help it. She sobbed, she sniffled.

All eyes were upon her. This was probably awkward for the host.

- What was this woman really doing? She was worshiping Jesus.

When your spirit is captivated in intense worship, you are not awkward or embarrassed.

By her tears and her touch she let Jesus know, “My life is transformed because of you. You lifted me out of my sin and hopelessness, and I don’t have words to tell you how grateful I am.”

- How long has it been since you wept in worship before God? Some of you guys may be thinking, “I don’t cry. I keep my emotions under control.” Well, let me suggest that you learn to cry. There are some things deep in your soul that you cannot let out except through tears. Pride is the plug that keeps you from letting good stuff out.

Only humble people can worship God with a true spiritual intimacy.

[2<sup>nd</sup> evidence of spiritual intimacy by which to measure the condition of our Christian lives]

## II. LOVE

How do you know if you love someone? Your desire to give to that person is far stronger than your desire to get anything.

If you are in love with someone, you’re always thinking of things to do for the one you love.

- That’s one of the chief differences between love and lust. Love is a compulsion to give, lust is a craving to get.

Love is costly. If it costs you nothing, it’s not love.

The most familiar verse in the Bible illustrates this point, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)

What did it cost Simon the Pharisee to host this dinner? It was probably a nice dinner, but he was obviously wealthy and could easily afford it.

- The Pharisee had an agenda.

Have you ever been invited to breakfast or lunch by someone and you know he has an agenda? You just wait to see how long it takes him to get to it.

Simon expected to get a lot more than he gave. He would get some bragging rights among the Pharisees. He’d had the popular and controversial Galilean teacher, healer, and exorcist as a dinner guest in his home! The other Pharisees would want his opinion on this renegade Rabbi, Jesus.

So this was a sort of “power lunch.”

- When a guest entered such a home it was the custom to do three things. The host gave the guest a kiss of peace as a mark of respect. A basin of cool water was provided to soothe and cleanse the guests’ feet from the heat and dust of travel. A pinch of sweet-smelling incense was burned or a drop of attar of roses was placed on the guest’s head.

The Pharisee did none of these.

Clearly, this man was determined not to touch Jesus. When he saw that Jesus allowed this woman of the streets to touch him and kiss his feet, he was glad that he had not defiled himself by any physical contact with Jesus.

The Pharisee’s counterparts are alive and active today. They are religious, but when you look for the fruit of these people’s lives—the stuff that’s visible—and you don’t see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, then you wonder if they are authentic.

- How did Jesus make Simon see what was really happening?

<sup>40</sup> *Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said.*

<sup>41</sup> *“Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.*

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<sup>43</sup> *Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.*

<sup>47</sup> *Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-- for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”*

What did it cost the woman to show her love? Just about everything. She set aside any dignity she had.

<sup>37</sup> *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,*

<sup>38</sup> *and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.*

Jewish women normally wore a perfume flask suspended by a cord around the neck. A little drop of the costly perfume rubbed on the head or neck would mask any unpleasant odors.

She didn’t put a drop on Jesus’ head. She poured the whole flask on Jesus’ feet!

She gave the best she had, because she loved Jesus so much.

- Can you say that you love Jesus like that?

[3<sup>rd</sup> evidence of spiritual intimacy by which to measure the condition of our Christian lives]

### **III. GROWTH**

If you are in a right relationship with Jesus, you will notice changes in your life. It’s called spiritual growth.

The Pharisee was in the presence of Jesus but he was completely out of touch with Jesus, and there was no sign of any change in his life.

- I can assure that that Jesus wasn’t just stuffing himself and grunting one-syllable answers to his host’s questions.

I wish we knew what Jesus said before the woman ended the discussion by her startling actions.

- The Pharisee was in the presence of God, but he was unchanged. He heard Christ’s words, and he remained apathetic.

What the woman did spoke so loudly, but the proud Pharisee didn’t hear it. He was completely out of touch.

The man was blinded by his own self-righteousness.

He had eyes but he couldn’t see; he had ears but he couldn’t hear. He was completely out of touch with Jesus.

- Few things are sadder than this. There are people who hear God’s words presented truthfully and clearly, they see people worshiping Christ passionately all around them, but it does nothing to their souls.

They leave unchanged.

- Somewhere on a previous occasion this woman had an encounter with Jesus.

Jesus was always in the company of sinners, telling them of God’s love and forgiveness to all who would repent. Jesus had taken the broken pieces and made something beautiful of this woman’s life. She had placed her trust in him. She would never be the same again.

<sup>47</sup> *Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven-- for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."*

<sup>48</sup> *Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."*

<sup>49</sup> *The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"*

<sup>50</sup> *Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

This woman had done something remarkable, even sensational. She wasn’t trying to be dramatic.

Then Jesus gave her the assurance of sins forgiven and told her to walk straight.

It’s not a matter of how high you jump, but rather of how straight you walk.

People who are in touch with Jesus don’t just raise their hands and close their eyes and sway in a worship service.

Some may do that, and it’s good. But when they leave here, they must walk as Jesus walked. The way they live shows whether they belong to him.

They have the Spirit of Christ within them. You can see spiritual growth.

Are you able to worship our Lord Jesus Christ the way this woman did? Can you pour out your adoration to him from the most intimate part of your spiritual being, even with tears? Are you driven to give the best you have to him?

Or has your unwillingness to acknowledge your sinfulness kept you at a distance from Jesus? You’re often in his presence, but you are out of touch with him.

Are you ready to allow Jesus Christ to change your life the way he changed that woman’s life? He still does that. That’s what the true church is. It’s a community of people whose lives have been changed by Jesus. They have new life in him.