

A photograph of a rustic wooden table. On the table, there is a large, golden-brown loaf of bread that has been broken apart, with some pieces scattered. Next to the bread is a glass filled with a dark red liquid, likely wine. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wall or another part of the table.

CALLED UNTO

BROKENNESS – (II)

"And one of the pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meal in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of his head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment" (Luke 7: 36-38).

Jesus Dined With His Antagonists

It is interesting to note that Jesus was berated by the Pharisees just before he was invited by one of them to have dinner in his house. The pharisees were bigots, they rejected the baptism of John just because he did not fit their bill. John, they say came not eating bread nor drinking wine, and for that reason they said he hath a devil. But the son of man is come eating and drinking; and they say, behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners (Luke 7: 33-34). Their assessment of Jesus was insulting and demeaning. The Pharisees have been very consistent in taking this kind of stance against Jesus throughout his life and ministry. But Jesus accepted the invitation to visit and have dinner in the house one of them.

The lesson here is the humility that Jesus demonstrated by accepting the invitation to visit the house of one of the pharisees. Not only did he accept the invitation to visit he had a meal with the pharisee and his family while he visited. This is very intimate. Ordinarily no one will sit at table with people who are enemies, people who continue to make derogatory remarks about one's person. But Jesus broke down the barrier of enmity erected by the pharisees by reaching out to them. It wasn't easy for Jesus to do this but he did it because of the good that was going to come out of this situation.

Jesus accepted this invitation in the public in spite of the general perception of the people at the time. It was not a hidden invitation, it was in the full glare of everyone including that of the woman in the city who was a sinner, she saw that Jesus went in and sat at meal in the Pharisee's house. This woman apparently has been following Jesus and watching for the best opportunity to make a move to reach Jesus and anoint him. She saw that opportunity created by Jesus himself when Jesus entered the house of this pharisee and sat at meal with them.

Jesus was sending a message here. He went into the house of those who insulted and derided him, and he sat at meal with them. It takes a humble and broken heart to reach out to people who curse and spitefully use us. The lesson here is that we must learn to reach out and connect with others beyond our little fold, we must overcome the barriers that the enemy has erected between us. We must fellowship with a sincere and a clean heart. It is only then that we shall see true repentance and genuine revival in the house.

The Need To look At The Big Picture

Jesus saw beyond the actions of the Pharisees, he saw beyond the words they used to describe him, he saw the kingdom of God. Jesus saw the entire plan of God to redeem humanity. He saw the cross that was ahead of him, his heart was on the ultimate price he was about to pay for humanity, and he knew that someone had to prepare him for his burial. What was at stake for Jesus was far more than the attitude of the pharisees to him, it was God's plan for redemption that was at stake. For this reason, he was ready to humble himself and go into the house of the Pharisee to sit at meal with them without aught in his heart against them.

“And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.....And Jesus said, let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me.... she hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her” (Mark 14: 3,6,8-9).

We must always look at the bigger picture just like Jesus did. We must always refrain from our narrow, selfish and parochial interest. We must look beyond our denominations, our circle of influence and always see the big picture. “..... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising every shame that he suffered from those around him, and today he is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God” (Hebrews 12: 2). We must reach out to those who do not know as much as we know, those who do not have as much as we have. Let's come to think about it, it was a woman from the city who was described as a sinner, who the disciples of Jesus would rather send away and deny access to Jesus, she was the one that connected to Jesus in the most unusual place and under the most unusual circumstances.

The Woman With The Alabaster Box Of Ointment.

This woman with the alabaster box of ointment connected to Jesus in a way no one else did. She saw what others including the disciples of Jesus could not see. She saw and felt the death pangs hanging all around Jesus and felt she needed to do something to anoint and to prepare the body of Jesus for his burying. Jesus saw the bigger picture and connected with a woman without reputation, someone who at best can be described as an “outcast”. No one had anything good to say about her except that she was a sinner. This is the path of brokenness that our master taught us. Except a grain of corn will fall to the ground and die, it would abide alone. If we must experience the great outpouring of the spirit that is coming, we must tread a path that is hitherto uncharted. We must surrender our ego; we must give up our pride. We must lay it all on the altar, and look only unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

We were told that the alabaster box of ointment that that this woman brought was precious and expensive, so much so, that there were some around Jesus who felt what she was about to do with the oil was a total waste of money. They felt in their indignation that the ointment could have been sold for three hundred pence, and the money given to the poor, and they murmured against her (**Mark 14: 3-5**). But Jesus responded by saying to them “leave this woman alone, **why do you trouble her for she has wrought a good work in me**. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you will, you may do them good: but me you have not always with you. She has done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying” (**Mark 14: 6-8**).

The Alabaster Box Of Ointment Must Be Broken

The alabaster box of ointment had to be broken before it was poured on the head of Jesus. This singular act prepared Jesus for burial and opened the door for the salvation of the world. The principle is clear, our life must be broken if we must be a blessing to our generation. The Lord will hear our cry if we come to him in brokenness not being boastful and beating our chest. “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of broken heart; and saveth only such as be of a contrite spirit” (**Psalm 34: 18**). We must realize that it is not by might nor by power, but by spirit of the Lord. It is not by the will of man or by the zeal or energy of man, it is the Lord that shows mercy, it is purely by His mercies alone.

The woman never bragged that she had anything expensive to give to Jesus. She was broken and lowly in spirit as she approached Jesus. She probably sold everything she had in this world to buy this alabaster box of ointment to anoint Jesus and to show gratitude to Jesus, but she never talked about how expensive the ointment she has with her was. It was the disciples that noticed that what she had was precious and expensive. She did not flaunt what she had in her possession, she just wanted to get to Jesus, she wanted to get the attention of our Lord. Too many times we come before the Lord and the Lord’s people flaunting our gifts, our knowledge of scriptures, our experience, our achievement, our titles etc. Whenever we do this, it immediately stands between us and the breakthroughs we want in our lives.

What did this woman do? “And she stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment” (**Luke 7: 38**). When she finally gained access to Jesus, she was so broken that she could not look Jesus in the face. She was so ashamed of herself that she could not look at Jesus in the eyes. She stood at the feet of Jesus behind him weeping. What a broken spirit this is. Do we see such brokenness in the church today? “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite spirit, o God thou wilt not despise” (**Psalm 51:17**).

She stood behind Jesus at his feet and wept. She wept bitterly such that the tears that came out from her eyes were sufficient to wash the feet of the Master. She did this in the open. She didn’t think of what the opinion of the public could be about her, it didn’t matter to her what anybody thought of her, she just wanted to worship her Lord. She laid on the ground and washed the feet of Jesus with her tears. After washing the feet of Jesus with her tears, she began to wipe those feet with her hair. The hair of a woman is the ultimate glory of the woman “But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her.....” (**I Corinthians 11: 15**). This woman by this symbolism laid everything on the altar. She not only laid on the floor she used her hair to wipe the feet our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only when we empty ourselves completely of our pride, our ego that Jesus picks us up and fills us up with himself. We must decrease so that He can increase in us (**John 3: 30**).

Death To Self

Paul the apostle declared "I die daily" (**I Corinthians 15: 31**). "... Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (**II Corinthians 4: 10-11**). This earthen vessel must be broken, it must be taken out of the way. It must decrease so that He Christ alone can increase in our lives. The treasure that is within the alabaster jar can only be seen and felt only when the alabaster jar has been broken. We must bear about in our bodies the dying of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the life of Christ will be made manifest in us. We must die daily. The flesh in us must die, our ego, our pride, and our reputation must die. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit" (**John 12: 24**).

We cannot know true revival until we are truly broken in the hands of our Lord. We cannot bring forth the much-needed fruit of the spirit until we truly die to self. We cannot experience the fullness of the Rain we have so much prayed about until we are truly broken. Until we get to a point when we truly lay our reputation on the altar and allow the Lord alone to be visible and not ourselves, we shall continue to move around in circles. It is not about us; it is not about our denominations. It is all about Christ.

Until we get to the point like Paul when we begin to count the things that we perceive to be gain to us (the things that appeal to us and fuel our ego) as loss for Christ. Like Paul we must count all things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, we must count the things of this world, the things we think we know and have achieved as dung so that we might win Christ and he might be all in all in our lives. So that ultimately, we will be found in Him (not in our denominations, our ministries, our gifts, our programmes etc.) and not in our own self-made righteousness defined by the standards of this world, but in the righteousness which is of God by faith. That we may know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering (be a partner in his suffering), being made conformable unto his death (**Philippians 3: 7-10**).

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (**Psalms 34: 18**); "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (**Psalms 51: 17**). Job said "I was at ease (the place of comfort and indifference), but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, **and set me up for his mark**. Before the Lord can set us up for his mark, he must break us asunder and shake us up from our ease and our slumber. He will break us up into pieces so that it won't ever be us anymore that is seen but Him and him alone.

Paul knew this when he said "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, **I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus** (**Philippians 3: 13-14**). We must forget about our past achievements, our successes and count ourselves as not having apprehended (as knowing and achieving nothing) but reaching out and pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. May this be our focus.

***“The Christian grows rich
by his losses, he lives by dying,
and become full by
being emptied”***

- Charles Spurgeon

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