

♪ C Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live
A place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE WELCOME,
ALL ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE! ♪

All are welcome! That is the message of all the Scriptures we heard today. David is welcomed by God when his sin is forgiven. You know the story. David lusts after Bathsheba, the wife of his general, Uriah. David, the king, seduces her; she gets pregnant, and David has *Uriah* killed by putting him in the front lines of a battle. Nathan, the prophet, names his sins of murder and adultery by telling a story about sheep. [2 Samuel, chapters 11-12]

We hear the end of the story in today's first reading: David admits his guilt, and God forgives him. God does not excuse what he had done, rather he welcomes David as someone he loves, and David joins the Lord in condemning the sins of adultery and murder. David celebrates that gift in the responsorial psalm we sang today.

In the 2nd reading, Paul is talking about himself when he writes to the Galatians. Remember, he was welcomed by Christ even when he was persecuting Jesus by arresting his followers. Paul had been trying to justify himself by keeping the law. He was sitting in God's chair, like David was before him.

I often say that God has a chair. It's the chair God sits in to judge us. Only Christ, the Son of God, has the right to sit in that chair. We say in the Apostles' Creed, "He will come to judge the living and the dead."

But I like to sit in God's chair, don't you? I like to sit there because it feels like I have this [hold up a remote CONTROL]. It feels like I have control! God says to David, and to Saul - before he became Paul, - "You are sitting in my chair!" He says the same thing to Simon the Pharisee in today's Gospel.

You can paraphrase his words in this way: "*Stop judging this woman and look at your own sins against hospitality. You did not even treat me with common courtesy. You are even sitting in judgment on me and accusing me of becoming ritually unclean by letting a sinner touch me. You are misusing the gift of your position as host and head of this household.*"

The woman sees Jesus being insulted by the Pharisee and wants to show her love. She loves much because she knows she has been forgiven so much. The translation in the Lectionary is confusing - "*her many sins have been forgiven because she has shown great love.*" It is clear from the whole story that the forgiveness came first, and her love was a response to the free gift Jesus offers. That is why I used the translation, "*her great love proves that her many sins have been forgiven.*"

She is ready to let God forgive her, to let Jesus sit in his own chair and be the judge. And his judgment is clear: *"Your sins are forgiven."* Jesus is proclaiming the truth that God has already offered her forgiveness. All she can do is accept it. Her very position at his feet shows how ready she is to let God forgive her. [by the way, Jesus never says *"I forgive you"* in the Gospels. He always says, *"Your sins are forgiven"*]

To be at the feet of Jesus is code for being his disciple. Maybe that's part of why the Pharisee gets upset - Jesus is letting a woman be his disciple - and the Rabbis of his time only had male disciples. In fact, this woman is a better disciple than David and Paul, men so highly revered by Jews and Christians. *They* had to be shocked into repenting, she was already on the road to accepting forgiveness when she came to that banquet with her alabaster jar and perfumed oil.

We are all invited into the stories we hear in the Scripture today. Sometimes I am David, wanting to use my power to get what I want, no matter who it hurts. Sometimes I am Paul before his conversion, addicted to being right and in control. Sometimes I am Simon the Pharisee, sitting in God's chair and judging others. Sometimes I am Paul after his conversion, writing to the Galatians, *"insofar as I live now in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law [my own work], then Christ died for nothing."*

And sometimes I am the woman, confronting the last obstacle to God's welcoming forgiveness, and letting go of her own condemnation of herself.

Jesus says to each of them, and to each of us, *"I welcome you into my house and my heart. Your sins are forgiven. I give you the power to love extravagantly and even to forgive yourself and others by accepting my gift of forgiving love."*

♪ Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat:
A banquet hall on holy ground, where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space;
As we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE WELCOME,
ALL ARE WELCOME IN THIS PLACE! ♪

Scriptures for the Mass

1st Reading – 2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13 (*The Lord has forgiven you, David, you shall not die*)

Responsorial Psalm – Ps. 32 (*Lord, forgive the wrong I have done*)

2nd Reading – Galatians 2:16, 19-21 (*I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*)

Gospel – Luke 7:36-8:3 (*Her many sins have been forgiven, therefore, she has shown great love*)