

“STAY IN TOUCH”

Luke 7:36-50

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The most powerful communication you can experience comes through touch.

We're accustomed to learning through seeing and hearing. We'd feel lost without our smart high tech devices that use video and audio to command our attention.

People spend most of their waking hours listening to or looking at communication media.

But for all of us the primal and most dynamic communication is physical contact—touch.

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

- What is communication? In its purest essence, communication is the meeting of meaning. Communication happens when what I mean has a meeting with you. It engages your attention and enlightens your understanding.

I am able to get something that I mean across so that it means the same thing to you.

Is that what happens when you say, “I love you” to a newborn infant? Does it mean to the baby exactly what it means to you? It's actually about as effective as asking the baby, “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 is 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 it can be employed to comfort or to destroy.

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.

- In Luke 7:36-50 we find the account of a woman who touched Jesus and of a man who kept a safe distance from him.

³⁶ *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.*

³⁷ *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,*

³⁸ *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.*

³⁹ *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."*

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

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

⁴² *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?"*

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

⁴⁴ *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.*

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

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

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

⁴⁸ *Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."*

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

⁵⁰ *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—religious snobs.

Jesus' friends 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 probably 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 common practice for the public to slip in and 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.

- Let me help you 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.

She had been a prostitute. Physical touch was her default form of communication. Here she used what she knew best, but in a pure and beautiful manner.

This woman and Jesus connected through touch in a holy intimacy.

The incident in Luke 7:36-50 gives you some indicators of spiritual intimacy by which to measure your relationship with Christ.

I. HUMILITY. Luke 7:39, 44-46

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

³⁹ *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 the Pharisee considered himself too righteous to allow such a sinful woman—human vermin—to get close enough to touch him.

He didn't even treat Jesus as an honored guest in his home.

⁴⁴ *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.*

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

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

Simon had no interest in connecting with Jesus. He was just curious about Jesus who was causing such a stir throughout Judea and the surrounding country (v.17).

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

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

- But what about this woman?

She was honest and transparent.

Her tears of gratitude fell onto Jesus feet.

Nothing suggests that she wanted to call attention to herself. But she couldn't help it.

Oswald Chambers wrote, *'If we are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, then any progress is in the area of humility.'*

The woman sobbed and sniffled. All eyes were upon her. Simon must have been squirming.

- 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 filth. You gave me a fresh start. Words aren't enough to show you how grateful I am.”

- How long has it been since you wept in worship before God? Some of you 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 may not let out except through tears.

Pride is a plug that keeps Christians from worshiping God intimately and passionately.

Only humble people who are in awe of God's grace and mercy can worship God with authentic spiritual intimacy.

II. LOVE. Luke 7:40-43, 47

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

- 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. He was only interested in getting.

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

Simon expected to get a lot more than he gave. He would gain some bragging rights. 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.

- Obviously, this man was determined not to touch Jesus.

When Jesus allowed this woman of ill repute to touch him and kiss his feet, Simon was pleased 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 know it's just a religious façade.

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

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

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

⁴² *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?"*

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

⁴⁷ *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 what little dignity she had.

³⁷ *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,*

³⁸ *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 would mask any unpleasant odors.

She didn't put a drop on Jesus' head. She poured the whole vial on Jesus' feet!

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

- Can you say that you love Jesus like that? If you are a Christian you have been forgiven much. That's why true Christians love our Lord Jesus Christ so much.

III. CHANGE. Luke 7:47-50

If you are in a right relationship with Jesus Christ, remarkable changes have happened in your life.

The Pharisee was in the presence of Jesus but he was completely out of touch with Jesus. He had no desire to be changed by Jesus.

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

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

- How tragic it is when people hear God's Word presented truthfully and clearly; they see people around them worshipping Christ passionately, but it has no effect on their souls.

They come and go 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.

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

⁴⁸ *Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."*

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

⁵⁰ *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 go and live a new life with God's peace.

- People who are in touch with Jesus have undergone a remarkable change in their lives, and they celebrate it!

No longer are they tormented by guilt of sin. They are forgiven; they have peace with God.

Can you picture this woman bowing behind Jesus and worshipping him with a holy passion? Does that stir something in your soul, because that's how you feel about what he has done for you?

Or has pride prevented you from admitting that you need Jesus? You're often in his presence, but you are out of touch with him.

Are you ready to ask Jesus Christ to change your life the way he changed the life of the woman in Luke 7?

Christ still gives new life to all who turn to him with true honesty and genuine faith.

That's what it means to be in touch with Jesus. It's more than hearing and seeing truth. It means reaching out.