

**The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa**

3rd Sunday after Pentecost

June 13, 2010

1 Kings 21:1-10, 15-21

Galatians 2:15-21

Luke 7:36-8:3

Holland, Saugatuck, Pentwater, Traverse City, Petoskey, Mackinaw, Hoffmaster, South Haven, Ludington, Muskegon, Grand Haven, Michigan in summer, Is there any place you would rather be? What is it you love most about Lake Michigan: Fishing, camping, sailing, boating, swimming? Do you love just going to the Lake to see it? To walk along the beach. To have some ice cream and walk the pier. To sit in a chair, read a book, and watch the sunset. In many ways, Lake Michigan defines our life. It impacts our weather, our leisure, our economy, our appreciation of beauty. Ask people of Michigan to talk about an experience they have had of God, or about where they feel God's presence, a great number of them will speak of some experience of God that has been connected with Lake Michigan.

It is when I think of my love for Lake Michigan, that I feel most profoundly the deep pain that is being experienced by those who live along the Gulf Coast. I cannot imagine how devastating it would be to us, and to our way of life if the oil spewing out of the ground in the Gulf, were spewing out of a well in Lake Michigan. So much of what we know and love about where we live would be destroyed. Towns, beaches, economies, business, cottages, camp grounds would all be ruined. Life as we know it and love it would be forever changed.

When I seek the images from the Gulf, I confess that part of me says, "thank goodness it is them, and not us. Thank goodness it is life along the Gulf Coast that is destroyed, and not mine. Thank goodness I can still have my summer plans. Heck maybe our economy might improve because of their misfortune." Lord have mercy on me.

Of course, "thank goodness it's not me" is not really a sufficient response. It is certainly not what Jesus would say.

Another possible response is anger at BP. They deserve it of course. If their thirst for profits overrode concern for the safety of their workers and the environment. If they lied. If they bribed. If they covered up. If they cut corners of safety for profit. If they did anything that was illegal or immoral they deserve to be punished. Others no doubt deserve our anger as well. And, if they are guilty, whoever they are, they should be held accountable. After all, the guilty should be held accountable.

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But, the honest truth is that I share in the guilt as well. I love cheap gas. \$2.69 a gallon is wonderful. \$2.30 would even be better. Cheap gas, cheap energy makes food, travel, electricity, everything is cheaper. I can go more, do more, buy more if energy is cheaper. Drill baby drill. I am addicted to oil. The more the better. Just keep it coming. The cheaper the better.

The guilty should be held accountable.

In our readings for today, we see some people who are guilty, they are obvious sinners. The greed of Jezebel and Ahab caused them to murder Naboth and steal his farm. Their power blinded

them and caused them to believe that were above the law. God held them accountable. The woman in the Gospel was an obvious sinner as well. Simon and everyone else in the town knew what sort of woman she was. She was a sinner. Everyone knew. Jesus knew as well.

But the readings today are not just about obvious sinners.

Simon was a sinner also. He was not known by everyone to be a sinner. His sins were not quite as obvious. But he was a sinner. Jesus knew it. Simon hid his sins better than the woman did. He hid his sin from others, he tried to hide it from himself. But he could not hide it from Jesus. Because he hid from his sin, he could not receive the gift of forgiveness. The difference between Simon and the woman was not that she was a bigger sinner than Simon. The difference was that he could not accept the gift of forgiveness that the woman did. Because he did not accept the gift of forgiveness, his love was small. Jesus is saying that the ability to love is not rooted in sinlessness, but in forgiveness.

When we are honest, we admit that some sins are acceptable while some are not. ....Public sins--- promiscuity, prostitution, addiction, drunkenness, murder, stealing, abusing children. These are not acceptable. But often we act as if other sins are quite acceptable....greed, over working while neglecting our family, jokes about different races, ignoring the poor, mistreating immigrants, wasting resources, living cheaply off someone else's hard work, being part of a system that values the lives of the rich more than the lives of the poor, men more than women, turning our back on crumbling school systems, or crumbling cities. These sins almost seem to be socially acceptable...yet, often it is these less public sins that cause as much if not more misery in the world that the public sins do. But to acknowledge one's sin, is to acknowledge a willingness to repent of that sin. To repent is to desire change. And, do I really want to change? Or, am I like Simon not wanting to change. I hide my sinfulness. I close myself to forgiveness. My love becomes small.

What Jezebel and Ahab did was not acceptable. Whatever the woman did was not acceptable. What BP did in is not acceptable. These public sins demand accountability. Of course they do. But, aren't secret sins, the ones we keep hidden, just as unacceptable as their public sins. We likewise must be held accountable.

The Gospel this morning is not ultimately about sins...known or unknown, public or hidden. The reading is about forgiveness. The woman lavishly expresses her gratitude to Jesus for the gift of forgiveness. She whose sin was so great was so very thankful. Simon who did not admit his sin did not feel he had anything to be thankful for.

What about us? We are sinful as well. That is as true as the gas in my car. No, I did not pollute the gulf coast, I did not destroy their way of life. But, in my addiction to cheap energy I share the responsibility. I share the guilt. I share the need to change my life, to repent. I share the need for forgiveness.

May I have the courage, to kneel with the woman who sinned greatly. May I receive with her the gift of forgiveness. May I repent. May I desire to change. May I live my life in thanksgiving for the gift of forgiveness I have been given by Jesus. May I be as lavish in my love, and Jesus is in his forgiveness.