



Women of the Bible in Stained Glass: Unnamed Woman Who Washed Jesus' Feet

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses: women and men who have walked in faith, endured in hope, and loved with courage. As we gather to reflect on the life of your daughter, the unnamed woman in the Gospel of Luke who washed Jesus' feet, open our hearts to hear her story. May her strength and struggles illuminate our own paths. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lectio (Scripture Reading) – Read **Luke 7:36-50** aloud three times. Notice what words, phrases, images, or ideas speak to you through the text.

Visio (Seeing) and Oratorio (Praying) - Gaze at the stained-glass window and consider the scripture reading contemplatively for 2-3 minutes.

Notice:

- What details stand out to you?
- Where is your eye drawn first?
- What emotions or questions arise?

Ask:

- Where do you see yourself in this story?
- What do you want to say to God after hearing this story?
- What might God be saying to you through the story of this unnamed woman?

Activity: Read “Alabaster” and “Three Kinds of Sinners” from Drew Jackson’s God Speaks Through Wombs

Discussion Questions

- This woman had clearly encountered Jesus before—what do you imagine her first encounter might have been like?
- Where do you see yourself in this story—more like Simon, the woman, or somewhere in between?
- What might the woman’s use of her body—tears, hair, kisses, perfume—mean for our own approach to worship?
- What does “loving much” look like in your life right now?

Comments / Study Notes

- **Hospitality in First Century Palestine:** In Jewish culture, hospitality was sacred. A host was expected to offer water for washing feet, a kiss of greeting, and oil for anointing—all signs of honor and welcome. Simon the Pharisee neglects these customs, while the unnamed woman fulfills them extravagantly with her tears, hair, kisses, and perfume. Her actions expose Simon’s failure and invert the social script: the “sinner” becomes the true host.
- **Reclining at Table and Social Status:** Guests at formal meals reclined on cushions, leaning on their left arm with feet extended behind—a posture reserved for free citizens and honored guests. The woman approaches Jesus from behind, where His feet would be accessible. Her presence in such a setting was socially scandalous, yet Jesus affirms her dignity. This detail underscores Luke’s theme of reversal—the lowly are lifted up, and the proud are humbled.
- **Anointing and Embodied Worship:** Anointing with oil or perfume was a gesture of honor, healing, and consecration. In this case, it becomes an act of embodied repentance and love. Her use of an alabaster jar suggests intentionality and costliness—echoing other anointing stories (e.g. Mary of Bethany in John 12:1-8) but uniquely tied to forgiveness here.
- **Literary and Theological Themes in Luke:** Luke’s Gospel emphasizes God’s mercy for the marginalized, table fellowship as revelation, and the scandal of grace. This story echoes the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), where the proud are scattered and the humble lifted. It also prefigures later meals—especially the Last Supper—where Jesus redefines belonging and forgiveness around the table.

Closing Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
we praise and glorify your holy Name
for all your faithful servants,
who have shone with the light of your truth,
nurtured life with courage and compassion,
and borne witness to your love.

Grant that we, inspired by their stories,
may run with perseverance the race that is set before us,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. Amen.

