

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Sep 17th 2015

The story that Jesus tells in today's Gospel reading is clear: a moneylender forgives fairly large debts, and this is the cause for the men's gratitude. How Jesus applies that story here, though, causes difficulties due to how we translate His commentary.

I grew up with “Therefore I tell you that her sins, which are many, are forgiven for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little loves little,” and this puts her love as the cause of the forgiveness. In today's lectionary reading, however, we have “I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” And the Jerusalem Bible agrees more with this latter translation: “For this reason I tell you that her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her, or she would not have shown such great love. It is the man who is forgiven little who shows little love.”

These latter two put the causality in exactly the opposite direction of the first translation, and that interpretation fits Christ's story far better. This clarification of meaning is one fruit of the Church's returning to the Bible's original languages and earliest manuscripts as much as possible to increase our understanding and to clarify our interpretation of God's word.

There are two people involved here, God and each of us. Now God does not measure out His love for us; He does not love us because..., or when..., or if..., He just simply loves us at least as steadily and strongly as the sun shines. It is us, the other people involved, who limit how much of His love we allow to enter our lives and change us.

God's forgiveness is always there, ready for us to take as much of as we want to or can. We cannot be waiting for God to forgive us, since He already does, so I think we must be waiting to have the courage to love and accept love as much as this woman does.

Where are we in our relationships with God? Are we waiting for some revelation, some amazing event, or anything else of that sort before we can (or will try to) actually believe in God's affection and concern for us? Are we actually waiting for some proof of God's forgiveness, even after Christ's bloody death, before we let God's love change us?

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