

Worship

The True, Wholehearted Attitude of Worship

Scripture Reading — Luke 7:36-50 (KJV)

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. 40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Sermon

We worship the Lord at various places, including at our homes and in the Church. In our Churches we mostly follow a set Order of Service. At times I have wondered how sincere we are in our worship, as we rush through our prayers in competition with each other. I think we have a lesson to learn from the woman who gate-crashed to reach Jesus Christ while He was at a meal in the house of a Pharisee.

Her actions show that she worshipped Jesus wholeheartedly, quite unmindful of the others in the room. Wholeheartedly is the key: it means putting heart and soul into our worship. Let us briefly consider how we, too, can do this.

The word 'heart' consists of five letters, H-E-A-R-T, and within these five letters we find the true attitude needed to worship our Lord wholeheartedly.

The first letter, H, stands for humility. Nothing in the passage suggests that she so much as looked Jesus in the face; she humbled herself to such an extent that she never stopped washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. This stands in contrast to the host, who failed even to offer the ritual washing of the feet. We cannot truly worship without humility; it is a virtue we need to practise at all times.

We move on to the next letter, E. Our worship should be full of emotion; without expressing our emotion, we cannot practise humility. This woman was unashamedly weeping the whole time, unconcerned with the people around her. All that mattered to her was to pour out her feelings at the feet of the Master. How much emotion do we bring before the Lord, especially in our intercessory prayers?

The next letter is A. Worship without adoration is meaningless. Adoration is love, esteem, respect, and admiration. Think of the unconditional love with which Jesus loves us. Reflect on His life on this earth and on His teachings; He died for us while we were yet sinners. Can we think of Him without adoring Him in our hearts?

Next comes R. No worship is worth the time we give it without repentance. Sin is always with us, and confession before the Lord of all our sins, small or big, is a prerequisite for true worship. Let us learn a lesson from this woman, who was a prostitute: she wanted to turn over a new leaf, and see to it that she did. Without speaking a single word, she opened her heart, full of genuine remorse, before Jesus, and received total pardon for this act of hers.

Finally, we have the letter T. Thanksgiving is another ingredient of true worship. We need to count the blessings we have received, even when we have not asked for them from the Lord. How, then, do we express our thanksgiving? This woman poured out a flask of very costly perfume upon Jesus. She knew she would receive forgiveness from the Lord, and was so sure of it that she came prepared with her thanksgiving already in hand. Besides the giving we, too, may offer, there are many other ways in which we can express our gratitude: not repeating our sins is one; living according to the principles the Lord has given us is another; or, perhaps, all of these together.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.