

Ezekiel 23  
Psalm 75  
Luke 7:36-50

“I Will Put an End to Lewdness”

October 24, 2010

How can God have two wives?

In one sense, there is nothing surprising here.

Jacob had two wives – two sisters, Leah and Rachel.

Polygamy was common in the ancient world – and it was common in Israel.

But in Leviticus 18:18 God had forbidden marrying two living sisters.

And yet here, God takes two sisters.

Ezekiel gets this from Jeremiah 3:6-11,

where Jeremiah had identified Israel as the faithless wife  
whom Judah has imitated.

Now, Ezekiel grew up in Jerusalem

during the early years of Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry.

Jeremiah 3 says that this oracle was given in the days of Josiah –

in other words, back when Ezekiel was a teenager in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 23 should be seen, at least in part, as an expansion of Jeremiah’s message.

The division of God’s people into Israel and Judah,

should be seen in the same light as the divisions in the church today.

They *shouldn’t* exist –

but they do.

You may have noticed that Ezekiel 23 has no happy ending.

Oholah dies in v10 and Oholibah is about to meet the same fate at the end of the chapter.

The reason why there is no happy ending is because Jerusalem is about to be destroyed!

And in chapter 24 the siege of Jerusalem will begin –

and Ezekiel’s wife will die.

Jerusalem is about to drink the cup of God’s wrath to its dregs.

Psalm 75 tells us about this cup.

It is a cup that is given to God’s enemies –

to all the wicked of the earth.

We can sing Psalm 75 with hope and confidence,

because our Lord Jesus Christ has drunk this cup – the cup of God’s wrath –

and therefore Psalm 75 calls us to give thanks to God for his wondrous deeds.

Sing Psalm 75

Luke 7:36-50

### **Introduction to Oholah and Oholibah (23:1-4)**

*The word of the Lord came to me: 2 “Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother. 3 They played the whore in Egypt; they played the whore in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and their virgin bosoms handled. 4 Oholah was the name of the elder and Oholibah the name of her sister. They became mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.*

In verses 1-4 we are introduced to Oholah and Oholibah.

There is no riddle in Ezekiel 23.

Nothing is obscure here – everything is obvious.

Oholah – which means, “her tent” – refers to Samaria.

Oholibah – which means, “my tent is in her” – refers to Jerusalem.

In one sense “Oholibah” certainly reminds us that God’s “tent” was in Jerusalem,  
but the point of the similarity of the names  
is that Samaria and Jerusalem are fundamentally similar:  
like Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

But verses 1-4 make clear that they were polluted long before they married the LORD.

I want you to think about this.

In Ezekiel 16, God takes the pure virgin, Jerusalem, and betroths her to himself.

In Ezekiel 16, it is a fairy-tale run amok –

the pure, sweet princess suddenly turns into a disgusting whore.

But in Ezekiel 23, we discover that Jerusalem was not nearly so “pure” in the beginning.

When Israel was in Egypt – before the betrothal at Mt Sinai –  
they were unfaithful.

They played the whore.

In other words, God *knowingly* took a pair of whores as brides.

This puts a twist on everything.

Especially in the ancient world,

it is one thing to marry a pure virgin – and then be shocked by her infidelities.

But it is entirely another thing to take a pair of common stales.

Indeed, the way the story is told *here*,

it does not appear that Yahweh had very high hopes for them!

He simply says “they became mine” –

which is more the language of taking a concubine rather than marriage.

Why does God speak of Israel in this way?

Because, quite honestly, Israel *was* polluted.

God did not take to himself a pure virgin – spotless and untainted.

He took to himself a wicked and sinful people!

When God set his love on you –  
it was not because you were so pure and holy!

This story should not surprise us.

### **1. Samaria's Sin and Judgment (23:5-10)**

In verses 5-10 we hear about Samaria's sin and judgment.

#### **a. Oholah's Whoring with the Assyrians (v5-8)**

*5 "Oholah played the whore while she was mine, and she lusted after her lovers the Assyrians, warriors 6 clothed in purple, governors and commanders, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses. 7 She bestowed her whoring upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them, and she defiled herself with all the idols of everyone after whom she lusted. 8 She did not give up her whoring that she had begun in Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her and handled her virgin bosom and poured out their whoring lust upon her.*

Oholah – the northern kingdom – went after the Assyrians.

In Ezekiel 16, Jerusalem's fixation was on the gods of the nations.

Here Samaria is fixated on the *men* of Assyria.

In Ezekiel 16, the emphasis was on the beauty of Jerusalem,  
the seductress who flaunted herself before the nations.

Here the emphasis is on the attractiveness of the Assyrians –  
and her longing for them.

She belonged to Yahweh –

and yet she lusts after the warriors and governors of Assyria,  
and she devotes herself fully to them – to satisfy their desires.

Notice that idolatry is almost an afterthought here:

“she defiled herself with all the idols of everyone after whom she lusted.”

In her quest for these desirable men, she will do anything –  
even worship their gods.

And in verse 8 we hear that she hasn't really changed since her youth in Egypt.

Israel has always been a whore.

The patterns that she established in her youth  
stay with her throughout her life.

While Oholah is certainly an extreme example,

she serves as a warning to the young:

the patterns you establish now will tend to stay with you for the rest of your life.

#### **b. Oholah's Judgment (v9-10)**

*9 Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, into the hands of the Assyrians, after whom she lusted. 10 These uncovered her nakedness; they seized her sons and her daughters;*

*and as for her, they killed her with the sword; and she became a byword among women, when judgment had been executed on her.*

And so God recounts what he did to her.

He handed Samaria into the hands of her lovers.

You want the Assyrians – fine, I’ll give you the Assyrians!

So God handed Samaria over to the Assyrians,

who raped her, kidnapped her children, and then killed her.

Samaria is dead –

and she is now a byword – a mocking example among “women”

(among the other cities surrounding her).

## **2. Jerusalem’s Sin and Judgment (23:11-35)**

Of course, Jerusalem saw this,

and said – “Wow, that looks like fun! I should try it too!”

Remember that Ezekiel is talking about your “home town.”

Some of you have fond memories of your home town.

Some of you grew up in really strong communities

that were great places with great people.

But I doubt that any of you grew up in a place like Jerusalem.

This was the holy city.

This was the *one place on earth* where God met with his people.

The mountains of Colorado, Oregon, and Virginia may be beautiful,

but they cannot compare to Mt Zion – God’s holy mountain!

The people of Jerusalem had participated in the mocking of Samaria.

Their northern neighbors had not worshiped God aright!

Israel, at best, worshiped Yahweh with the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

And during the corrupt years of the Omrides (Ahab’s family)

they had worshiped Baal – and (it seems) even the gods of Assyria.

And sure, we had some bad kings in Jerusalem –

Ahaz and Manasseh even committed idolatry in the temple!

But Josiah fixed all that!

We are God’s holy people – living in God’s holy city.

We are not like Samaria!

Ezekiel says, “that’s true – you’re worse!”

### **a. Oholibah’s Whoring with the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Egyptians (v11-21)**

*11 “Her sister Oholibah saw this, and she became more corrupt than her sister in her lust and in her whoring, which was worse than that of her sister. 12 She lusted after the Assyrians,*

*governors and commanders, warriors clothed in full armor, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men. 13 And I saw that she was defiled; they both took the same way. 14 But she carried her whoring further. She saw men portrayed on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion, 15 wearing belts on their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them having the appearance of officers, a likeness of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea. 16 When she saw them, she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. 17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoring lust. And after she was defiled by them, she turned from them in disgust. 18 When she carried on her whoring so openly and flaunted her nakedness, I turned in disgust from her, as I had turned in disgust from her sister. 19 Yet she increased her whoring, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt 20 and lusted after her paramours there, whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose issue was like that of horses. 21 Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom and pressed your young breasts.”*

If Oholah whored after the Assyrians –

Oholibah whored after the Assyrians, the Chaldeans *and* the Egyptians!

And once again the focus is on how attractive these men are.

The issue (pardon the pun) is not idolatry, per se,  
the issue is Jerusalem’s attraction to the nations.

Verses 11-21 do not focus on the gods of the nations,  
but *the men* of the nations.

Your problem is that you love other people more than you love God.

You want the nations to like you.

You want them to think that you are sexy –  
that you are attractive.

And to put it simply:  
you want what they have.

Ezekiel 16 condemned Jerusalem’s prostitution to idols.

Ezekiel 23 condemns her whoring after the “love” of men.

Note in verse 14 that she sees the “images of the Chaldeans” –  
and when she “*saw*” their images, she lusted after them,  
and so she sent to them.

She saw, she desired, and she pursued.

It’s not exactly the same verbs as in Genesis 3 –  
but it is the same point.

Eve “saw”

Eve “desired”

Eve “took.” (Genesis 3:6)

Sin starts with seeing.

Verse 16 – could be translated “feasting her eyes, she craved them.”

Gregory the Great once commented that temptation takes root

because of our desires – because of our cravings.

Sin comes through “suggestion, pleasure, and consent.”

Temptation ought to disgust you.

Even the suggestion of sin ought to be repulsive to us.

When you take pleasure in thinking about the temptation,

that is where sin takes root!

Jerusalem does not listen to the voice of the LORD.

She instead follows her eyes, her pleasure, and her cravings.

She should have longed for the LORD – her husband –

but instead she craves the “desirable young men” of Babylon.

You know what your problem is, don’t you?

You keep trying to replace your sinful cravings

with other cravings!

The problem with inordinate desires is not that they need to be reoriented.

They need to die!

James asks what causes fights and quarrels among you? (James 4:1)

He says they come from your passions that are at war within you.

“You desire and do not have, so you murder.

You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

You do not have, because you do not ask.

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly,

to spend it on your passions.

You adulterous people!

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world

makes himself an enemy of God.” (4:2-4)

The solution to covetousness is not to set your mind on the “right stuff” –

but to set your mind and heart on Christ.

The solution to lust is not to focus on your wife –

but to focus on Christ!

“Redirecting” sinful desires simply transfers your idolatry from one object to another.

After all, when the Babylonians come – the bed of love does not satisfy her.

And she is disgusted by them.

That's good, right?  
She should be disgusted by her sin.

But it is not her sin that disgusts her.

It is the Babylonians.

She remembers the days of her youth.

She remembers her old boyfriends, the Egyptians.

“whose members [literally “whose flesh”] were like those of donkeys,  
and whose issue was like that of horses.”

Neither the Assyrians nor the Babylonians could satisfy her.

She wants the Egyptians.

Ezekiel is targeting our tendency to trust in man rather than the Lord.

He's not dealing with “idolatry” per se –

he is dealing with our tendency to rely on people more than God.

In our culture, that has worked out in the conviction  
that everything needs to be bigger, better, faster.

In our day, it is our trust in the “experts” –

whether experts in science, experts in technology, experts in psychology.

We do not listen to the voice of the LORD –

we listen to the voices of the nations (we listen to the world around us).

Today, we are told that *everyone* needs to have a “healthy sex life.”

Jesus said that some make themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of God.

And Paul said that some are called to a life of chaste singleness.

Today, we are told that every religion points to the same god.

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father  
except through me.”

Peter said, “there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”

Jerusalem sought what was bigger, better, faster –

She was defiled by her lovers – and yet all she can think of is how to get more.

God has turned from her in disgust –

just like he turned from her sister.

And so, in verses 22-27, God sentences Jerusalem:

**b. The Sentencing of Oholibah (v22-27)**

*22 Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I will stir up against you your  
lovers from whom you turned in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side:*

23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, desirable young men, governors and commanders all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses. 24 And they shall come against you from the north [4] with chariots and wagons and a host of peoples. They shall set themselves against you on every side with buckler, shield, and helmet; and I will commit the judgment to them, and they shall judge you according to their judgments. 25 And I will direct my jealousy against you, that they may deal with you in fury. They shall cut off your nose and your ears, and your survivors shall fall by the sword. They shall seize your sons and your daughters, and your survivors shall be devoured by fire. 26 They shall also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels. 27 Thus I will put an end to your lewdness and your whoring begun in the land of Egypt, so that you shall not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.

So far, God has appeared as a rather passive husband.

But now he takes action –

ironically acting through the very “lovers” whom Jerusalem had rejected.

God often does this.

The very things that we sinfully pursue

are very frequently the very things that God uses to judge us.

The slogans of the ‘60s are now reversed:

Make war, not love!

And God warns that they will judge “according to their judgments” –

in other words, the atrocities that are coming upon Jerusalem

will be in keeping with Babylonian and Assyrian practice.

One Assyrian king reported that when he captured a city,

“I burnt many captives from them. I captured many troops alive; I cut off some of their arms and hands; I cut off of others their noses, ears and extremities. I gouged out the eyes of many troops. I made one pile of the living and one of heads. I hung their heads on trees around the city. I burnt their adolescent boys and girls. I razed, destroyed, burnt and consumed the city.” (Block, 752 – quoting Ashurnasirpal II (883-859)).

Now, Babylon will do this to Jerusalem.

In verses 28-35, God reminds Jerusalem of her sister, Samaria:

### **c. Your Sister’s Cup (v28-35)**

28 “For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will deliver you into the hands of those whom you hate, into the hands of those from whom you turned in disgust, 29 and they shall deal with you in hatred and take away all the fruit of your labor and leave you naked and bare, and the nakedness of your whoring shall be uncovered. Your lewdness and your whoring 30 have brought this upon you, because you played the whore with the nations and defiled yourself with their idols. 31 You have gone the way of your sister; therefore I will give her cup into your hand. 32 Thus says the Lord God:

*“You shall drink your sister's cup that is deep and large;  
you shall be laughed at and held in derision, for it contains much;  
33 you will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow.  
A cup of horror and desolation, the cup of your sister Samaria;  
34 you shall drink it and drain it out,  
and gnaw its shards, and tear your breasts;*

*for I have spoken, declares the Lord God. 35 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, you yourself must bear the consequences of your lewdness and whoring.”*

It's a big cup – and it is full –  
and so when you have drunk it down to the dregs,  
you will become drunk –  
a sloppy, miserable drunk.

The cup of God's wrath is a common image in the scriptures.  
Usually it is said that the *nations* will drink the cup of God's wrath.  
But now it is Jerusalem.  
God's people must drink the cup of wrath – and be destroyed.

And don't complain, because you have brought this upon yourself.  
You deserve this – because you played the whore with the nations –  
and defiled yourself with their idols.

Here Ezekiel connects Jerusalem's craving the *men* of the nations –  
with their idolatry.  
When you are committed to the *things* of the nations,  
then you are committed to the *gods* of the nations.

This is what the church of our Lord Jesus Christ has forgotten!  
If you crave the things of this age –  
that is only a symptom of your idolatry!

Our little ones show us this so clearly – because their cravings are so transparent:  
they *want* that pacifier –  
they *crave* that cookie –  
their whole soul and body trembles with excitement about that toy!

And as they get older, their cravings simply turn to new things:  
they want those clothes – those shoes –  
they crave the praise and adulation of their friends –  
their whole soul and body trembles with excitement  
at the touch of that someone special...

Our culture would tell us that your wants, your needs, your cravings  
are just normal.

**No! they're not!**

Your wants, your needs, your cravings  
are a disoriented perversion of normal!  
You were created for God!

If you do not want him more than anything else –  
then you are perverted!  
If your soul and body do not tremble with longing at the thought of his touch –  
then you are a disgusting, twisted whore!

Jesus said to those who were fixated on their own needs, wants and cravings,  
Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,  
(“seek me” he said)  
and then all these things – all the things *you really need* –  
will be added to you.

The first thing you need to believe is that God knows what he is doing.  
The second thing you need to believe is that God knows what he is doing *with you*.

Your problem (like Oholibah’s) is that you have “forgotten” the Lord –  
and cast him behind your back.  
And what makes it worse, is that this is a deliberate and intentional forgetting.

### **3. “Never Were Such Devoted Sisters...”: The Judgment of Oholah and Oholibah (23:36-49)**

Do you know the old song, “Sisters” from the movie “White Christmas”?  
With Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye impersonating the sisters?  
“Sisters, sisters, never were such devoted sisters!”

Well, Oholah and Oholibah are truly devoted sisters.

By the way, in Hebrew, there is a very different concept of being “devoted” –  
namely, being *devoted* to destruction!

Oholah and Oholibah are truly “devoted sisters.”  
(I’m sorry for ruining that song for you –  
but it has been years since I could listen to it without this connection,  
so I figured I should ruin it for you, too!)

#### **a. Their Abominations: Adultery, Bloodshed, Idolatry, Infanticide (v36-45)**

36 The Lord said to me: “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Declare to them their abominations. 37 For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. With their idols they have committed adultery, and they have even offered up [5] to them for food the children whom they had borne to me. 38 Moreover, this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my Sabbaths. 39 For when they had slaughtered their children in sacrifice to their idols, on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it. And behold, this is what they did in my house. 40 They even sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and behold, they came. For them you bathed yourself, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with ornaments. 41 You sat on a stately couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed my incense and my oil. 42 The sound of a carefree multitude was with her; and with men of the common sort, drunkards [6] were brought from the wilderness; and they put bracelets on the hands of the women, and beautiful crowns on their heads.

Verses 36-42 detail the charges against the sisters.

Their abominations are a fundamental violation of their covenant bond with Yahweh, their true husband.

The basic charge (v37a) is adultery and bloodshed.

The evidence is adultery with their idols,  
and offering up their children as sacrificial food.

And what is worse, they have done this on the Sabbath!

And they have done this in my temple – my sanctuary.

Sin is always bad – but there are times and places where it is worse.

Our Larger Catechism talks about the “aggravations” of sin in a similar way.

It is always a sin to bear false witness.

But if you bear false witness during the public worship of God,  
that’s even worse!

I think we have become pragmatists in our view of sin.

We tend to think only in terms of how sin affects other people.

But God says that our sin affects *him*.

You have sinned against God in his holy temple –  
you have sinned against God on his holy day.

And that makes it worse!

Verses 43-45 then pass judgment.

43 “Then I said of her who was worn out by adultery, Now they will continue to use her for a whore, even her! 44 For they have gone in to her, as men go in to a prostitute. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, lewd women! 45 But righteous men shall pass judgment on them with the sentence of adulteresses, and with the sentence of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses, and blood is on their hands.”

Today we are hearing about “sex addiction” –  
that people become so “addicted” to sex that it consumes them.

There is nothing new under the sun!

God says that sin is like sex.

The more you have, the more you want,  
but the more you get, the less it satisfies.  
Oholibah is worn out by her adultery –  
but she can’t stop.

The outsider looking in, would say,  
“why are you doing this? – you are just destroying yourself!”

But sin is not merely a choice.  
Sin becomes a habit – it becomes an ingrained pattern.  
Sin becomes your master –  
once you “consented” to sin;  
now sin controls you.  
Just try saying no to your pimp!

But God is going to deal with Jerusalem’s sin.

How?

“righteous men shall pass judgment” on Oholah and Oholibah.  
They will receive the sentence of adulteresses – of those who shed blood.

In other words,  
Jerusalem must die.  
The prostitute will be executed.

**b. The Final Sentence of Oholah and Oholibah (v46-49)**

*46 For thus says the Lord God: “Bring up a vast host against them, and make them an object of terror and a plunder. 47 And the host shall stone them and cut them down with their swords. They shall kill their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses. 48 Thus will I put an end to lewdness in the land, that all women may take warning and not commit lewdness as you have done. 49 And they shall return your lewdness upon you, and you shall bear the penalty for your sinful idolatry, and you shall know that I am the Lord God.”*

How does God put an end to lewdness in the land?

By killing the lewd.

Please understand!

It is not that “your sin” must die.  
It is that *you* must die.

The warning at the end of the chapter is rather curious:

“that all women may take warning and not commit lewdness as you have done.”

Some have seen this as a misogynistic passage –  
that it is “against women.”

Certainly it condemns these two women!

But in the very next passage – in Ezekiel 24 –

Ezekiel’s wife will be called “the delight of your eyes.”

Let me ask you, women,

as I read Ezekiel 23,

how many of you said, “he’s describing me!”

Ezekiel 23 is not designed to condemn women in general.

Indeed, the “women” that he addresses in the chapter are cities,  
and so the warning, in one sense, is addressed to all cities.

All the cities of the earth – all the nations –

are hereby warned not to engage in idolatry and oppression!

Ezekiel is taking the worst sin you can imagine –

the sin that rips the social and moral fabric to shreds –

the wife who engages in public adultery,

slaughtering her own children to appease her lovers –

that’s what idolatry and the fear of man is like.

### **Conclusion: Hope for Oholibah**

There is no hope in Ezekiel 23.

And yet I have titled the conclusion,

“Hope for Oholibah.”

Why?

Because there came a night when one of Oholibah’s daughters –

a woman fallen into many sins –

pursued yet another man,

and yet this time, not another man.

For with eyes clearly opened, she perceived his divinity –

she understood something of who he was,

and also, something of what he would do.

And so she brought an alabaster flask of ointment,

of scented myrrh – and broke it and poured it over his feet.

And she wept, washing his feet with her tears – and her hair.

There are three accounts of the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet with her tears.

In Luke 7 we learn that she was a prostitute (a “sinner”).

From Matthew 26, we learn that she does this to prepare Jesus for his burial.  
It is also worth noting that in Matthew 26 (as in Mark 14)  
the anointing happens right after Jesus says  
that he will come in judgment against Jerusalem.

In other words, right after Jesus says,  
Remember Ezekiel – well, it didn't work last time –  
so I'm coming after Oholibah again...

The ninth century nun, Cassia, wrote a hymn that captures the whole scene very well:

“Perceiving thy divinity, O Lord,  
a woman fallen into many sins  
bears scented myrrh with dignity to thee,  
before thy burial anointing thee  
with lamentation and with fragrant oil.”

“Woe be to me, she cries, for darkness falls.  
With stings of mad desire and lust for sin  
a dark and moonless night envelops me.  
Receive the wellspring of my tears, O Lord,  
who gathers ocean waters into clouds.”

After all, she's a prostitute – she's a whore –  
she's Oholibah's daughter!  
And she knows it!  
But she also knows that this One is her only hope!

“Incline to me, for thou hast bended heav'n  
by thine ineffable self-emptying.  
I kiss thy feet and wipe them with my hair,  
the same pure feet whose sound at dusk Eve heard:  
in Paradise she hid herself in fear.”

The daughter of Eve (the first sinner) –  
The daughter of Jerusalem (the whore) –  
now pours out her tears on the feet of the one from whom Eve fled,  
the one who had poured out his wrath on Jerusalem –  
and was about to do so once again!

What is it that drew her to him?

“O who can count my multitude of sins?  
Or who can plumb thy judgments deep abyss?  
Incline to me, O Savior of my soul,  
turn not away from me, thy humble maid,  
for mercy without measure comes from thee.”

Wait!

Can it be?  
Can a prostitute become a maid?

Certainly Simon and his friends knew better:

*If this man were a prophet,  
he would have known who and what sort of woman this is  
who is touching him,  
for she is a sinner!*

Note that Jesus did not deny this!

Truly, she is a sinner.  
Here is Oholibah's daughter –  
she has followed Oholibah's pattern –  
and she deserves death.

But Jesus says to Simon,  
that the one who is forgiven much, loves much –  
and the one who is forgiven little, loves little.  
“Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven –  
for she loved much.”

This woman has turned her heart and her affection to Jesus.

And Jesus said to her three things.  
And these three things are all that you ever need to hear.  
Indeed, these three things are the structure of our liturgy every week.

Your sins are forgiven.  
Your faith has saved you.  
Go in peace.

And because you have been forgiven much,  
love much!

We are to be a place where “sinners” find forgiveness and peace.  
When people like Oholibah hear that we are in town,  
they should respond like her!

Wow!

Do you mean to say that there is a place in the Kingdom of God for me?  
Because our love for one another, and our love for those around us,  
should cause people to say:  
They love much—they must have been forgiven much!