



“Conversations with a Savior: A Sinner”

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
5:30 p.m. Saturday, June 11, 2016
The Reverend John H. Brock
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Galatians 2:15-21; Luke 7:36-8:3

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

What type of person are you? By that I mean, have you ever taken one of those personality test? And not the ones that show up on Facebook. I mean something like the Myers & Briggs Personality Type. That's where they say, according to their website (<http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/>) that

The purpose of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) personality inventory is to make the theory of psychological types described by C. G. Jung understandable and useful in people's lives.

There are “sixteen distinctive personality types” that are broken into four sets of two. The first set is **Extraversion or Introversion** and to quote the descriptions from the website:

Do you prefer to focus on the outer world or on your own inner world?

This is designated by the letters E and I.

Sensing or Intuition:

Do you prefer to focus on the basic information you take in or do you prefer to interpret and add meaning?

This is S and N.

Thinking or Feeling are next:

When making decisions, do you prefer to first look at logic and consistency or first look at the people and special circumstances?

Which become T and F.

And finally **Judging or Perceiving:**

In dealing with the outside world, do you prefer to get things decided or do you prefer to stay open to new information and options?

These are J and P.

There are no “wrong” or “bad” personality types. and many people generally fall somewhere along the spectrum of each pairing. But you would be listed as the one that you “score” 51% in. or, you could be Very Strong on one of them. As example, when I first took this survey, I was listed as an ISTJ: Introverted Sensing Thinking Judging. When I took an abbreviated version of it a few months ago, I came out as an ISTP. My Perceiving was now stronger than my Judging. So, I changed a bit. We all change throughout our lifetime. And that's alright. But all of us fall somewhere along one of those sixteen personality types.

And the reason I bring all this up is that, did you notice in our gospel reading tonight, that we had a woman who was pegged with a personality type as soon as she walked in the door? She was labeled with a personality type by someone who didn't realize that he fit the same description.

Jesus has been invited to eat with a Pharisee. Remember that Pharisees are like teachers of religion. Which meant, at the least, that they were teachers of the Law of Moses as well (sometimes they're even portrayed as lawyers). So this means that this fellow is well versed in the *dos & don'ts* of what is permissible and what is not. Jesus is at this fellow's house. We don't know if they've started eating yet, or are just sitting around, trading pleasantries, but this woman walks in. She comes in, apparently uninvited, because, **first**, the author knows her type, and *then* the Pharisee identifies her type, not as an ISTJ or an ENFP or any of those Myers Briggs types, but rather, she is typed as a **sinner**.

Realistically, we know almost nothing about her. She enters the house alone, so she probably does not have a male in her life. She has an alabaster jar of ointment, so she must have some type of income to be able to make an expensive purchase perfume. We know she has long hair, because she uses it to dry Jesus' feet. And we speculate about who this woman is, this woman who is not afraid to touch a man to whom she is not related, this woman who has loose hair in public, who can afford expensive things. So most of us probably come to the conclusion that - even though scripture only identifies her as a *sinner* - she is a "woman of ill repute"; that is to say, a prostitute.

And in our story, she begins to do things for Jesus that would usually be done by the host. But, *apparently*, the host has neglected, or forgotten, or is purposefully ignoring those social mores' that say when a guest enters your house, you greet them warmly and offer them opportunity to clean the dust, dirt and crap off of their feet, because sanitation is weak, and if you wore any kind of foot apparel, it's sandals. The Pharisee has done none of this. This woman, this uninvited sinner, has.

Jesus, either knowing, or sensing, what the Pharisee is thinking, presents the Pharisee with a story that puts him in his place. But that he has to go on and basically spell it out makes me wonder if the Pharisee *did* comprehend what Jesus was saying to him, which is, if you've sinned much, and been thusly forgiven, that the love and joy flowing from that forgiveness will be that much *greater* than from the one who hasn't sinned that much at all, and then, hasn't much of which to be forgiven. (I have long wondered if this is the basis of Martin Luther's famous quote "Sin Boldly", but we almost always ignore the rest: *believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly.*)

So what type of person do you think you are? Are you like this woman? I don't mean a prostitute, I mean, are you a *sinner*? Or are you like the Pharisee, one who is able to recognize the failings when you see them? Are you like the woman, willing to open yourself to ridicule and shame in order to express your own sorrow? Are you like the Pharisee, aware of the failings of others, while ignoring the failings of our own selves?

Or are you some combination of both of them? That's what I think. That's the type of people I think we all are. Not E or I, not S or N, not T or F, not J or P: I think human beings, **all** of us have at least **one type** in common: I think we are, all of us, S-squared: Sinner, **and** Saint. We are both of them, simultaneously. And I say that because we know that, like we said during our opening confession

Our sins hurt others and diminish us.

All of us do it. All of us sin. We sin and we cannot **earn** God's love. God's love is a gift of grace, given to us. we heard it in the words Jesus spoke to the woman: Your faith has saved you; we heard it in the letter to the Galatians:

¹⁶ yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

That's the type of people we are: Forgiven sinners.

Isn't that, really, the best type to be?

Amen.

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