***CL 1 Christians believe God creates people to live in relationship with him and with each other***

Biblical Literacy activity: Recount of Jesus and the sinful woman **Luke 7: 36-50**

**What do the theological notes say?**

* Humans are a special creation of God- unique different to all other creations
* Genesis 2: 7 he breathed his breath into us
* We therefore have a horizontal relationship with the rest of God’s creation because like them we are created from the Earth
* We also have a unique vertical relationship with God because we contain his breath- created in his image
* No two humans are identical;- each has gifts and abilities
* However these gifts do not determine our worth before God- all equal

**Theological notes** say “Human worth does not depend on people’s abilities, talents or achievements; nor is it diminished by illness, handicap, age or failure of any kind. Human worth certainly has nothing to do with race, colour, gender, distinctive characteristics or abilities, or anything else that distinguishes one human being from another” P 38 Green book

Matthew 25:40 “for as much as you do for the least of them, so you have done for me”

**WITH THIS IN MIND WE GO TO LUKE:**

Luke was written around 70-100 AD. At this time there was conflict between the synagogue and traditional Jewish followers and the new Church where non-jews came based on their belief of the Good News provided by the life of Christ. This is important in this story about Jesus because he is challenging the idea of people being of different worth- who ar worthy of God’s time and who are not. Luke was writing to spread the Good News. He knew the message of Christ was for everyone irrespective of wealth, social status, religious affiliation, race etc. This will influence the choice of events he decides to share. Lastly the chapters form 4 to 9 focus on the teachings of Jesus. It’s where we see him heal the sick and cast out demons. It’s also where we hear Jesus speaking with absolute authority and as part of this predicting his own death to his disciples.

**Reading Luke 7: 35-50**

What are our first observations from this recount?

1. He is dining with the Pharisees- the people who hold position in society
2. He is approached by an immoral woman- her immorality could be anything but we assume a prostitute (often used to represent the outcast and unloved) – she approaches from behind him- too in awe to come straight up to him, although because of the traditional way they sat, she probably couldn’t get to his feet.
3. Her first reactions are to kneel and then to cry. She then becomes fully involved kissing his feet, pouring an expensive perfume over them, wiping his feet with her hair (because she has no cloth to use). Also letting her hair loose was a scandalous (grounds for divorce) She puts everything at risk- discarding all social rules and practices
4. The Pharisee doesn’t say anything at first but he thinks quite a bit- how can he let someone so unworthy touch him.
5. On this basis, he mentally questions who Jesus is, even though he addresses him as teacher in his first verbalisation.
6. Jesus knows what he is thinking. This is not the first time. In Luke 5:22 Jesus tells the Pharisees who are questioning his forgiving of sins (paralysed man healed) “I know what you are thinking”
7. How does Jesus react- his first response is to the Pharisee. He removes the immediate reprimand by telling a parable of the forgiven debt. This would have made the Pharisee feel quite at ease as it isn’t directed against him – or so he thinks. Jesus asks him questions checking he understands the story.
8. Jesus then turns the story to their situation – the woman has given something very precious (just as the 500 pieces in his story was precious) – he questions who loves him more- the Pharisee or the sinful woman?
9. Jesus then addresses the social improprieties of the Pharisee himself- you didn’t offer me water to wash my feet (dusty), you didn’t greet me with a kiss(Middle eastern custom to place a kiss on each cheek, even today), you didn’t anoint my head (sign of honouring respected guests)
10. Jesus then forgives her sins. Is it because of her good deeds? She washed his feet and used expensive perfume. NO he tells the Pharisees she has shown great love to him, grateful that he has forgiven her sins- her actions are her response to this. He reprimands the Pharisee again - by not welcoming him properl,y he has shown little love and so he will receive little forgiveness.

So what does this mean for us?
Think back to the theological notes underpinning this recount

“Human worth does not depend on people’s abilities, talents or achievements (it didn’t matter that she was an immoral woman or a Pharisee); nor is it diminished by illness, handicap, age or failure of any kind (it didn’t matter that her sins were many). Human worth certainly has nothing to do with race, colour, gender, distinctive characteristics or abilities, or anything else that distinguishes one human being from another”

The woman was equal in the eyes of Jesus- equally given forgiveness of her sins because of her faith alone. She was given the same grace. In the same way we are given forgiveness and grace no matter who we are or what we have done. We are expected to pass this on. Scripture tells us **11** There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land. (Deuteronomy 15: 11) and **17** Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done (Proverbs 9: 17) Jesus expected the Pharisee to be more welcoming of him. He tells us in other places to be welcoming to all. Matthew 25:40 “for as much as you do for the least of them, so you have done for me” The woman was one of the least in the society of the times.

Prayer:
Heavenly father we thank you for the many gifts you provide for us. We thank you for the wealth we have in comparison to others. Help us to share your word and your abundance with others. Help us to guide our students as they engage with service through service learning. May we all be the heart and hands of God.