

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

On Friday I had done the unforgivable. I had betrayed the confidence of a dear friend. She's one of my soul sisters, one of my encouragers, one who always sees me as I am meant to be in Christ, not how I am in sin. She helps me see His Light on the dark days. She gives me wonderful hugs. Saturday I gave her excuses. She in turn gave me forgiveness - Christ-like forgiveness.

Oh, I had the best intentions in mind. Friday she had informed me of a concern and asked for my prayers, but I wanted to do a medicine dance, a fix-it-myself performance. Do you know the pride and the "move over God" type arrogance that goes into such thoughts? In about a half hour's time I'd come up with a great solution, I thought, and was dying to try it out on an audience. I telephoned my friend. There was no answer, so I left a message for her to return my call. I was fit to be tied. Oh, I do wish I had been tied, for after a few more hours I did the unthinkable. I repeated that which was not to be repeated. I betrayed my friend. Oh, it was clothed in the noblest of intentions. I veiled it with the great rationale of seeking advice.

Saturday my friend returned my call. I sheepishly confessed. She expressed her disappointment and concern. I could feel the distance forming. A knot began to choke my

throat. My stomach felt queasy. I knew I couldn't talk, smile, laugh or charm myself out of this situation. I did the only thing left for me to do, the one thing I should have done in the first place. I asked her for forgiveness.

She said, 'LUCY, I FORGIVE YOU.'

Tears formed in my eyes. The ball and chain weight of guilt dropped from my heart. I had been undeservedly released and set free.

"Lucy, I forgive you."

I've never experienced so deeply that Christ-like reality, that "forgiven reality," that is ours for the accepting, than at that moment. For you see, she is a Christian, a beautiful Christian. I know her forgiveness is real. My acts won't be recirculated in her mind or in mine every time I see her. It was in Christ and through Christ that she was acting and I accepted. I know she took my betrayal and placed it at the foot of the Cross, making it a gift which she wouldn't take back, and neither would I. She knows I love her. I know she loves me. We know Christ loves us both. I know she's disappointed in me. I know Christ is disappointed in me. I'm disappointed in myself - but I am forgiven.

There are so many forgiveness scenes in the Bible. I'm thankful that our Lord Jesus knew this gift needed to be shown over and over again, for it's one of the hardest ones for us to receive or comprehend. It's so human for us not to accept it, but rather to give it back. We'd much rather walk around

wearing a hair shirt on which we daily pin our known sins. We keep them close to our hearts so we can stay distanced and separated from our Lord. But don't such actions seem to make a mockery of our Lord's Crucifixion?

It's as if we're saying, "I can't accept forgiveness, Lord, for Your death was not payment enough. I'm going to hoard my sins. I'm going to continue to walk around gloomy and guilt-ridden."

As I write to you, Pilgrim, an image silently materializes. It is of a woman, a sinful woman. I'd seen her last night in the video "Jesus of Nazareth." She's also found in Luke 7: 36-50. She timidly shows herself at the door, peeps in, and runs like a trapped animal to the feet of Jesus and grabs hold. It's like she's been playing hide and seek in a hostile town all of her life. This game's stakes weren't the usual: the consequences for her losing would be stoning by words and stares and being ostracized. She was willing to risk it all to come into enemy territory just to touch the Lord. She didn't know why it didn't make sense, but she couldn't say "no" to the magnetism of Jesus. She of all people, who used to be controlling men, couldn't understand the effect He was having on her. She'd spotted Him in the crowd. Although she was hidden, she knew she had been seen like never before.

The two-second glance He'd given to her in the crowd had cracked her defenses, had totally shaken her foundational core. The amazing, most disturbing thing was that it was OK -

not just OK but, she realized, what she had been looking for all of her life. He was love, real love. "Isn't this ridiculous?" she kept saying to herself. She was ready and willing to give up a lifetime of lust. Those old needs and desires had been cancelled and eradicated, by those eternally deep, warm, piercing eyes.

She wanted to give Him a gift, a token, something to let Him know what had transpired in her soul. As she'd left home, she'd grabbed her most prized possession, an alabaster bottle of expensive perfume. It seemed so inappropriate, but felt so right. It was the one treasure that she'd been guarding for years. She would pour it out, all of it, on Him.

As she entered the room, she could feel the stares and hear the whispers. At first she was embarrassed. They knew who she was, some better than others. It didn't matter; only He mattered. She ran to His side, afraid that someone would try to bar her way. His eyes were upon her once more. She knelt and unstopped the perfume. She gently touched His feet. Tears began to flow, free flowing, cleansing tears. She, who hadn't cried for years, could not contain herself. As she poured the perfume upon His feet, the tears dropped from her eyes, intermingling with the oil. She was afraid that the fragrance would be altered, its essence diluted, and her gift made less valuable. She leaned over and quickly wiped away the new mixture with the only thing available - her hair. She was amazed that there seemed to be a new, sweeter, more rich

fragrance being given off. She looked up. She met His eyes once more.

He said, "Your sins are forgiven." She knew they were. He then said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Luke 7:50 NIV. She stood up, taller than she'd ever stood before. She slowly walked out of the room with the dignity and demeanor of royalty. She knew she was a person of value, of great worth, for she was loved - by Love Himself.

As I revisit this wonderful story of reconciliation and forgiveness, it brings to life again the gift given me by my friend. It was a Christ gift, one given very similarly so long ago to the lady with the costly perfume. Although our sins are not the same, our Savior is. The balm of forgiveness is still today the dearest, most Christ-like gift one can give to another. It is the last loving gift our Lord Jesus Christ gave to us as He gave the ultimate gift of His death upon the Cross. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34a.

Forgiveness, His forgiveness, when received creates such humility. It leaves you on your knees, and it is from this position and vantage point that our Lord Jesus Christ can use us totally, effectively as His servants.

Precious Pilgrim, I pray you have accepted this priceless gift from our Lord above.

*I am your forgiven sister in Christ,
Lucy*