



## **"Waiting For The Light To Shine"**

Luke 7:39-50

Many of you have read Mark Twain's book "The Adventures of Huckelberry Finn." In that book, Huck is fighting a battle between what he thinks is right and what the town thinks is right.

People give him all kinds of advice on how to avoid Hell, and Huck doesn't take it too kindly. He helps the slave Jim escape-- although his religious training causes him to believe that his helping a slave will send him somewhere besides Heaven.

There are similarities between Huck and the woman in our Bible story we have just read. In her action and in what Huck did we can see it's like Steps 3-7 of the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 Steps program.

Step 3 says that we must decide to turn our lives over to God's care or to a higher power.

By finding out where Jesus was and going to Him, the woman made a conscious decision to turn her life and will over to God.

Huck Finn was raised by an alcoholic father. The Widow Watson and the town tried to civilize Huck. To Huck Finn, God was an avenger. Huck said God had gotten his attention by "slapping me in the face and letting me know my wickedness was being watched all the time from up there in Heaven."

Huck decides to free the slave Jim-- and we would say, "Good for you, Huck, that is what God would want."

But Huck felt no sense of God. But he did go through some intense soul-searching which is AA's Fourth Step : "Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

But unfortunately, Huck's efforts are wasted. He tries to pray but he can't. He believes the reason he can't pray is because he helped a slave escape; when in reality he couldn't pray because his God-given conscience had been numbed by a life of lies-- the best way he knew how to survive.

The woman in our story is more successful. I can imagine her thinking about and remembering what she had done in the past. She knew she was a sinner and that she needed help.

It is hard to take an honest look at ourselves and admit we have problems. It is hard to say we can't handle our drinking or our eating or whatever problem we may have.

Those who have problems with alcohol and other drugs need to realize they had problems before they started using alcohol and other drugs. The drinking just enhances the problems.

But even as those who have problems with drinking need to take a look at themselves, we who call ourselves Christians need to take a look at our lives as well.

What kind of faith do we have? Do we go to God only when there is a problem? What kind of prayer life do we have? Do we read the Bible and allow it to speak to our lives? How do we live out the faith we have?

Do we really rely on God, or do we try to do things all by ourselves? As Christians we need to examine our lives.

In the Guide to the 4th Step Inventory it says we need to examine ourselves for personality defects which are:

*Selfishness*- taking care of ourselves without worrying about anybody else.

It talks about *Alibis*- Trying to justify what we do.

*Dishonest thinking*- which is another way of lying.

*Pride*- Do I put others down so I can look better.

*Resentment*- Real or imagined wrong or injury that usually leads to hate.

*Intolerance*- Refusal to put up with any beliefs, practices, customs or habits that differ from our own.

*Impatience*- Unwillingness to bear pain or opposition or bother calmly.

*Envy*- Sadness at someone else's good fortune.

*Phoniness*- Putting up a front for others.

*Self-pity*- Caring only for ourselves and our needs.

*Feelings easily hurt*- Sensitive, touchy and thin-skinned.

*Fear*- Thinking that something bad is going to happen all the time. It is thinking about the Ten Commandments and anything else that may lead to problems.

But as we look at ourselves we need to look for the good things as well as the bad. People with drinking problems need to look at what they do well and that will encourage them.

Christians need to look at what they do well and continue to do those things. We will find that God has blessed us in many ways.

As we look at ourselves we see that our problems did not happen overnight. Neither will the problems be solved overnight. We need to learn to live life one day at a time, one hour at a time, one step at a time.

Did you ever wonder why God took six days to create the world? God could create the world in a moment if He wanted to do it. God set us a pattern for life. We can work six days and rest on the seventh.

If we break up our lives into manageable parts we will not get so frustrated.

Step Four helps us get our lives back in order. We learn that the "I" is not the important thing, it is the "We" that makes life meaningful.

Step Five of AA's 12 step program is to admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. That is scary.

Huck Finn reviews his life and finds it to be lacking morally, but he blames those who taught him and he blames his home life. He doesn't accept any blame for what he has done.

Our story in Luke does not say what the woman said to Jesus, but by what she did in public she was shouting by her actions, "I have come before you, and you know I have sinned. I am sorry for what I have done."

We need to be sorry for what we have done in life to God and to others. The confession may be as simple as saying, "I am sorry. I was wrong."

The Catholic Church had the right idea over the years. It is good to confess our sins to another human being. We don't like to do that because it is embarrassing. But it feels good to get things off our minds.

If we would confess to someone else we would find we are not unique. Others make the same mistakes as we do. We need the support of others in admitting we have made mistakes.

But most of us feel our problems are private between us and our God. That is true but we also read in the book of James that we are to confess our sins to each other and to pray for each other. (James 5:16)

We need to find someone we can trust. Then as we talk and share and pray we will find a huge burden will be lifted from our souls. Freed from the past, we will be able to face the future with new enthusiasm.

Steps Six and Seven of the 12 Step Program state that we are ready to ask God to remove our shortcomings.

The woman in our Bible story seems ready to ask God to help her change. Huck Finn doesn't realize he has any problems so it is unthinkable for him to want to change.

It is one thing to admit that we have sinned. It is another for us to be willing to change. Just because we are sorry for what we have done wrong does not mean that we want to correct our faults.

It is a measure of faith to say that we are not self-sufficient. It is also a measure of faith to say that God is able to help us with our problems, that God is able to remove the harmful thoughts and the bad attitudes we have that hurt our relationship with God, with others and with ourselves.

It is great to be forgiven. But we need to move from forgiveness to want to change that which caused our problems.

We need to put God first and then we will have peace and holiness in our lives that we can't get by ourselves.

Again, it is not easy nor can it be done quickly. It takes time. Old sins have a way of becoming old friends. We have lived life with them so long that we don't want what we are going to do without them.

The biggest fear that we have is that we are afraid that we will have to give up something. And that is true. If we are to get away from alcohol or drugs or some other sin, we will have to give up what caused those problems in the first place.

That may mean we may have to give up some of our friends because they are the kind of influences we want in our changed lives.

It means turning to prayer and the Bible and the church and Christian friends.

It means we have to make a spiritual commitment to want to do what God would have us to do, not what we want to do. That is also scary, because we are moving into areas we don't understand.

Maybe you are like the sinful, forgiven woman who had been sinning for years-- or maybe you are like Huck Finn who wanted to be good but felt he could do it through his own strength.

But most of us are like Simon. We do all the right things, at least in public, but yet we can be insensitive and critical and unforgiving and too wrapped up in ourselves to know that God can forgive even the one who has sinned for years.

We need to look at our own lives and our own consciences and our own weakness of character and pray for God to remove those defects that cause us to be less than God wants us to be.

We are all on a journey. Hopefully, we have all met God on that journey. We need to connect with God. As we journey we will see the problems we have and we will want to correct them with God's help.

Huck Finn made it to Broadway in the musical "Big River." One song sung by Huck describes his long years in darkness.

In the song "Waitin' For the Light to Shine", Huck's lack of moral and spiritual core is described as one who has waited and waited for the light to shine.

The darkness has been deep and unending. Isaiah says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." (Isaiah 9:2)

The sinful woman and the misdirected Huck Finn saw the greatest of lights. Huck was still lost because he never found the light. The woman embraced the light.

We don't have to wait for the light to shine because the light of Christ is available to each one of us.