



**June 17, 2007**

Preaching: Rev. Ronni Verboom

Luke 7:36-8:3

## “Hush, Don’t say a word!”

I’d like to begin this Father’s Day with a reflection by Hamilton Cromie. It’s entitled *Father wasn’t excitable*:

*My father, a lawyer in a small city in Illinois, was in one particular unlike most lawyers: as a rule, he didn’t have much to say. It wasn’t that he was surly or aloof- he was just a wonderful man for keeping his mouth shut. ....*

*....One evening [during the summer] Father had just come home from work and opened the paper when Mother asked if he’d mind running down to Armstrong’s delicatessen for a loaf of rye bread. I was tired of playing catch with my kid brother so I tagged along.*

*Just as we walked into the store a nervous-looking fellow...poked a gun at my father and said, “This is a stickup!”*

*Maybe Father misunderstood. ....He turned to the bread rack, saying, “All I came in for is a loaf of rye bread.” ...The man jabbed his gun into Father’s ribs and cried, “Stick ‘em up or I’ll let you have it!” Then he slapped me across the face and told me to put my hands up, too.*

*At this point my Father grabbed the gun, belted the stranger behind the ear...and threw him right through Armstrong’s screen door.*

*“Thank you,” said Armstrong, reaching for the phone. He looked as if he hadn’t really waked up from a bad dream yet.*

*“That’s all right,” my father said. “Better get that screen fixed right away. Lots of flies this time of year. Where do you keep the rye bread?”*

*“We’re sold out,” Armstrong said. So we went on.*

*In the next block we stopped at Prell’s grocery, but their rye bread had caraway seeds in it and my mother hadn’t mentioned anything about caraway seeds, so we went on again. My father was sure we could find what we wanted at the Consolidated Market on Main St. Halfway there, though he crawled under some broken latticework to get a kitten for a little girl who was crying....Then he stopped to change a tire for two women.*

*By the time we got to the Consolidated it was closed...and Father admitted it was getting late. “Your mother may have to bake herself some bread,” he said.*

*We started home, walking fast, and as we went by Armstrong’s the proprietor came running out with a package. “Found this mixed in with the white after you left,” he said.....*

*When we got home dinner was cold and Mother looked hot and out of sorts. Father sat down in his favorite chair, slipped off his shoes and reached for the paper.....Mother stood there with the package under her arm and demanded to know how anybody in God’s Green World could take three hours to buy a loaf of bread.*

*“Listen, Martha,” Father said finally..... “the rye was mixed in with the white---- took Armstrong a little while to locate it.” Then he snapped the paper open in a way that meant the discussion period was over.*

My father was also a man of few words. Actually, stereotypes suggest that men all talk less than most women. I’m not sure that has been scientifically examined, but it may be true to a certain extent. Is that good? Is it bad? Well, let’s think about talk and words as a people who are called to follow Jesus.

Protestant churches are filled with a lot of TALK.

In WORSHIP

- we focus on the “message”--- an interpretation of God’s WORD, brought to us through the WORDS of Scripture.
- We do a lot of VERBAL prayers;
- We make ANNOUNCEMENTS;
- We talk about our joys and concerns.

In SMALL GROUPS that meet for Bible study or fellowship the time is filled with TALK.

SUNDAY SCHOOL, at least for adults, is ENTIRELY TALK.

In COMMITTEE MEETINGS we talk, talk, talk.

As we practice our faith through the church we do a lot of TALKING ABOUT our faith: what we think, wonder, and believe.

Today's Scripture gives us another model to consider as a people of faith. Into a setting focused on conversation and debate about moral and theological issues, there came a woman. This was a formal banquet. Guests of honor reclined gracefully on couches. A very proper and refined atmosphere reigned. I picture it a little like a professional conference in a luxurious hotel where participants gather for an elegant meal served on white tablecloths, and where prestigious figures of the profession offer speeches and presentations.

Simon, the host, was a Pharisee. He was learned and devout—accustomed to religious and philosophical discussions. He was articulate and convinced of the importance of attending to the fine points of faith and law.

He had invited Jesus to be a special guest at this meal, undoubtedly wanting to hear Jesus expound on the faith—sharing his particular views in an environment of open debate.

The woman who entered was seen as “a sinner”. She interrupted the banquet with her surprising entrance and behavior. She came into the gathering of learned men who were “talking up a storm”.

And SHE didn't say a WORD. Not one word. But her behavior spoke VOLUMES.

What is the message the world receives from this silent woman?

Her unescorted arrival and immodest behavior suggest she is a prostitute—hence the description of her as “a sinner”. By simply TOUCHING Jesus this woman ritually defiles him, WHETHER OR NOT she is a prostitute. She is present where no woman is allowed. She uncovers her hair in public which is similar to walking stark naked down the sidewalk in our day. She has acted on her own outside any family connections. These are all SHAMEFUL, IMPURE, SCANDALOUS behaviors for a first-century Jewish woman.

What is the conclusion the dinner guests made? This is an EVIL, BAD, DISGRACEFUL woman. They were filled with horror and disgust. They were appalled to observe Jesus accepting her behavior—not even attempting to put a stop to it.

What is the message Jesus received from this silent woman? Here is a person open to and longing for forgiveness. Here is one filled with love and trust. This is why Jesus doesn't stop her! Why would he circumvent the opening to forgiveness of a human heart? Why would he interrupt an expression of love and faith?

This woman never said a word. But her actions spoke for her. She didn't have to SAY anything for Jesus to know she loved him, and had faith in him.

This is a CHALLENGE to US, my friends. I am not saying WORDS have no place in our faith life.. of course they do. We wouldn't have this story today without the WORDS that tell it.

BUT, we easily get stuck in words. Actually, I think we like to bury ourselves in them sometimes. We can hide in and behind words.

We must LIVE our faith, live grace, live love, if we really intend to follow Jesus. There's a song in a musical ("My Fair Lady"?? "Oklahoma"?) where a female lead sings to a would-be suitor: "Don't TELL me you love me...SHOW ME!"

Friends, Jesus tells us this every day: "Don't TELL me you love me, don't TALK ABOUT your faith, SHOW ME!" Sometimes our response is to talk back--- listing excuses that get in the way of action. Jesus replies, "Hush! Don't say a word! LIVE faith, LIVE grace, OFFER love."

What can you do this week? Where can you bring the perfume of love and faith? Today, if you're a dad—how can you SHOW your children you love them? Today, if you have a dad, how can you SHOW him your appreciation and love? Every day, how can you SHOW what it means to follow Jesus to a world that is lost and struggling?

The world needs your actions of love and faith MORE THAN WORDS COULD EVER SAY. Amen. Amen.