Moving Forward from the Past

Luke 7:36-28, 44-50

Weekly Life Group Guide

Lent 4 of 6

1) Start your group with the following questions:

Were you surprised by who made it to the FINAL FOUR in NCAA Basketball? Do you follow College BB? Why / why not?

Are we equally interested in the Men's NCAA Tournament BB games as we are the Women's BB games? Why is that?

Have you heard the outcome of the Mueller investigation? Being respectful of the opinions of others, do you think it found *"the President was unfairly accused"* as some claim, or did it find *"not enough evidence to proceed"* as others claim?

Why is this like so many other issues, so polarized in our time?

2) Share joys and concerns, and use the prayer from last Sunday at Old Mission, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

O God, along with all creation, we worship you today. You give us life and salvation. You bear our burdens and you forgive our sins. When we stop to consider all your blessings, we are overwhelmed with praise. We who have been forgiven much, have learned to forgive others from you. Teach us also to forgive ourselves, and leave the past behind, so we might live a full and grateful life. For this we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. *(add Lord's Prayer)*

3) Look up Luke's Gospel account of the woman who anointed Jesus in the text for this week (Luke 7:36-28,44-50) and the parallel passages Mark 14:2-9 – Matthew 26:6-13 – John 12:1-8. Have someone read each account then discuss the following:

Where is the setting for this incident in Matthew, Mark and John? How about in Luke? Why are they different do you think?

Whose home were they at in each of the Gospel accounts?

Where was Jesus anointed in each account? i.e. feet or head? Which Gospels mention someone wiping with her long hair?

How does each gospel identify the woman who is anointing?

Which accounts have Jesus saying, *"The poor you will always have with you"* and *"She poured perfume on my body to prepare for my burial?"* How does that shape the account?

Which one talks about the importance of forgiveness? How does that affect the way the story is told and what it means?

In which Gospel(s) did someone object to the anointing? Why?

Is it a fair analysis to say as Dr. Gardner has, *"they evidently thought the expensive perfume was of greater worth than the woman who brought the gift. But not Jesus."*

Does the degree to which we have been forgiven affect our level of gratitude for what God / Jesus has done for us? Why?

4) In Dr. Gardner's newsletter column and his message this week, he said the following. After reading, please discuss it and reflect on it together.

"Luke 7 tells us the story of Jesus being anointed by a woman with a sinful past. Well, truthfully, which one of us could claim to have a sin-less past? Romans 3:23 says, *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* And all, includes all of us."

What is "sin?" Is it just making a mistake? Or is it more serious?

One definition of sin is the *"intentional transgression of the known will of God."* Dr, Gardner says that has too many loopholes. Why did he say that? Do you agree or disagree?

Another definition is *"causing harm to others or self."* Do you agree?

Dr. Karl Menninger (of Kansas) wrote a book forty years ago called, Whatever Became of Sin? It was his commentary on the how the concept of sin and "right and wrong" was being eroded in society with the result being each person doing as they desire without a moral compass. Is the concept of sin outmoded and no longer valid? How has it changed?

5) Regardless of our understanding of "sin," Romans 3:24 is at least as important as Romans 3:23. It completes the sentence. Read it and then discuss this question together.

How important to our faith is the concept that the God in whom United Methodists believe is a God of grace and forgiveness?

6) Review the final two messages in the Lenten series:

April 7   Luke 8:43–48   *"The Touch"*

April 14   Luke 19:28–40 *"The Sound of Stones"*

7) Announce your next Life Group or Class meeting. Close your meeting in prayer for one another and our Church.