

13JUN10 Text: Luke 7:40 ***“And Jesus answering said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ And he answered, ‘Say it, Teacher.’”***

Veteran White House correspondent Helen Thomas **recently resigned** her long-held position as a senior member of the White House press corps that had earned her a front row seat in all White House briefings. All this came about when Rabbi David Nesenoff asked Karen Thomas to elaborate on her opinion of Israelis at a White House Jewish Heritage event, she controversially responded by saying, *“Tell them to get the h_ _ _ out of Palestine.”* **Thomas also stated that Jews should go home to Poland, Germany, America and anywhere else.** Although she apologized for her antagonistic remarks, she was met with harsh criticism by politicians who have described her comments as anti-Semitic, offensive and reprehensible. The resignation of **Helen Thomas**, an 89-year-old columnist for Hearst Newspapers who has covered every U.S. president since John F. Kennedy, came in response to the backlash that surfaced as a result of her anti-Semitic stance. Former special council and spokesman for the Clinton administration, Lanny J. Davis, responded to Thomas’ comments by saying, *“Of course Helen has the right as a private citizen under the First Amendment to speak her mind, even as an anti-Jewish bigot, but not as a member, much less privileged member with a reserved seat, in the White House press corps.”* There are times when a person needs to be confronted head on. Helen Thomas was one such person.

In today’s Gospel lesson, we see Jesus confronting a person head-on. He confronts the self-righteous, loveless attitude of a Pharisee named Simon. The interesting thing to note in all three of today’s Scripture lessons there is the common theme of **confrontation**. In each lesson,

GOD CONFRONTS SINFUL ATTITUDES

He does so in order to lead the people involved in sin to the point of repentance over their sins so that they might return to His love and care. Not only that, our Scripture lessons this morning remind each of us that **we too have a need for confrontation** in our own lives, a need for God to speak to us through His Word of His Law to correct and guide and with the Word of His Gospel to sustain and comfort. Let’s see how GOD CONFRONTS SINFUL ATTITUDES.

The Gospel records a visit that Jesus paid to a Pharisee named Simon who had invited Jesus into his home as a dinner guest. In Jesus’ day, people did not sit at tables in chairs,

rather they **reclined** on one elbow on their side of that table sat low to the ground. Suddenly at the house of Simon there arrived an uninvited visitor, a woman, but not just any woman, a **sinful** woman who had a bad reputation among the people of that town. As Jesus reclined at the table, the woman stood behind Him, weeping. Her tears fell to Jesus' feet. She wiped Jesus' tear-moistened feet with her hair, kissing them and finally pouring expensive perfume on them. Imagine the look on the faces of the other guests... they must have been **aghast** and **dumbfounded** at this display of gratitude and love. Our lesson tells us that Simon, the Pharisee who had invited Jesus, thought to himself, "*If this man were a prophet, He would know **who** is touching Him and **what kind of woman** she is—that she is a sinner!*"

What was this **attitude** that Simon was displaying here? What is the **sinful behavior** that Jesus recognized in the thoughts and in the heart of His host? It was the attitude of **self-righteousness**, that judgmental, "**holier-than-thou**" **attitude** by which Simon thought himself so much **holier** and so much more **superior** to this woman with the sinful reputation. Our Lord and Savior, who loved the sinful woman as much as He loved the self-righteous Pharisee, needed to **confront** Simon's sinful attitude and that's just what Jesus did: "*Simon, I have something to say to you...*"

Jesus **CONFRONTED THIS SINFUL ATTITUDE** by means of a parable in which two people owed a lender two different sums of money...one a **great** amount, the other a **small** amount. The lender canceled both of the debts. Jesus asked Simon, "*Which would be **more grateful?***" "***The one who had the bigger debt canceled,***" **Simon replied.** Simon had answered correctly and Jesus went on from there to drive home the point to Simon about **real** sorrow over sin and **real** love and devotion toward God in response to the forgiveness that God so freely gives.

Jesus pointed out to Simon his own lack of love. As host, Simon had not washed Jesus' feet, he had given Him no kiss of welcome, he had not anointed His hair with oil...all common signs of hospitality and love. Yet this woman, whom Simon and the others considered so **sinful** and so far beneath their level of holiness, bathed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair and anointed His feet with perfume. She displayed **true sorrow** over sins, even though her sins were many and great...she displayed something that was lacking in Simon's life: **repentance.** Simon's inability to recognize his own self-righteousness, his lack of love and his own impenitence are confronted squarely by Jesus. Indeed, **GOD CONFRONTS SINFUL ATTITUDES!**

The **confrontation** which was recorded for us in our Old Testament lesson today is very instructive for us as well. The background to the reading from 2 Samuel is this: King David lusted after Bathsheba, another man's wife, a man named Uriah, and committed adultery with her. When Bathsheba informed King David that she was pregnant, he tried to cover up his sin with deceit and lies. When King David's plan of deception to cover his own sin had failed, he devised an even more wicked plan. **He would have Uriah killed in battle!** David ordered his general to place Uriah in the fiercest part of the battle and then withdraw from him so that he would be left alone to be killed by the enemy. Everything worked according to David's plan: Uriah was killed, Bathsheba became his wife and King David's life went on as if nothing had happened.

The great truth of the matter was this: **David's sin had not escaped the notice of God!** God was **greatly** displeased with David for his arrogance, his adultery and his murder. David's deception needed to be uncovered. GOD CONFRONTED David's SINFUL ATTITUDES in a very personal and dramatic way. The Lord sent the prophet Nathan to King David and the prophet Nathan told David a story. Nathan said that there was a rich man with many sheep and a poor man with one lamb, a lamb that was loved by the poor man's family and treated like a pet. When the rich man had a visitor to entertain, instead of taking one of his own sheep and slaughtering it for his guest, he took his poor neighbor's lamb and killed it for the meal for his guest. When King David heard the story, he was outraged and cried out, *"The man who did this deserves to die!"* Now notice how **GOD CONFRONTS David's SINFUL ATTITUDES...** the prophet Nathan turned to the king and said, ***"You are the man!"*** The full weight of God's judgment upon his sins fell upon King David, those sins which David thought he had so cleverly hidden from everyone around him. David was brought to repentance by Nathan's message. He confessed his sins and asked God to forgive him his sins, great as they were. **Yes, GOD CONFRONTS SINFUL ATTITUDES in order to bring about repentance!**

Today's epistle lesson describes one more sinful attitude which God confronted. The apostle Paul reveals a confrontation that took place between himself and the apostle Peter. Peter had been eating with some Gentile Christians believers until some of the men from Jerusalem arrived and **then** Peter no longer ate with the Gentiles. He was afraid of what the Jewish believers might think of him if they saw him eating with the Gentiles. Peter's bad example caused others to do the same thing and soon the believers were divided. Some were now even beginning to say that if the Gentiles were not circumcised, they were not going to be saved. **God used the apostle Paul to confront these sinful attitudes which were causing**

division and doing harm to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul reminded Peter, “*We ourselves are Jews by birth...we know that a person is **not** justified by works of the Law, **but through faith in Jesus Christ...because by works of the Law no one will be justified!**” GOD CONFRONTED Peter’s SINFUL ATTITUDE about what others might think of him and pointed out how Peter’s attitude was setting a bad example that divided the Church and went contrary to God’s Word of the Gospel that was meant for Jew and Gentile alike.*

GOD INDEED CONFRONTS SINFUL ATTITUDES! The questions we need to ask ourselves today are questions like these: What are the sinful attitudes in **my** life that need confrontation by the Word of God? How did the account of Simon the Pharisee strike a responsive chord within my life? Do I have a self-righteous attitude that blocks my ability to love and accept others for who they are? Were you struck by the sinful woman’s depth of love and devotion shown to Christ by her tears and her extravagant actions? Did it cause you to reflect on your own level of love for Christ and your own degree of sorrow over sin? Has a life of deceit and trying to hide your sin, like King David, left your spiritual life empty and driven you away from God? Does your lifestyle or mine, like Peter’s, cause offense to the Gospel? Do you and I fear what others will think of us if they discover we are Christians? These three lessons highlighted sinful attitudes that spark such questions as these and so many more. GOD CONFRONTS SINFUL ATTITUDES by means of His Word. **That confrontation in your life and mine is not a bad thing, although we may sometimes shrink away from it.** If we are to be disciples of Jesus Christ, we **need** to let God’s Word speak to us and teach us! When God’s Word points out to us our sins and our shortcomings, let us remember that God is doing so for a purpose: **to lead us to repentance and renewed faith in our Savior!**

Let us never forget that Jesus died for **all** of our sins that are pointed out to us by God’s Law! God’s mercy and forgiveness in Christ are indeed rich and full enough to cover our **darkest** sins and **deepest** secrets. “*Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me.*” is a truth that needs to be etched on your heart and mine. Yes, God’s Word does point out when we sin, but it also contains that sweet, sweet message of His grace and love in Christ Jesus! Let’s face up to the **confrontation** of God’s Word. Each one of us has sinful attitudes and behaviors that need such confrontation. **After such confrontation, may we find rest and assurance in God’s love and forgiveness in Christ, received again and again by faith.**

May God continue to lead us to **genuine repentance** and **renewed faith** in our Savior and **greater love and devotion** to Him in all we do, for Jesus’ sake. AMEN

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