

# A Tale of Two Gifts



JFA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY LETTER

CHRISTMAS 2014

Dear Friend,

This is a tale of two true stories, two gifts, and the power of saying “thank you.”

## OKLAHOMA, 2014 A.D.

At a JFA poll table this fall, a volunteer (“Adam”) and a young woman were discussing reasons she thought abortion should be legal, including differences between the unborn and the rest of us.

After a few minutes, the woman said, “My aunt died due to a complication of pregnancy, and that was in America, in Chicago. If she would have gotten an abortion, she would still be here.” Tears appeared around the edges of her eyes.

“You were saying earlier,” Adam replied, “that you think the unborn is not valuable because it is dependent? Do you realize that newborns...”

She started to edge away from the table, looking towards her friend with a glance that said, “Let’s go.” Adam asked another question about the arguments regarding dependency and the value of the unborn.

She took a step closer to respond, but seeing her friend ready to leave, she stepped back. With more than a hint of sarcasm, she said, “Thank you for being so understanding. You’re *so* kind.”

She was gone. Adam turned to me and began replaying the arguments about the unborn, what he thought she had meant, and what he thought he could have said differently. “I could have brought up...”

## PALESTINE, CIRCA 30 A.D.

One of the Pharisees asked [Jesus] to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.”

Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven – for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”



JUSTICE FOR ALL — TRAINING THOUSANDS TO MAKE ABORTION UNTHINKABLE FOR MILLIONS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME.

113 N. MARTINSON, WICHITA, KANSAS, 67203 316.683.6426 WEB: WWW.JFAWEB.ORG BLOG: WWW.HBMM.NET STEVE@JFAWEB.ORG

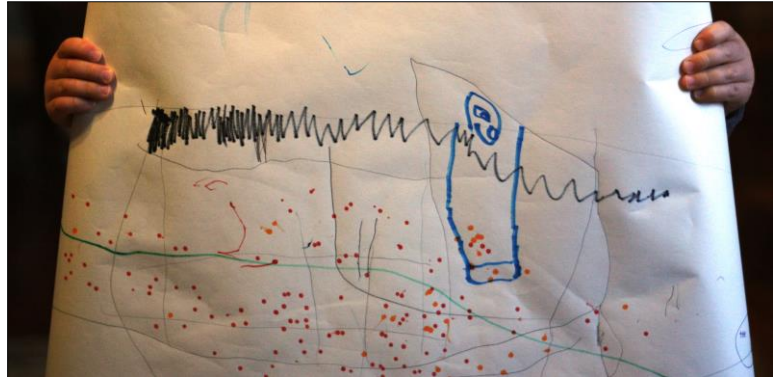
Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (Luke 7:36-50, ESV)

### SAYING THANK YOU, WITH AND WITHOUT WORDS

Back in Oklahoma, I tried to follow Adam’s train of thought, but an elephant was looming so large in the room that I wasn’t able to focus on what he was saying. I waited for a good space into which to speak. “I think you may be right about what she meant,” I said, and then added mysteriously, “but I think you missed something...” He stared back at me with an uncomprehending look.

I walked around to the side of the table where the woman had been standing. “It’s as if she was taking something very precious to her, a part of herself, and offering it to you.” I drew my hands together, holding them up toward him with an imaginary gift. “You didn’t accept her gift.”

Here’s another way to put the point: If my son proudly brings me a page filled with a mess of scribbles, I could brush it aside as a worthless piece of paper, but instead, I hold it in my hands, and I’m excited about it. I thank my son in this way because of *his* value, and the value of *his giving of the gift*.



Looking in on the interaction between Adam and the woman, we are tempted to say, “How could he have missed that?” She said that her aunt died. She *died*. The woman’s tears were obvious. What’s more, the response that might have transformed the interaction was tragically simple:

*Wow. I'm not sure what to say. That is so hard.  
Would you be willing to tell me a bit about what your aunt meant to you?*

Let’s return to Jesus’ interaction with the woman who shed tears all over his feet. Instead of focusing on her sin (as Simon had been) or the “waste” of expensive ointment (as Judas had done in a similar situation), Jesus simply received her gift and, with his actions, said a simple “thank you.” Then he used that foundation to move forward in addressing the woman’s need for the truth about himself and her need for forgiveness.

This beautiful action turns the situation on its head. Jesus had given this woman the gift of the presence of the Son of God through his incarnation, and then the gift of forgiveness. Yet he thanks her for *her* gift, however it might have paled in comparison. In the same way, when a person takes the time and effort to share with us, we can temporarily set to the side our agenda of changing a mind. We listen, reflecting on the gift we are being given, saying “thank you” without words. From this foundation then, we are better able to help a person correct a crippling falsehood or accept transforming forgiveness.

As I’m considering the importance of saying “thank you” for the gifts people offer to us in conversations, I’m mindful that many of my readers have given JFA a different sort of gift: a financial gift to help us train pro-life advocates like Adam. It seems fitting to end this letter and this year by saying “thank you.” Thank you for investing in JFA volunteers like Adam. Your financial and prayer support is helping them learn unforgettable lessons of imitating Christ’s love for each person. We are awed by God’s provision and by your partnership in our work. Thank you.

In His Service,



Steve Wagner  
Executive Director, JFA

Read More on the Topic of this Letter: [www.jfaweb.org/Dec-2014-Extras](http://www.jfaweb.org/Dec-2014-Extras)

You Can Still Give a Year-End Gift: [www.jfaweb.org/Donate](http://www.jfaweb.org/Donate)