

# Loving Jesus ...a little?

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[ 0 : 00 ] Do have your Bibles handy, open them up at the passage that we're looking at, Luke chapter 7. And everything is either fine or dreadful.

You came into this world, Lord. And you knew what it would cost you. And you knew what we were like and what we needed. And we thank you, Lord, that you knew all that needed to be known about us.

And we thank you that you still do. That however we've come this morning, you know. And you have words for us, words of life. Lord, would you help us to pull up a chair at your table this morning?

And will you please feed us? In Jesus' name. Amen. All sorts of interesting things happen at the dinner table, don't they? Just imagine yourself at your family dinner table.

Or, you know, maybe you need to imagine yourself at your parents' dinner table. Do that. What was that like? When you're sitting across the table from someone, it's pretty clear, pretty quickly, what your relationship with them is like at that time, isn't it?

[ 1 : 35 ] So, if you get the one-word answers, or grunts, you know, that says something. If you get a happy smile and they look you straight in the eyes and there's good chat, then that tells you something as well, doesn't it?

And if you're never seen at the dinner table, then that tells you something about the relationship that you have with the people who do gather at that table as well.

And so it is with Jesus. When you sit down to eat with him, and that's really what we do on a Sunday morning when we come to church and open his word, when you sit down to eat with him, what happens gives you a snapshot of how it is between you and him.

Let's just look at verses 33, 35 of our passage. For John the Baptist, Jesus speaking, came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, he is a demon.

But the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. But wisdom is proved right by all her children.

[ 2 : 45 ] See what Jesus is saying? Jesus is saying, listen wisely, friends, because how you react when Jesus eats with people shows how it is between you and him.

Here we are, immediately following those verses, is the story of when Jesus sits down to the table with two very different people. So how will we react? And in these two people, we see one person who is completely free, who is free to really love.

And we see one person who is a total prisoner, prisoner to convention, prisoner to their self-righteousness. So without further ado, let's start reading the story.

Verse 36. When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house. And reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life.

Remember, reference to sinners in verse 34. A woman who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume.

[ 3 : 59 ] She comes in the room, sharp intake of breath. This is a polite dinner party. This is a polite dinner party. What is she doing here?

And she's called a sinner. She's called a sinner because of her occupation. I'm not going to spell it out. You can probably draw your own conclusions. But that's why. It's kind of like you're at your school prize giving.

Everybody's in their best. About to receive their awards. Politely clap. And the kid who was expelled last year walks in the room. Oh.

What kind of scandal are we going to get now? We'll just flip for a minute and think what it was like for her. Have you ever had that nightmare?

You're in the room full of important people. It's a big occasion. And suddenly you realise you've got no clothes on. Ever had that nightmare?

[ 5 : 06 ] Or is it just me? That's what it was like for this woman. She walks into the room and she is completely exposed. Everybody's looking at her.

Everybody knows. Completely exposed. And then something amazing happens. As she stood behind Jesus at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears.

She's in a room full of people. She's completely exposed. All eyes are on her. And what does she do? She stands in front of Jesus and she cries. See, in front of Jesus, she feels safe to cry.

She feels safe to be vulnerable. And why does she cry? Well, because she's sad. And she's sad because she knows that her situation and her life are not right.

But she can cry in front of him despite all of those other people in the room because she knows the heart of Jesus for sinners who come to him honestly and openly.

[ 6 : 24 ] then she wiped his feet with her hair, kissed them.

Wait a minute. We need to stop here because she wipes his feet with her hair. She breaks every single rule of polite society when she undoes her hair, takes off her head covering, kneels down at his feet and then dries them with her hair.

Now, the impact of that is totally lost on us, isn't it? But it is something like this. You're really upset, you're crying, your eyes wet somebody's tears. Remember, you're a woman. And you take off your top and you start toweeling his feet down.

That's what this was like. She thinks, what does it matter?

Everybody here already knows, but more importantly, Jesus can see all that I am. He knows all that I have done. And she's right.

[ 7 : 35 ] She's right. He does. And then what? She wiped his feet with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

She breaks open the perfume. Now, that's a jar. You have to snap the neck. It's not unscrewing a lid. You snap the neck. And she breaks it open and she pours out her love for the Lord Jesus at his feet.

She knows his heart for sinners who come honestly. Now, perfume was incredibly expensive back then. I mean, it's not cheap now. But back then, unbelievably expensive.

And she just pours it on his feet. And she needs that perfume. She needs that perfume to smell nice. Doesn't she?

So what is going on here? There's no showers. That perfume is what she needs. She's not just pouring out her love for the Lord Jesus. She's pouring out her livelihood at his feet.

[ 8 : 51 ] She's broken the neck. There's no putting the cork back in. There's no going back. She loves and she trusts Jesus.

And so she pours it out on his feet. She loves him. And how does Simon react? When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of a woman she is, that she is a sinner.

And that's the line that really gives him away, isn't it? She's a sinner and I'm not. That's what she's thinking. His heart is revealed, isn't it?

She's unacceptable. I'm acceptable. She needs punished. I need to be praised. She needs saving from herself so she can be more like me.

She owes us an apology. I don't. I pay my way. As far as Simon and polite society were concerned, this woman was just tarnished forever.

[ 10 : 13 ] And if Jesus touched her, then he'd be tarnished too. And actually, not much has changed, has it? In some ways, Simon is right because short of a miracle, we don't escape our mistakes.

They're saved on the internet forever and then they get brought up and we get cancelled. Our history follows us around, doesn't it? Dirt sticks.

Or as they used to say, old sins cast long shadows. And that's the rub, isn't it? No amount of doing good things will stop you from making the big mistakes.

And then no amount of good things will be able to erase them when you've made them. How is that problem to be solved?

Kind of, by the way, how do we want Simon to get his comeuppance? Who's going to put Simon in his place? Because that's needed too, isn't it? And then Jesus tells a story.

[11:29] Verse 40. Jesus answered him, Simon, I have something to tell you. Tell me, teacher, he said. Two people owed money to a certain moneylender.

One owed him 500 denarii and the other 50. Neither of them had the money to pay him back. So he forgave the debts of both.

What kind of moneylender is this? He lends money and then when someone can't repay him he just says, okay, well don't worry about it then. That's like going to the bank and saying, can I please have a loan because I need to do up my house?

And the bank manager says, do you know, I've got a better idea. I'll give you the money. What kind of a man is this? Who are we talking about here?

You guys already know. Now, which of them, Simon, will love him more?

[12:35] And Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven. You have judged correctly, Jesus said. And then he turned towards the woman and said to Simon, do you see this woman?

I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing my feet.

You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. And here's the punchline. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven as her love, her great love, has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little. Oh, now we know why Jesus is loved so much by that woman.

she knows that she's been forgiven, doesn't she? And now we know why Simon doesn't love the Lord Jesus, because he barely feels his debt.

[13:52] We have an amazing way of taking our failures and sort of turning them around and trying to make them look a little bit better, or maybe even good. came across a great little interchange between two people which really illustrates this.

So one guy says to another guy, do you know, recently I got complimented on my parking skills. And the other guy says, oh really, what happened? Well, I came back to my car one day and there was a little yellow note on the windscreen and it said, parking, fine.

It's funny, but that is human nature in a T, isn't it? It's, I'll take my little foibles, little, and I'll just twist them so they don't seem so bad because that way I don't owe anybody anything.

Certainly not God. He thinks he's got out of paying a parking fine, does Simon. She knows that the millstone around her neck has been taken off.

The mortgage is paid and it shows, doesn't it? It shows in how much she loves Jesus. And then Jesus said to her, your sins are forgiven.

[15:02] And the other guests began to say among themselves, who is this who even forgives sins? So Jesus confirms what we knew all along, that she has been forgiven and her love is the proof, isn't it?

But who's done the forgiving? He has forgiven her, hasn't he? Jesus is the forgiver of sins because he is the one we've sinned against.

He is the God we've rejected. Only God forgives sins. My water now, it's not quite as bad as it was, is it?

All the sediment, all the dirt and gunk is collected at the bottom, more or less. Still not sure I'd drink it. Exactly, Hamish, it's been cleaned.

And that is the point. See, it's the other way around. It's not, if you spend too long around sinful people, eventually the dirt will rub off on you. Instead, it's when Jesus comes into contact with you, you become clean.

[16:24] Have you come into contact with Jesus that way? You can tell she's clean. It's how she reacts to Jesus. Love, completely open love, like he's the only person in the room.

And suddenly next to her and to Jesus, Simon looks pretty grubby, doesn't he? He hasn't heard the good news, he hasn't understood the good news. The good news is that when we put our faith, our trust in the Lord Jesus, our debt is paid.

We're forgiven. He's taken that debt to the cross, it's gone. And when he touches us, we become clean. And then we're released.

We're freed to love Jesus without worrying what everybody else in the room thinks. We're free to pour out our heart in front of him, put our livelihood at his feet.

feet. She came into that room exposed, didn't she? But by his words and his actions in forgiving her, in speaking to Simon the way that he has done, Jesus has covered her.

[ 17 : 49 ] And what happens then? Jesus said to the woman, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Can you imagine the weight lifting from the shoulders of that woman?

Has that ever happened to you? It can. Jesus is still doing the same work now that he was then. If you know how much you've been forgiven, then you will love Jesus lavishly, just like this woman did.

Maybe even foolishly in the world's eyes, pouring out that perfume at his feet. Is he precious to you like that? And if he isn't, then we have to ask the question from this passage, don't we?

Is your life really right with him? Have you been forgiven? Because if I don't believe I need forgiving, then I won't love Jesus. I mean, I might love him a little, enough to add him to the guest list, but I won't love him with my life, the way he deserves, the way he demands.

forgiveness. And if you haven't been forgiven, then where does that leave you, friend? Because what we see from this story is that respectability and good behaviour and wealth and manners and all those things count for very little with Jesus.

[ 19 : 26 ] They don't cut any ice with him. Of course, we won't believe we need forgiveness from him unless we believe he is the forgiver. And if you don't love him, maybe it's because you've missed who he is.

We owe him our lives, don't we? Even if we claim them for ourselves. And he is the king, isn't he? Even if we've crowned ourselves at his expense.

And eventually the bill will come due. And what then? Is that debt forgiven? It can be, because even if you are like Simon, even if you are like Simon, when you invite Jesus to your house and you say, please come and sit at my table, Jesus, knowing full well what you are thinking in your heart and exactly what you are like, says, yes.

I will come and sit at your table. It's when we know how much we've been forgiven that our love for him really flowers, just like this woman's love does.

and we bloom. Because although that's not what the people in the room thought, that is what's happening here. This woman is free to ignore what everybody else thinks, because she knows that Jesus loves her and has forgiven her.

[ 20 : 55 ] She's free to love him the right way. blooming. She can be completely vulnerable with the Lord of the universe.

Look at him like he's the only one in the room. Just imagine for a minute that you're in a slightly shady situation. I don't know what that would be for you. Maybe it's on the playground, something a little bit happening.

Maybe you're at the Christmas party at the office and something a little bit is happening. Wherever it is, just imagine that the biggest person in the room, CEO, most popular kid in school, whatever it is, they come over to you and they put their arm around you and they say, you're okay with me.

If anyone around here gives you any trouble, come and tell me about it. That would free you in that room, wouldn't it? That's exactly what Jesus does for us.

He says, you're okay with me. And now you're free. You're free to ignore every cultural manifestation, social convention, habit, whatever it is that would stop you from loving freely and loving Jesus.

[ 22 : 20 ] You are free. Can you imagine being able to trust like that? Just a little side note, guys, this is what real masculinity looks like.

Okay? You lend your strength to the weakest person in the room. You find the person who is most exposed and most vulnerable and you use your influence to cover them.

And of course, it's when we've been forgiven that much that our attitude to other forgiven people changes too, doesn't it?

that's where Simon is so poor. As we're sitting here at the table today, what do these words of Jesus reveal about your heart towards him?

Do you treasure your forgiveness every day? Does this kind of love for Jesus ever make an appearance at your dinner table?

[ 23 : 27 ] You know, when the kid who always gets the class kept behind through their naughty behaviour, when they come over and sit at your table, what difference does your love for Jesus and the fact that you've been forgiven make to that situation?

Or when that person who sails through life seemingly without ever having any problems, without really thinking about anybody else, comes and plonks themselves next to you in church, maybe even at the dinner table, and you immediately think, oh, what difference does your love for Jesus and the fact that you are forgiven make to you then?

It's our love for Jesus that should guide how we treat those people, isn't it? Not our love for them, whether we like them, whether we think they deserve forgiveness, the fact that Jesus loves us and we love him and he is forgiven, that's what should determine how we treat those people.

Just think, how would things change in our church, in our families, in our community, if that's how we did it instead? If we sat down every day at the table with Jesus and we said, dear Lord, thank you that before anything else, I am nothing more than a forgiven sinner and nothing less than somebody you wanted to forgive so badly that you died for me.

And then we went out into the world and we lived that. Whoever has been forgiven little, loves little.

[ 25 : 16 ] And Jesus said to the woman, your faith has saved you, go in peace. let's pray. Lord, help us to remember your great love for us, your free forgiveness offered to us.

And Lord, as we look at what you have told us, what you have kept for us in your word, help us to be like that woman, Lord, not with her regrets and her mistakes, Lord, but in seeing just you in your love for us.

And may we live out of that love, Lord, as we deal with others around us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thank you very much, Johan.

We are going to close by singing a hymn of praise to the Lord. Just reflecting on that passage, I was just reminded, knowing what was coming, of the third line here, ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.

The price has been paid, the disease of sin has been cured, we've been restored into relationship with God, and our sins have been forgiven. That's amazing, and absolutely deserves, the words don't express it, do they?

[ 27 : 06 ] But let's stand to sing and pour out our love to the Lord Jesus for what he's done. Thank you. Children are forgiven, who might need his praise to sing.

Praise him, praise him, praise him, praise him, praise the everlasting! Praise him for his grace and glory is To our God is in his strength, praise him, still does sin forever, so to our God live through earth.

Praise him, praise him, praise him, praise him, glory is his glory.

Father, thy defense has led us Where our people faithfully know In his hand he gently measures Where to God's throne, O Lord, of all Praise him, praise him, praise him For he has just been told Where our sons have been nourished The sum of it that it is gone But our hearts of rise and perish But it's all, not changing all

Praise him, praise him, praise him, praise him Praise the highest, O Lord May he tell us, O Lord, of all Who are your hands Give him, hold him, face to face On a new heart of him, Lord For the fire in time and day Praise him, praise him, praise him, praise him Praise with us, the Lord Lord, I pray that you would help us to be like that woman To recognise our own sin To recognise your love for us

[ 30 : 41 ] And the forgiveness that you have offered and given to us And help us to love you in response And Lord, I pray for anyone here Who is perhaps more like Simon the Pharisee Who is interested in you But doesn't think that they particularly need you Who doesn't recognise the debt that is owed Lord, I pray that you would speak to everyone here this morning That you would help us all to see our need of you All to recognise how much we need your forgiveness And I pray, Lord, that even this morning Someone here might just turn to you And ask for that forgiveness And be freed like that woman was freed In your name, Amen Do sit down Refreshments after the service Those of you who are in grid Particularly year sixes If you use the sheets Do chat about them with your parents

If you want to bring them to the grid next Sunday Then Chris and Elaine Will answer all your remaining questions Those of you who were in the grid last year In a few minutes We're hoping to grab a coffee first I'm going to go over to the Old Chapel We're starting something called Step Up Hopefully you remember that Your parents might have mentioned it Those of you who were in the grid last year Just a few minutes to just sit and chat Check in how you're getting on Be in the services every week Ask any questions And perhaps just briefly pray So those of you who were in the grid last year Step up in about five minutes Over the road in the Old Chapel In the United States

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