

Welcoming Jesus Luke 7v36-50

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Date: 22 October 2017

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 0 0] Starting at verse 36, it's up on the screen. If you have the Red Church Bibles, it's on 1036. 1036. Now, one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him.

So he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume.

And as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them. 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 woman she is, that she is a sinner.

Jesus answered him, Simon, I have something to tell you. Tell me, teacher, he said. Two men owed money to a certain money lender. One owed him 500 denarii and the other 50.

Neither of them had the money to pay him back. So he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled.

[1 : 2 3] You have judged correctly, Jesus said. 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.

Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little, loves little. Then Jesus said to her, Your sins are forgiven.

The other guests began to say among themselves, Who is this who even forgives sins? Jesus said to the woman, Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Thanks, Connor.

I haven't got little notes for you today, but there are pens, and I think Sam is going to distribute them. If you want to take notes, you can use the back side of your new sheet, and write things down there if you wish.

[2 : 4 1] Thank you. Thanks.

Thanks, Sam. Well, let's pray and ask for God's help to us. Father, thank you for Luke, the author of this account of the Lord Jesus.

Thank you that we have it in our language, and that we have the freedom to meet here today, and think about it, reflect on it.

But we want to do more than that. We want to encounter the Lord Jesus, just as these people encountered you.

And as we encounter the Lord Jesus, we want to be changed, to be the people you have called us to be, the people that you desire us to be.

[4 : 2 2] So, Father, would you do your work in our lives today? Do a radical transformation in only ways that you can do.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. The Pharisees, they really don't like Jesus, and they really don't like the people, or the situations Jesus finds himself in.

Remember the people Jesus had met back in chapter 5? You might want to look back there, chapter 5. There were the fishermen. Then there was the man with the skin disease that no one could touch.

Then there was the paralytic, left outside, the unwelcomed ones. And then it all boils over in verses, chapter 5, verse 27, when Jesus meets Levi, the tax collector, and calls him to follow him.

Let's read verse 29. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.

[5 : 44] But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?

And they kept up their complaint. Verse 33. They said to him, to Jesus, that is, John's disciples often fast and pray, and so did the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.

I think it's safe to say that the Pharisees and Jesus are not Facebook friends. So it comes as a surprise when in chapter 7, verse 36, we read that one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him.

And perhaps even more of a surprise that Jesus went to the Pharisees' house and reclined at the table. You see, the Pharisees were good religious folk.

They were highly respected within their communities. They were keepers of the religious law. And the primary way of keeping the law, well, was to keep away from the sinners, the outsiders, those untouchables.

[7 : 04] Sinners were like a contagious disease, something to avoid at all costs. You see, their understanding was if you could keep yourself pure, uncontaminated, then the chances are God is going to welcome you.

God is going to bring the kingdom. But this Jesus character has arrived and upset their thinking.

He's been claiming to be God. He's breaking all their rules. And the shocking reality is Jesus spends all his time with the untouchable sinners.

Rather than avoid them, he welcomes them. Rather than condemn and judge them, Jesus stops, it seems, goes out of his way to eat and drink with them.

In fact, Jesus sums up what he came to do and what people think of him in verse 34. If you just go back a verse or to chapter 7, verse 34, he says, the Son of Man, speaking about himself, came eating and drinking.

[8 : 17] And you say, here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. That's how Jesus summarises his mission.

One who comes eating and drinking, one who's a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Is Jesus really like this?

Have we understood correctly what he came to do? Well, Luke recounts this story to tell us that this is exactly what Jesus does.

You see, as Luke tells this story, as he recounts this event to us, it's as if Luke is saying, look, come on, come with me. You're also invited to this dinner.

I want you to accompany the Lord Jesus and I want you to watch the people. Listen to how they respond.

[9 : 19] Listen to the conversations that take place. And as we sit in on this meal, we will discover that it's not the religious respectable who are accepted and welcomed, but those who accept and welcome Jesus.

It's not the religious respectable who are accepted and welcomed, but those who accept and welcome Jesus. We're going to look at three big ideas from this dinner.

First, the devotion Jesus deserves. You can picture the scene here. You've got all the honoured and privileged guests that's been invited and in amongst them all is Jesus.

He's been invited too. As was the custom, in those days, people would sit on the floor to eat their food. You would rest in some ways, perhaps with your head on your left elbow, leaning in like this, and you would use your right hand to use bread and scoop it into the food that was there and to drink away.

And your body would be positioned in such a way that your feet pointed away from the food area. Everything seems to be going well, enjoying the food, enjoying the company.

[10 : 49] Verse 37. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume.

Now let's be clear. This is not a respectable woman. She has lived, we're told, a sinful life.

Three times we're told, we're not even told her name. She's just told that she's a sinner. That many times she has sinned.

The implication is that she's a woman who's known in the town. She is the town's prostitute.

An unwelcome intruder, if ever there was one, to a meal with a Pharisee. Her very presence contaminated the house.

[11 : 48] Those eating ran the risk of becoming impure and unacceptable. You can imagine them all flinching, moving.

But Jesus remains unmoved. Unflinching, he lets this sinful woman touch him.

Verse 38. And as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears.

Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. The intrusion is bad enough.

Now it's become embarrassing. This woman starts crying and wiping the dirty dust off Jesus' feet with her hair. Why doesn't someone do something?

[12 : 49] perhaps they're all afraid to touch her. Who knows who she was with last night? Maybe they can't believe Jesus' acceptance of her.

But she's not finished. This woman has spared no expense. She has bought a jar of alabaster perfume. Her life savings from her work.

And she pours it on his feet. Why? What's she doing? Well, she's obviously heard about Jesus.

She knows that Jesus has been invited to his house. She knows that this Jesus is the one who welcomes sinners.

That's why she comes. And so this sinful woman pours out her devotion in the only way that she can.

[13 : 59] You see, her devotion is an expression of her welcome. She treats Jesus in such a way that Simon the host should have treated Jesus.

Look at verse 44. Then Jesus turned towards the woman and said to Simon, do you see this woman? Well, what an understatement.

She couldn't be avoided, could she? 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.

feet. You see, as the host, it was expected that you, or certainly at least one of your servants, would wash the feet of the guests and put a bit of olive oil, a way of freshening up.

[15 : 20] So, perhaps this was an intentional slight on Jesus, a kind of social snub. you're invited, Jesus, to the house, but, you know, let's be clear here, you're not welcome.

And Jesus turns it all on its head, as they all look at this woman weeping. It's as if Jesus is saying to Simon, this is your house.

You invited me, you sent the invitation, but see this woman, well, she's acted as the true host. She has welcomed me because she knows who I am.

Simon, if you really knew who I was, well, you would welcome me too. You see, this sinful woman bothers me.

Does she bother you? There's no hiding who she is. There's no masks, there's no cover-up, the clothes are a dead giveaway.

[16 : 31] She knows that everybody knows what she does. But it doesn't stop her. In shameless, extravagant devotion, she welcomes Jesus.

and it bothers me because that's not me. Because when I come to Jesus, I like to come presentable, reminding myself of how good I've been and how I've managed not to fail or fall and proud that I haven't slipped up and, well, certainly not in public anyway, and don't have any major sins to confess.

But if I am to truly know Jesus, well, then I need to learn to become like this sinful woman, without any pretense, shameless, risking it all, entering into the house where she could have been kicked out.

I need to become like this sinful woman because, well, you and I, we're all sinful, and we all need Jesus.

Second, there's the forgiveness that Jesus gives. Simon the Pharisee is disgusted with Jesus' lack of response.

[18 : 11] Look at verse 39. 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 woman she is, that she's a sinner.

It's bad enough that this sinful woman has gate-crashed his dinner and invaded his privacy. But what's worse is that Jesus has done nothing about it.

He's been walking around claiming to be God. He should have rebuked her, condemned her, pushed her away. Instead, Jesus lets her filthy, dirty hands touch him.

How dare he? be. You see, Simon is not interested in welcoming Jesus. He's more interested in setting a standard that Jesus might take note of.

We're beginning to get the impression that the dinner has been orchestrated in such a way to, well, maybe teach Jesus a thing or two about how he should behave.

[19 : 26] If Jesus is who he claims to be, well, then he would have kicked her out. But that's not why Jesus has come.

Jesus came, remember, to eat and drink with sinners because people like you and me desperately need Jesus. So often we can be busy seeking approval, can't we?

keeping a mental account of how often we've served through the week, just totting it up and all the different people that we've helped and the money that we've given and the organisations that we've supported and just to make sure we don't forget, well, we just kind of accidentally let it slip.

I've been so busy this week, as if busyness equated with holiness. holiness. If only others were like me.

Well, Jesus comes not for that kind of person, but for those who live messy and broken lives. For those who fall and can't seem to break their sinful habits, who try harder only to fail again and again.

[20 : 53] He's not impressed by our approval seeking. He's not impressed by the cover-ups, the masks that we put on as we gather together and sing our worship songs and the fake smile we put on as we answer people's questions.

I'm fine. He longs to come with people who come as they are. people who need forgiveness.

You see, Jesus knows our hearts better than we know ourselves. Look at verse 40. Jesus answered him.

Well, how did Jesus know? Remember, he said it to himself, didn't he, in verse 39. Poor Simon, he's really on edge now, isn't he?

Because Jesus knows what he's thinking. Simon, I have something to tell you. Oh, tell me, teacher, he said, as if he could teach me anything.

[22 : 02] Two men owed money to a certain money lender. One owed him 500 denarii, about 18 months' wages, so a significant amount of money, and the other 50, about six weeks.

Significant, but certainly not as much. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now, which of them will love him more?

Simon replied, well, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled. You have judged correctly, Jesus said. it's a simple, simple story, but deeply challenging.

If someone forgives you, you love them. If someone forgives you a lot, you love them a lot.

And the point is, this sinful woman loves Jesus, because she has received forgiveness. She loves Jesus a lot, that explains her devotion, because he has forgiven her a lot.

[23 : 16] Verse 47, therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much.

But he who has been forgiven little, loves little. Then Jesus said to her, your sins are forgiven. The other guests began to say amongst themselves, who is this, who even forgives sins?

And Jesus said to the woman, your faith has saved you, go in peace. You see, it's not her devotion that saves.

It's not her extravagance that saves, as she pours out all that she has for Jesus. It's not, it's not just her love that saves.

In her faith, it's her faith, verse 50, that Jesus alone can forgive sins. This sinful woman knows that Jesus is the true friend of sinners.

[24 : 27] She comes to him because he is the one who will forgive her. He won't misuse her or abuse her. He will forgive her. He won't refuse her or reject her.

Jesus will welcome her. Her love, her devotion, her extravagance is because she has been forgiven.

She has received forgiveness from Jesus. Jesus. Third, the change that Jesus makes.

The story is here to tell us that just as the woman received forgiveness, we too can all be forgiven of our many sins.

The known sins and the secret sins. The ones we don't want anybody to know. You see, this little story that Jesus tells in verses 41 to 42 about the debts being cancelled.

[25 : 39] Well, it's a much bigger story, a much bigger picture, isn't it? Of what would happen when Jesus went to the cross. When Jesus would pay the debt of my sin and your sin.

He would take the punishment that you and I deserve. He would take the hit for you and for me. He would cancel the debt, wipe the slate clean and no longer hold it against us.

And in case we're struggling to grasp the enormity of that, let me read to you something from Psalm 103. Familiar words.

He does not treat us as our sins deserve, or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, an eternity of space, so far as he removed our transgressions from us.

[26 : 52] He wipes it away, every deep and secret sin, everything that we think, no, Jesus couldn't deal with that, he deals with at the cross.

Now the thing is, if we have received and experienced this forgiveness, it will radically change your life. It will transform you.

In some ways it's the tester to know that we have been forgiven. If we've received forgiveness, it will affect us in two ways.

First, you will have a deep love for others. You will have a deep love for others. Look at verse 47. Jesus says, Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven for she loved much.

But he who has been forgiven little, loves little. That's the problem with Simon, isn't it? He loves little because he's been forgiven little.

[28 : 04] Not that he just has little sins and there's no big sins to confess. It's because he can't see how great his sin is. That's his problem.

And as a result he has no love for this sinful woman who's come bursting into his house. She's to be avoided, ignored, removed, pushed out, given a kick.

You see, sinful lives like this sinful woman are broken and messy. They're complicated. And when we look out sometimes we think, well, they're the very kind of people we just want to avoid.

because it's messy. And it's going to cost us our time and our personal space if we get involved. It's going to interrupt my plans and the things that I want to do.

But when we have received forgiveness, when we look at the cross and we see Christ who is hanging there for me and see how God has cancelled my sin debt and I see the cost of it all, then I will love much because I have been forgiven much.

[29 : 36] We will care and we will invest our lives intentionally into people. We will give our time and we'll open our homes and we'll welcome and there will be nobody who we will ever refuse and we'll never look at anybody and say, sorry, I haven't got the time because well, it's too messy.

Forgiven lots and we will love lots. But there's another way in which it will change us. Not just love for others, but peace for life.

Did you get Jesus' words at the end, that final departing word? It's amazing. Jesus said to the woman, your face has saved you.

Go in peace. Think about this woman for a minute. She's lived a life of personal guilt and public shame.

Guilt is when you live with your own sin. But shame is when everybody else knows about that sin. She couldn't walk down the street in her town without people passing comment.

[31 : 02] Her life was ruled by what others said and what others thought of her. God was forgiven. But now she meets Jesus and that changed everything.

Go in peace. No longer burdened by her past. No longer having to sneak out at night. No longer afraid of what others would think or say.

Well, she was now forgiven. She was a daughter of God, accepted and welcomed. how many of us continue to live with the shame of the past?

Avoiding eye contact in case people ask that question? Keeping busy so that we don't have to talk? Afraid to step out and get involved?

Always thinking, what if? what if they find out? You see, when we face up to our sin, like this woman, when we run to Jesus in extravagant devotion, when we receive and experience his forgiveness, hear the words of Jesus, go in peace.

[32 : 31] peace. No longer held back by what others think or say. No longer controlled by the sins of past, but now set free to go and love and care and welcome others.

to peace. This woman really bothers me because she does what I should do and I don't do it.

Too busy hiding, too busy covering up, afraid of what others will think if I express my love for Jesus in public and talk about him.

I need to look at the cross again and maybe that's where we all need to come and see Christ and see the forgiveness that we have received. For those who are forgiven lots, love lots and can go in peace set free from their past, given a future to go and love and care and welcome.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Thank you.