

AM Luke 7:36-50

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[0 : 00] Well friends, we've joined together for another Sunday morning, another Sunday morning continuing our studies in Luke's Gospel, in Luke's Gospel and this morning as we come, we've come to Luke chapter 7, Luke chapter 7 and these verses 36 through 50, verses 36 through 50, let's read them together now.

Now, one of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place 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 money lender had two debtors, one owed 500 denarii and the other 50.

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.

[1 : 25] And he said to him, you have judged rightly. And turning towards 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. 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. Amen. This is a reading of God's inspired and inerrant word.

Let's turn to the Lord in prayer now. Heavenly Father, we pray that as we come to your word this morning, that you would open our eyes. We pray that the Holy Spirit may illuminate our understanding, that he may unstop our deaf ears, that he may remove those scales from our eyes, that he may soften our hearts.

[2 : 41] We pray, Father, for a vision of the greatness of Jesus. A vision of the greatness of our Savior. May we who have been forgiven much, love much.

May we know the truth and the reality of sins forgiven this morning. And may you go before us now, we ask. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Let's turn to this section in Luke chapter 7. Luke chapter 7 and these verses 36 through 50. Be helpful if you have them open in front of you this morning so that we can see together what God is saying through his word.

I wonder if you've ever thought about who your ideal guest would be for a dinner party. Or perhaps you've played that game with your family where you pick five people from history who you would invite to a dinner party and you have to explain the reasons why you would like to have them there. Maybe some of you would say, well, I'm going to choose the Apostle Paul. I want to get inside the mind of the great Apostle. I want to understand how he thought. I want to understand about his great change from Judaism to Christianity.

[3 : 48] I want to understand the journey and the process that he went on. I want to understand the formulation of justification through faith alone. Maybe some of you would choose a great preacher, a Martin Lloyd-Jones or a John MacArthur.

You'd want to quiz them about their study. You'd want to quiz them about how they formulated their sermons. You'd want to quiz them about their hermeneutic. Maybe some of you would choose a great sports star, a George Best or an Eric Cantona.

Maybe some of you would choose an author, a Beatrix Potter. Maybe some of you would choose a politician, a Boris Johnson or a Nelson Mandela. Perhaps some of you would just want to have dinner again with that one person who you miss.

It doesn't matter to you that they're not famous. It doesn't matter that the world doesn't know them. But it matters to you that you knew them and that you miss them. Once you get into all the possibilities, it really is endless, isn't it?

Trying to work out the mix of who would be a good mix of people. Would Boris Johnson and Eric Cantona, for instance, find anything to talk about? And as we come to Luke chapter 7 this morning, as we come to these verses 36 through 50, they're all about a dinner party, aren't they?

[5 : 05] A dinner party thrown by this Pharisee named Simon. Simon has the advantage, of course, of being able to pick his dinner guest. Simon has the advantage of being able to choose those whom he wants to invite.

But as we're going to find out, it's a woman who isn't invited, a woman who wasn't welcome, who actually goes away with the Lord's blessing rather than Simon himself.

It's this uninvited guest who makes the biggest impression on the occasion. We want to see three things together this morning. Think about three things together this morning.

Firstly, we want to think about this uninvited guest. We want to set the background and see how Simon throws this party. But we want to think about this uninvited guest who gatecrashes the occasion. Secondly then, we want to think about an uncomfortable truth.

That Jesus reminds Simon of this uncomfortable truth. That he needs forgiveness from sin just as much as the woman does. And then thirdly, finally, we want to see an uncompromising saviour.

[6 : 05] Who even despite what the crowds say, even despite what the religious leaders say, will not compromise on his message of justification through faith. So firstly then, we think about this uninvited guest.

This uninvited guest. And we see that in verses 36 through 40. So we remember the context then of Luke chapter 7. We remember the context of where we are.

Last week we finished our section in Luke's Gospel by thinking about the reasons why people rejected Jesus. They rejected him perhaps because he didn't live up to their expectations. He didn't fit the mould of what they expected him to be.

They did the same thing with John the Baptist of course. Didn't they? Remember that great section that Luke finishes with. Verse 33 of Luke chapter 7. For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine.

And what do you say? He has a demon. The Son of Man has come eating and drinking. You say, look at him. A glutton and a drunkard. A friend of tax collectors and sinners. And this then is the backdrop.

[7 : 08] This then is the background for what we read in verse 36. Don't miss the connection because it's not there by accident. Don't miss the connection because it's there on purpose. It's there as a divinely spirit-inspired recordance by Luke.

Jesus has said what? Look, I come eating and drinking and you say, look, a glutton and a drunkard. I come enjoying the good things of life and you say, a glutton and a drunkard.

And yet what's the very next thing that the Pharisees do? What's the very next thing that the religious leaders do? Verse 36. One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him.

They ask him to eat and drink with them. That's the very thing that they're criticizing him for. That's the very thing that they hold against. And they say, look, he's a glutton and a drunkard. And yet what's the next thing they do?

Verse 36. They say, well, look, come and eat and drink with us. Here you are, Jesus says in effect, inviting me to another barbecue. Here you are, Jesus says in effect, inviting me to another feast, another Sunday dinner to use our modern parlance.

[8 : 16] And yet notice what Jesus does. He accused me of being a glutton and a drunkard because I eat and drink. And yet what does Jesus do? Or what do you read?

Verse 36. One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him. And he went into the Pharisees' house and took his place at the table. Yeah?

So what? That's what modern, not even modern, that's what social etiquette demanded that Jesus do. Simon has asked him to come for a meal and etiquette demanded that Jesus go for the meal. He takes his place at the table. So what? He accepts the invitation. So what? Big Deal. Yet what's one of the things that the Pharisees and teachers of the law often hold against Jesus?

We've read it in the previous verse that he's a friend of tax collectors and sinners. That he often ate with tax collectors and sinners. And yet here he is, verse 36, eating with them.

[9 : 15] Here he is, verse 36, dining with them. I say this with all reverence and respect, but Jesus wasn't fussy. Jesus would eat with whoever would eat with him.

Jesus would dine with those who would dine with him. Jesus would share the kingdom, the good news of the kingdom of God with all of those with whom he dined. He takes up the invitations that are extended to him.

Perhaps it was that the tax collectors and sinners were more willing to eat with Jesus. Perhaps they more readily extended the hand of friendship to him.

Perhaps they more readily prepared meals and were ready to welcome him than the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Maybe the Pharisees didn't invite him so often.

Perhaps it was that they weren't willing to eat with him rather than the other way around. Think about the words of Jesus Christ himself as we find them in Revelation.

[10 : 20] What does Jesus say in that Revelation of Jesus Christ? He says, behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if any man opens the door to him, Jesus will come in and eat with him and dine with him.

Think about John's gospel. Anyone who comes to Jesus, he will by no means cast out. Jesus is willing to accept the invitation to any who would call on him.

From any who would welcome him. From any who would open the door to him. It's a reminder to us today, friends, isn't it? Of the urgency of making a personal decision to follow Jesus Christ.

It's a reminder to us of the urgency of making a decision to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Of inviting him in. Of dining with him.

Of supping with him. Personally. For ourselves. It's one of those great tensions that we have to hold in the Christian life, isn't it?

[11 : 20] It's one of those great tensions that we have to hold in the Reformed faith. That on the one hand we believe in the sovereignty of God and salvation. On the one hand we believe in the eternal predestination of the elect to salvation.

And yet on the other hand we also believe in the responsibility of each one of us to accept Christ for themselves. To become disciples of Jesus for themselves. We have to make that personal, active, living decision for ourselves.

And come to Christ for ourselves. The eternal election of believers doesn't remove our responsibility to believe for ourselves.

So Jesus has gone in. He's sitting at the table. He's reclining at the table. He's waiting for the meal. But as then we're introduced to this uninvited guest.

This sinful woman. A woman of the city, verse 37. A woman of the city who hears that Jesus is there. A woman of the city who hears that Jesus is at Simon's house. And she has to come and see him.

[12 : 28] Luke doesn't record for us what the sin is. It's just clear that it's a public sin. Because of that many people have speculated that it's a sexual sin. Perhaps not an unrealistic speculation.

But Luke doesn't record the specific sin for us. He just tells us that this was a sinful woman. A woman who was known by the public to be sinful. And she brings this alabaster jar of ointment. She comes to see Jesus. She comes and she stands behind Jesus. She lays down at his feet. And starts weeping uncontrollably.

So much so that her tears drench the feet of the Savior. So much so that her tears soak the feet of our Lord. And she dries them with her hair.

I'm not really much of a crier to be honest. I come from a long line of bottling emotions up as the way that we deal with them. But I can remember one occasion being about 13, 14.

[13:34] I just started secondary school. I think I was probably in second or third year. And I can remember one night, one Sunday night. I can remember vividly weeping uncontrollably. Because my history teacher, a substitute history teacher actually it should be said.

Had told us that if we failed our history exam in three weeks time. Then we would be kicked out of school. I can remember weeping so much that my shirt was wet with the tears.

And that's how it is for this woman here. She's weeping at the feet of our Savior. So much so that his feet are wet with her tears.

She kisses and anoints the feet of Christ. It's an act of service. It's an act of worship. It's an act of love. Don't forget that in those days it wouldn't have been our modern covered shoes that people walked on the roads with.

It would have been perhaps barefoot. It would have been with sandals that didn't have any covering on them. And so as people walked on those dusty roads, their feet would have become very, very dirty.

[14:38] Very, very clogged with mud and dust. And here is this woman washing in effect the feet of our Savior. Here is this woman in effect drying the feet of our Savior with her hair.

It's an act of worship. It's an act of love. And yet notice Simon's response in verse 39.

When the Pharisee sees this uninvited guest. When the Pharisee sees this sinful woman, what does he say? If this man were truly a prophet. If this man were truly sent from God.

If this man were truly the Son of God. Then he would know. Then he would understand what sort of woman it is who is washing his feet. He would have understood how sinful she was. He would have understood how much he was being made unclean by her.

He would want nothing to do with her. It can be easy for that self-righteous attitude to creep in amongst us all, can't it?

[15:42] Well surely this person would never come to church. I mean look how mired they are in sin. Surely this person would never respond to the gospel. I mean look how out of control their life is. This person isn't the sort of person who comes to church.

We may not vocalise it. We may not say it out loud. Because our theology tells us that all can come to church. Our theology tells us that all can come to Christ. But internally in our hearts.

There might be some groups who we feel are beyond the pale. There might be some groups who we feel would never respond to the gospel of Christ. There may be some groups who we feel are too far gone. Just as Simon feels that this woman is too far gone.

But Jesus isn't finished with him. Jesus has something to teach him. Jesus has something to tell him. Jesus has something to show him. And it's that we'll turn to now. So the first thing we see then is this uninvited guest.

This sinful woman who crashes Simon's dinner party. But secondly then we want to think about an uncomfortable truth. An uncomfortable truth. And we see that in verses 41 through 47.

[16:52] So Jesus has said to Simon. Look I've got something to say to you. I've got something to tell you. I've got something to remind you of verse 40. And Simon says well look say it. So Jesus goes on then in verse 41. And he's going to teach Simon about forgiveness.

He's going to teach Simon about grace. And as he so often does. Jesus does it using a parable.

Look he says verse 41. There's this man. There's this money lender. Had two debtors.

One of them owed him 500 denarii. Now as we know a denarius was a day's wages really for a labourer. So if someone owed 500 denarii that was.

Let's say for the sake of argument. Let's say that's about two years wages. About 50,000 pounds in modern parlance. And another man owed him 50 denarii.

So that's for the sake of argument. Let's say that's two months wages. About 3,000 pounds. And now notice what happens in verse 42. Neither of them can pay.

[17:53] Neither of them can stump up the cash. Neither of them can fulfil their debt. Neither of them can give back the money that they owe. But the man who's owed the money. What does he do?

Verse 42. He cancelled the debt of both. In mercy and in grace and in compassion. He decided to cancel the debt of both men. And it's a wonderful picture of the gospel for us.

Isn't it? Even before we get to the punchline. Even before we get to the point that Jesus is making to Simon. It's a wonderful picture of the gospel for us. Because all of us this morning stand underneath a debt we can never afford to pay.

All of our friends. All of our family. All of the people of our town. Stand under a debt that they can never afford to pay. And yet in mercy.

And in grace. God has made payment in his son the Lord Jesus Christ. God has fulfilled and paid the debt that we owe. For all who believe.

[18 : 49] That's the gospel. That's the good news. That we can't pay our debts. And yet someone else has paid them on our behalf.

But Jesus isn't finished with Simon. Is he? He says to Simon. Verse 42. Well. Which one of them do you think is going to love him more? Which one of them do you think is going to be more grateful to the man who cancelled the debts?

Well of course it's going to be the man who had the greater debt cancelled. Isn't it? Jesus says well done. Look you've answered correctly. You get it. You understand.

The uncomfortable truth for Simon though is that he's just like this woman. The uncomfortable truth for Simon that Jesus is highlighting is that he is just as much in need of forgiveness. As this sinful woman was.

Sure his sins may not be as great. Sure his sins may not be as many. But he needed forgiveness. He needed his debt cancelled just as the sinful woman had done. He couldn't atone for his own sin.

[19 : 51] He couldn't pay his own debt. He was under God's righteous judgment just as this sinful woman was. He had deemed her unworthy of salvation. He had deemed her too far gone.

He had deemed her beyond the pale. And yet God in mercy would forgive the sins of the woman. Would cancel the debt of the woman.

Because she believed in Christ. Just as God would cancel Simon's debt if he believed in Christ. He turns his attention now to the woman.

Verse 44. And what does he say? Look Simon you didn't. You didn't treat me with any respect. You didn't give me a bowl of water to wash my feet.

Let alone have one of your servants do it. And this woman hasn't ceased wiping my feet. This woman hasn't ceased cleansing my feet with her tears since the moment I arrived.

[20 : 49] This woman has dried my feet with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss. But this woman hasn't ceased kissing me since the moment she arrived. You didn't give me any oil for my head.

But this woman hasn't ceased anointing my feet with oil since I arrived. Basically Jesus is saying to Simon. Look you've shown me no respect. You've shown me no honour.

You've shown me no value. Whereas this woman hasn't stopped showing me respect. And honour. And value. Since I arrived.

The old joke is of course that the only smell that the Queen recognises. Is the smell of fresh paint. The idea being that everywhere that she goes has just been freshly painted.

That it's just been freshly redecorated for her arrival. It would somehow be disrespectful if the Queen showed up. And there was that damp patch still left on the wall. It would be somehow disrespectful if the Queen showed up.

[21 : 47] And the wallpaper was just hanging on by a thread. It would be disrespectful. And yet that's how Simon treated Christ. She's anointed me with perfume.

Jesus says verse 46. You didn't give me any oil. Therefore her sins which are many. Now notice please. Notice please. Jesus doesn't downplay her sin. Jesus doesn't try and make light of her sin. Jesus says verse 46. Her sins which are many. He recognises that her sins are many. He recognises the state that she's in.

But he says her sins which are many. Will be forgiven her. Why? Because she's loved much. Because she's loved much. However he who has been forgiven little.

Will love little. He who thinks that he's fundamentally a good person. He who thinks that fundamentally he doesn't need much saving. Will love little. Because he's been forgiven little.

[22 : 48] Because he's been forgiven little. In his own eyes. When we stop to think about it. I hope this morning we realise that we've all been forgiven much.

That our sins just like the woman's here are many. But that in Jesus Christ we can know forgiveness. If that's the case then we should love much.

If we've been forgiven much then we should love the saviour much. If we've been forgiven much then we should love the brothers and sisters much. If we've been forgiven much then we should be ready to forgive others much. Certainly in my own heart.

I know that all too often the attitude of Simon creeps into my own life. I know that all too often I can tend to think of myself as fundamentally a good person. person who just needed a little bit of polishing around the edges.

Who just needed a few of the rough edges cut off. And yet the truth is that I needed forgiven for much. The truth is that I needed a great saviour.

[23 : 55] But thankfully God has provided one in his son. The uncomfortable truth for Simon is that he needs saving just as much as the woman did.

The uncomfortable truth for Simon is that he is a sinner. Just as this woman was. Simon needs saving from his sin. Just as the woman needed saving from her. He thought he was better than her. He thought he was more righteous than her. But he still needed a saviour. Thirdly, finally this morning then we want to think about our uncompromising saviour.

And we see that in verses 48 through 50. He's shown Simon the lesson. He's taught the woman the lesson about sin. He's taught Simon the lesson about loving much, having been forgiven much. He's assured Simon that the woman's sins are forgiven her. And that's what he says to her in verse 48, isn't it? And he said to her, verse 48, Your sins are forgiven. The people sitting at the table, no doubt some of Simon's friends, no doubt some of the other Pharisees and teachers of the law in the area, say, well, who is this?

[25 : 00] Hold on a minute. What's going on here? Who is this? Who can forgive sins but God alone? That's their constant question throughout the gospel. And yet the saviour wouldn't be swayed, would he?

What does he say to the woman in verse 50? Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. These people might be questioning. These people might be wondering who can forgive sins but God alone. But actually your faith has saved you.

Now go in peace. And it's a key part of the narrative for us to understand. It's a key part of the gospel for us to understand. Because some look at verses 43 through 46 and what Jesus says to Simon and says, See, salvation is based on works.

Jesus points Simon to all of the things that she's done. Jesus points Simon to the actions that she's done and says that her sins are forgiven. But actually Jesus says, No, verse 50.

Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Her faith showed itself in her actions. Her faith showed itself in the things that she did.

[26 : 13] Her faith showed itself fundamentally in how she treated Jesus and the respect and honour that she gave him. But fundamentally she was saved by her faith. It's a personal, living, active faith in Jesus that is necessary for salvation.

It's a personal, living, active faith in Jesus that shows itself in how we live that is necessary for salvation. The question is, do we have that faith this morning?

Do you have that faith this morning? Do you have that faith in Jesus Christ as your only hope? Do you have that hope and faith in Jesus as the only saviour from sin?

Have you turned to him in faith and repentance? If you have, then like the woman here, you can know that your sins are forgiven.

You can know right relationship with God restored. Do you have faith in Jesus Christ as your only saviour?

[27 : 19] Or perhaps you're more like Simon this morning. You still believe that you don't need saving. The truth is that you do. Discover that truth before it's too late.

And turn to Christ. The one who will save you from your sin. The one who will forgive much. And the one whom you must love.

Amen.