

The Uninvited Guest

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[0 : 00] Shall we turn back for a while to the passage of Scripture we read in Luke's Gospel, chapter 7? Luke's Gospel, chapter 7. And I'd like to read again a few verses from verse 36.

One of the Pharisees asked him, Jesus, 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.

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.

Wherever Jesus went, he was dogged by criticism, criticism from the Pharisees, from the teachers of the law, from the religious elite in the country in which he lived, in Jerusalem, in Judea, and wherever he went.

And on one occasion, he was surrounded by tax collectors and so-called sinners, because they gathered to hear him. And on that occasion, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, this man welcomes sinners and eats with them.

[1 : 37] This man welcomes sinners and eats with them. And isn't that good news for you and I today, that the Lord Jesus Christ welcomes sinners?

And not only does he welcome sinners, but he invites us to come to his table at communion seasons. Jesus never showed disdain to anyone who was truly humble and who was truly seeking him.

And the good news is that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. And we are all lost, every single one of us, until we are found by Jesus and until we are saved by his finished work upon the cross.

In Psalm 138, we read in verse 6, And in this particular passage of Scripture, we have an introduction to two people, one who is proud, one who is self-righteous, one who prides himself on his religiosity, and another, a woman whom the proud Pharisee disdained, and yet she was lowly. She came and she knelt at the feet of Jesus and she kissed his feet and washed his feet with the hair from her head. Perhaps one of the most humble descriptions of anything that we can find anywhere in the pages of Scripture, apart from the Lord himself, when he took off his outer garment and put on a towel and washed the feet of his disciples.

[3 : 24] And so this passage records for us how this woman unashamedly and openly showed her love and gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ for what he had done for her.

And the Gospels revealed to us many meetings between Jesus and women. Some of those women, of course, were in desperate straits. We are told in Mark and Luke's Gospel of the woman who had endured bleeding for 12 years.

And Mark tells us that she had spent all her money on doctors, but she had not found any cure. And when Jesus was passing through the community where she lived, she came up quietly and secretly in the crowd and touched the hem of his garment, believing that she would be healed.

And she was healed. And the Lord Jesus turned and commended her for her faith. Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.

And then there was the Syrophenician woman when Jesus went up to the very north, when he left Judea and went up to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And there was a woman.

[4 : 38] She was a Canaanite woman. She wasn't one of the Lord's covenant people. And her daughter was possessed of an evil spirit. And she came to the Lord Jesus Christ, begging that he would drive the spirit out of her daughter, which he did.

And her daughter found peace and an end to her suffering. And then on a Sabbath day when Jesus was in a synagogue, there was a woman there who had been bound up as a cripple for 18 long years.

And Jesus showed compassion on her. He took pity upon her. And he freed her from her pain and misery. And she was able to stand up straight for the first time in 18 years.

And because of that act of pity and that act of compassion, the synagogue ruler was indignant. There are six days for work, he said. Come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath. You would imagine that it was a daily occurrence that people suffering, such as that woman suffered, would be healed. And it was an indication that although he was the synagogue ruler, though he was the equivalent of a minister in that particular community, yet he had no sense of compassion for the plight of that poor woman.

[6 : 02] He was more concerned about keeping the law of Moses to the very letter. And the women of that day were often treated as second-class citizens.

But Jesus, he gave them a sense of dignity. He gave them a sense of respect. The Samaritan woman at the well was surprised that Jesus would even speak to her, let alone ask her for a drink of water, when his disciples would probably have ignored her completely.

Because when they came back from the town, they were surprised to see Jesus conversing with the Samaritan woman. And one of my favorite passages in Scripture, in Luke 11, one time when Jesus was preaching, a woman cried out, and in the AV it says, Blessed is the woman that bear thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

It's got that sort of earthiness that comes through in the Old English of the King James, an earthiness which is sort of missing in the modern translations.

Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and who nursed you. And Jesus replied, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.

[7 : 22] Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it. And we come into a church, a Lord's Day by Lord's Day. We hear the word of God being read and we hear it being preached.

But do we go on our way, obeying the word of God? Remember at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave the parable of the two builders, the wise builder and the foolish builder.

And it was an illustration that the different types of listener who had been present at the Sermon on the Mount, and they had heard the word of the Lord, they had heard the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And for some it had gone in one ear and out the other, and they went away and they did not put what they had heard into effect in their lives.

But the wise man heard the word of the Lord and he changed his ways. He built his life on the rock that is Christ. And when the storms came, as eventually they did, then that man survived because he was trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[8 : 32] We hear the word of the Lord preached here, wig by wig. Are we putting our faith, are we putting our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ?

I wasn't able to go to church last Lord's Day because I wasn't feeling well. So I went on to the website of this very church and I listened to a young man who had been preaching here just a couple of months ago.

And I was so impressed with the fervor of how he preached and how he presented the Lord Jesus Christ. And I was thinking to myself, if I was a stranger to God's grace, just hearing the fervor of that young man, surely that would impact upon my heart and bring me to trust in Jesus.

And so here in this passage of Scripture, we're presented with two very conflicting attitudes. A man who would never have regarded himself as a sinner, but a man who regarded himself as one of the religious elite.

And a woman whom Simon the Pharisee certainly did regard as a sinner. And I have no doubt that that woman regarded herself as a sinner.

[9 : 51] She knew herself to be a sinner, but she also knew that in Christ Jesus she had found forgiveness. And it was because of that forgiveness that she came into a home from which she normally would have been barred, from which Simon would have told his servants to throw her out into the street.

But she came in because she wanted to show her love and her gratitude and her thankfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ for what he had done for her.

Simon looked down upon her. She was a woman who was ostracized for whatever her lifestyle was. She would have been excluded from the company of respectable synagogue goers.

And the problems that had brought her into whatever lifestyle she'd had in the past by which she was labeled as a sinner, that was of no concern whatsoever to Simon.

He had no compassion for her any more than the synagogue ruler had compassion for the woman who had been bound up by Satan, as Jesus put it, for 18 long years.

[11:01] Maybe she had been a prostitute. We simply do not know. And if she was, maybe she had been forced into it by economic hardship, as are many women today, many women who cannot speak English, who are recruited in Albania and Eastern European countries, and who are brought to this country, brought to the West, with the promise of good jobs, where they can earn good money and send the money home to their families.

And they find themselves caught up in criminal networks, living in fear and brutalized if they should refuse to do what they are forced to do.

But here was a woman who, in Jesus, whatever her past had been, she found acceptance, and she found herself able to break from her former lifestyle and to enter in to a new beginning.

Her sins were forgiven. The slate was wiped clean, and the shame of her past had been removed from her.

Respectable people like Simon might like to remind her of the former lifestyle that she lived. But one of the children's addresses, and I think I might have done it here when I was here on a previous occasion, is an indication that when we come to trust in Jesus, God takes our sins and he casts them into the sea of his forgetfulness.

[12:31] And then he tells us in Jeremiah 31, I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. We might have done things in our past lives which the very thought of them would bring us a sense of shame.

But the wonderful thing is that when we confess our sins to Jesus, and when we find forgiveness, when we find ourselves cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's promise that he will never, ever mention those sins again.

It's as if they had never existed. We have a new beginning, a new life, living no longer for self, living no longer for the world, but living from now on for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And finding acceptance with Jesus, surely that is the most important thing that we could ever seek. But the acceptance that this woman found with Jesus did not necessarily imply that Jesus was accepting of her past lifestyle.

The woman caught in adultery when she was brought to the Lord Jesus Christ, when everybody went away, when Jesus said, let he who is without sin cast the first stone, and they all dissipated and quietly went their ways.

[13:55] And she said to Jesus, and do you, sir, condemn me also? And he said, no, I do not, but go away and sin no more. She had been brought to Jesus, and Jesus was not accepting of her lifestyle and of the things that she had done.

He simply told her to go and sin no more. In the society in which we live today, if two men had been brought to Jesus who had been engaged in a sexual relationship, then Jesus would, I believe, have said the same to them, to go away and to sin no more.

Go away and sin no more. I think it was last year or the year before, Tim Fallon was elected as the leader of the Liberal Party in Parliament in Westminster, a Christian, and he was being constantly harangued with the question, do you believe homosexuality to be sinful?

And in the end, he was hounded out of his position as leader of that particular party. As a nation, we have sadly moved far away from honoring the Lord, who says that he will honor those who honor him, but he will disdain those who despise him.

And so here was a woman who had found a love that enabled her to break with her old lifestyle. The debt of her sin had been fully paid, and she knew that.

[15:32] And because of that, she took this jar of expensive ointment, and she came to show her love and her gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ for what he had done for her.

Now, it would be very easy when we read this passage in English to mistake the words of Jesus, because when Jesus asked Simon the question, and he posed to him the parable of two people,

two people who owed money, one who owed a great deal, and one who owed not quite so much. And the person to whom they owed the money cancelled the debt. And Jesus asked Simon the Pharisee which of them would love the creditor more.

And he replied correctly, the one whose greater debt had been cancelled. And by that answer, he was condemning his own hard, cold attitude.

And so Jesus says here about this woman, and he says, I tell you, her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much. We would, it would be easy to imagine that Jesus had been so impressed by the demonstration of this woman's love, that she had taken this expensive jar of ointment, that had come in to Simon's house, ignoring Simon and the others, and focusing on Jesus, and then pouring out that ointment on his feet.

[17:02] A wonderful demonstration of her love. She did indeed love much. But did Jesus forgive her because of her actions? And the answer is simply no.

Because none of us, none of us, it doesn't matter how good we might consider ourselves to be, we cannot ingratiate ourselves with the Lord by our actions.

We cannot work our way into heaven. If I give my body to be burned and give all I have to the poor, it will do nothing for me, he writes Paul, if I lack love.

You see, when, if you go back to the original Greek, when Jesus says, I tell you her sins which are many are forgiven, if you look at the Greek tense, it's talking about a past action.

Jesus wasn't forgiving her for her sins because he was so impressed by this great outpouring of her love. He was stating that her sins had been forgiven at some point in the past.

[18:09] Before she even came into that house, her sins were forgiven. Perhaps her forgiven yesterday, or the week before, or several months before. We don't know how she would have been present somewhere where Jesus was preaching.

Perhaps Jesus had cleansed her of an evil demon. Perhaps Jesus had healed her of something. But at some time in the past, she had come to faith and she had known the reality of her sins having been forgiven.

And then at some point in time, she heard that Jesus had come to the community where she lived, that he was a guest of honor in the house of Simon the Pharisee.

And so she grabbed the most precious and the most expensive thing she had, this jar, an alabaster jar, we're told elsewhere, of expensive ointment.

And she came and she just tipped it out over the feet of Jesus. She didn't measure out a tiny quantity with a spoon. She didn't tip it out carefully.

[19:13] She just tipped it out on the feet of Jesus. And she wept at his feet, not tears of distress, but tears of love and tears of thankfulness and tears of gratitude.

And with her long hair, she washed the feet of Jesus. Simon the Pharisee was thinking to himself, well, if this man truly was a prophet, he, excuse me, he would know what sort of woman this is. And that he was, if he was truly a prophet, he would not allow himself to be touched by a sinful woman. And of course, that goes back to when village raised the widow's son in the town of Nain. And the people were saying, a great prophet has arisen among us and God has visited his people. And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country. And maybe it was because of that action of raising the son of the widow of Nain that Simon invited Jesus to come and eat with him.

[20:27] But as Jesus reminded him, Simon the Pharisee didn't give Jesus any of the courtesies that would have been common in that day when you were inviting a guest into your house.

And he said to you, 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. Excuse me.

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. She loved much because her sins were forgiven.

And that jar of expensive perfume, maybe at some point in the past she saw her future security in that. It was an expensive perfume. Nard, we're told, in one of the other accounts.

[21:32] Maybe she thought, well, as she gets older and less capable, she could sell that and she could live on the proceeds. But then when she came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, she saw her future security no longer in a jar of ointment, no longer in something of this world.

But she saw her future security in the man, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so she was willing to take the most precious thing she had and to tip it out upon the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Moses was anointing his brother Aaron, when he was clad in the wonderful robes of the high priest and it came to the anointing of Aaron for his spiritual duties, we're told that Moses took a horn of oil and he poured it over the head of Aaron.

And in the Psalms, we're told that the oil ran down over his beard and to the hem of his garment. We would imagine having read in Exodus the description of these wonderful and ornate robes that had been made for the high priest that you wouldn't want to despoil them with oil, that Moses would have measured out a little drop of oil on the head of Aaron.

Perhaps I had a towel ready to mop it up, but he just tipped it out and it ran down over his head and over his beard and down to the hem of his garment.

[23 : 08] And that's a picture of God's amazing love for us, poured out, pressed down and running over. He does not hold back. He gave us the most precious thing he has.

He gave us his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And this woman, in gratitude for what Christ had done for her, took the most precious thing she had and tipped it out upon the feet of Jesus.

and I wonder, what have we done? What have I done? What have any of us done? To show our gratitude for what Christ has done for us.

Because no matter how good our lifestyle, no matter how religious we are, no matter how good is our attendance in church, we can do nothing individually or corporately to wipe away one single sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, when he shed his blood, he washed us clean of every single sin that we have done. And so we have here two attitudes.

[24 : 19] The one man, Simon the Pharisee, proud of his religiosity, his church attendance, his membership, imagining that somehow these were his ticket to heaven and his ticket to finding acceptance with God.

And a woman saved by grace, a woman devoid of pride, humble in the very presence of her Savior, knowing that all the religion in the world can do nothing to get her into a right relationship with God. Which one will love more? And Simon, by his response to Jesus' question, condemned himself. Her sins were many, but so are our sins, a many.

And it was to pay the price for our sins that Christ left heaven and came into this world and took upon himself human flesh and went eventually to the cross and laid down his life as a sacrifice for sinners.

And we, like that dear woman of old, whose name we do not know, perhaps it was Mary, but we too, if we should come to the Lord and seek forgiveness for our sins, we too will know the weight of our sins being lifted for us, from us.

[25 : 41] We too will know the joy of a new life and of a new beginning. And as we look into the mirror of Scripture, I wonder, for us individually, individually, which reflection is looking back at us.

Is it that of Simon or is it that of this woman? She cared nothing for what people thought about her. So overcome was she by her love for her Savior.

Her debt was great, but Jesus had paid it every single last bit of it. That's what true Christianity is all about.

It's coming to know Jesus. It's coming to find acceptance with God. It's coming to know the forgiveness of our every sin. She came to the God of all grace, of whom Paul writes in Galatians, He loved me and gave himself for me.

He loved me and gave himself for me. Jesus is the Savior of the world, but can we say this morning that he is my Savior.

[26 : 48] He loved me and he gave himself for me. Jesus said to her, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Your faith has saved you.

Go in peace. It was all of Jesus. It was all of God's doing in her life, and yet he commended her for her faith. What grace, what amazing love, and I pray that we, too, confronted with this passage of Scripture today, that we, too, like that woman of old, would come to know the love of the Lord Jesus Christ and to hear his words speaking to us from the page of Scripture.

Son, daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Amen. And may the Lord add his blessing to these thoughts and meditations on his word.

Thank you.