

The Amazing Saviour

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[0 : 0 0] gracious father give us your help now as we reflect on your word help us to have soft hearts open ears ready to learn and be changed into christlikeness amen i wonder if you've had much experience with social awkwardness you know those times in public when someone's drawing attention to themselves in just the worst possible way and even if it's not you you just want to die i used to quite enjoy awkward situations just to see how people would deal a few years ago a few days after some friends got married one of the groomsmen had a great idea that we would have a party at their house while they were away it's not as malicious as it may sound he wanted to have a potluck dinner whatever brings their own meal and we would leave the leftovers in the freezer nice right they'd be coming back the next day and the food would be good pretty fresh well after we'd eaten the food and it was stored and we were spread out on the living room eating chips lollies watching a movie we were so happy with ourselves what a great idea and then we heard a key in the door and we were silent we looked at each other wondering doesn't pete have the only spare key the groomsman the door swings open the married couple walk in home a day early from their honeymoon confused silence we just sit there not moving not saying anything not sure how this has happened it was pretty uncomfortable well the party was over and we went home i wonder if you've been in or perhaps caused a situation like this in today's passage there is a really awkward situation a very out of place woman rocks up to a party that she does not belong at and she has zero worries about what people think what they feel and what they might say well so far in this gospel luke has been showing us who jesus is hasn't he in his birth in his childhood in his baptism in his ministry in different stories and encounters we've been getting different pieces of the puzzle haven't we now we obviously have an advantage of the finished story but for those witnessing jesus in these places and doing these things the question who is this keeps popping up the pharisees were asking onlookers were asking even the disciples were asking in today's passage this question is asked again and not because of some mind-blowing miracle but because of his words let's have a look as the passage begins in verse 36 luke sets the scene jesus is invited to a pharisee's house he goes he reclines at the table along with a bunch of other guests now the idea of reclining at a table in a formal or at least in a socially proper way i find that a little bit weird but this is what they did i think that uh... it was sort of something like something like this head head towards the table maybe you know on the side

and feet out the back reclining very comfortably on the floor among the food that just sort of helps you to to feel and see this night another strange thing that you may have noticed is that so far in luke jesus has already done a lot to annoy and offend and even anger the pharisees hasn't he and the religious elite so why is he being invited around for dinner well i wonder if despite some of the crazy things he's done or said at this point some still hold him in high regard they see his wisdom and they see his power and even if they don't entirely agree well jesus was important and the pharisees loved recognition this guy would just love to have jesus who look at least he's a prophet of some significance oh man if he spoke well of me so he puts on a dinner he invites his high society friends and jesus who is hot right now i wonder if you've been to an occasion like this i like to think of it as a we're better than you and we know it dinner if i'm ever at a place like this i'll usually try my best to fit in and do as they do mostly not to embarrass the people i'm with but at this dinner party it doesn't take long for the socially acceptable calm to go down in flames have a look at verse 37 a woman in that town 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 i don't know how much experience you have with things that destroy the mood at a dinner party but an uninvited guest is right up there and this is worse than just that keep going verse 38 she stood behind him at his feet weeping remember his lying down feet at the back and she began to wet his feet with her tears then she wiped them with

her hair and kissed them and poured perfume on them can you even imagine this scene just try and put yourself there reclining at the table talking to some other jewish friend there's a nice buzz of chat around the room not unlike what we might have after the service and then silence spreads across the room you turn around to see what's going on and it takes all your strength just to keep your composure an uninvited guest is standing behind jesus and weeping what's going on is this is this the entertainment and a second later you notice tears dripping off her face onto his feet and if that wasn't enough she bends down and begins to wipe his feet with her hair the person next to you brings up their appetizer she's not finished she opens a bottle of perfume you get a whiff and she pours it on his feet the room is silent this is just not done what is she doing here the others in the room are sharing your disgust because of what she is doesn't she know she can't be here among the righteous with the food you look up at simon the host what's he going to do will he throw her out he probably doesn't even want to touch her it's a shocking scene isn't it i wonder if you can feel the tension of that night but what is particularly striking is simon the pharisee host's response while he may well have been disgusted with this sinful woman in his house and her appalling behaviour that is not what shocks him most did you notice look at verse 39 when the pharisee who had invited jesus 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 simon's shock is real unexpected isn't it a prophet would know what kind of woman this was and how contact with her would make him unclean you see while some people are still asking the question who is this simon seems to think he's figured it out he's a prophet he speaks the word of god he cares about the law he should be on the side of the pharisees if this man were a prophet like i've heard like i've decided how can he allow this sinful woman to touch him but we know who jesus really is don't we we know that simon's assumption is wrong and even though we may not yet fully understand this situation we do know how jesus is able to respond to simon's question even though he said it to himself simon has made a bigger mistake than just who is jesus and so he tells him a parable to point out his mistake have a look at 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 money to pay him back so he forgave the debts of both now which of them will love him more that's a short and sweet story with a simple and clear point it wouldn't be surprising for simon to be pretty familiar with a situation like this a wealthy man with wealthy friends lending money to people though probably usually expecting repayment unlike the moneylender in the story even perhaps a dinner like the one he's currently holding may come with an expectation of reciprocation but even if not it isn't hard to figure out who will love this moneylender more i suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven simon replies yes great job simon but jesus has used this parable to show simon his error in the next couple of verses jesus turns to the woman to rebuke simon everything you did was wrong everything she did was right no water for my feet foot washing was common hospitality in this time especially because of walking in bare feet no kiss to welcome and greet an honored guest no oil for my head a sign of blessing from god it's a bit like three strikes isn't it he had so much opportunity to show love and kindness to jesus and he failed at every point compared to this sinful woman who's willing to cross social and cultural boundaries with no concern with what people think no worries about how people will respond what people might say she will go where she isn't wanted and where she isn't accepted so that she can show how much she loves jesus why why would she do this why would she go that far because she knows how much she's been forgiven she takes so sorry so jesus takes this opportunity to teach simon and us an important lesson about forgiveness and also about himself have a look at verse 47 point three therefore i tell you her many sins have been forgiven as her great love has shown but whoever has been forgiven little loves little this woman understands her need for forgiveness she knows just how much she needs it she knows just how deep her sin goes she knows how far from god she is and she knows that jesus is the only one who will forgive her jesus is like her money lender who will cancel her debt that's why she doesn't care what people think of her that's why she'll go where people like her wouldn't go shouldn't go because jesus has given her something that's so much more valuable and important than social acceptance forgiveness she knows that she's been completely forgiven and so without shame or worry she shows her great love love jesus doesn't name simon as the one who failed to show love he just says whoever has been forgiven little loves little unlike this woman simon doesn't feel a deep need for forgiveness why might that be well he isn't on the outer of society is he he isn't scorned by the upper class he's accepted he's included he's recognized as being good and right and so he has little need for forgiveness at least in his mind when jesus talks about little

forgiveness he isn't referring to a merit based forgiveness and he's not dividing those who are really bad from those who just skirt the edges of sin that's not what's happening simon despite being one of the religious elite he simply doesn't understand the nature of sin and the character of god he has confused what god accepts with what people accept and since he's not excluded in the way this woman is but accepted by what he thinks is a god fearing society he doesn't think he needs to change he doesn't understand his need for forgiveness like the woman does it's almost as though he's allowed his society to become god's law and by this law he decides who's in and who's out and so he's in and she's out and even jesus when he doesn't live by the law of this society well simon decides he mustn't be one of us he mustn't be of god have you ever made the mistake of judging or condemning a brother or a sister because they didn't fit the current christian cultural mould it's easy to do especially for us who are very at home here simon clearly didn't realise that he'd done this to the son of god now who's put their foot in it at the end of the scene jesus turns his attention fully to the woman verse 48 he said to her your sins are forgiven jesus shows that she's the only one at this dinner party who has done the right thing and the guests they can't figure it out he doesn't have a throne out he sends her away with a blessing and so they ask that question that we've seen before who is this that he even forgives sins well some of them may really be wondering who is this my guess is that they're not asking with a real desire to know but because they're sceptical and even mocking his perceived authority to do what only god can do excuse me and you might say well why should they be sorry why shouldn't they be what proof has he given but you also may remember the non-jewish centurion a few weeks ago he recognized jesus authority over him and over his servants illness and the centurion never even saw jesus so these upper society religious people they don't recognize the god they claim to worship they don't ask for forgiveness they judge and reject jesus warning isn't just to simon but to those who don't understand that they need forgiveness to those who love little the sinful woman knew her great need for forgiveness she knew the big debt that god had removed and she produced a display of great love her faith saved her so what about us where do we fit in jesus parable will we leave tonight with jesus blessing go in peace or with his warning i think there are two key responses and you can see them on the outline firstly know how much you have been forgiven jesus warns those who have been forgiven little because they will only love little i think it's [20 : 04] very easy for us who come here each week to leave having only been forgiven little in other words not realizing and remembering just how much we've been forgiven and how much we need forgiveness and you know i think it has to do with a culture of confession and forgiveness i'm not saying confession is wrong just that a possible outcome is to fall into a habit of not truly seeking and feeling and knowing the forgiveness that we need let me tell you how i think this happens at least for me often i sit here in church each sunday thinking about my sin since last sunday and sometimes i'm just racking my brain or trying to concentrate at least what did i do this week what were the bad things that i did i'm sure i didn't kill anyone no adultery no extramarital sex i don't think i got drunk i don't even think i had an argument pretty awesome oh no no no no i'm sure i did something i'll just read the confession anyway i wonder if you've felt like this before whether on sunday or perhaps even when sharing prayer points i'm not sure if i have anything to pray about i wonder if you noticed how king david talks about his sin in the psalm that johnson read it was nothing like that was it do you notice that when he was crying out to god for mercy he didn't even mention the horrible thing he'd done instead he said wash away all my iniquity cleanse me from all my sin which is always before me we don't get a picture of david trying to recall the bad thing that he did what sin did i do who did i do something bad too no he says surely i was sinful at birth and against you only god have i sinned now you may not have the same thoughts as me but there is still a real warning in this passage for those who are part of a godly community and in a place where there can be an expectation of holiness and on the spot confession to put it plainly there is a warning against religion putting on a godly exterior fitting in doing the things we do in our culture in our society in our church but perhaps never fully grasping the nature of sin and the character of god maybe never crying out to god for mercy cleanse me from all my sin it is always before me don't get me wrong the aim of this passage isn't to heap up guilt on those who struggle to acknowledge their sin jesus didn't do this he didn't call simon out but he did warn those who don't understand and acknowledge how much jesus has forgiven them do you know how much you've been forgiven do you know how much

you need him jesus says if you do you will show it second application point is to show great love we should take every opportunity to show not just know but show our great love to jesus who has forgiven our big debt the woman in this passage she knows she's been forgiven we know it because she showed it the story isn't simply about this woman's knowledge of how much she's been forgiven but also the love she showed because of it and this is where the rubber hits the road for us because so much of what we do here surrounds knowing what jesus has done isn't it i just finished saying that and we talk about it all the time every time we meet at church at bible study at youth group at sunday school in one-to-ones we're so practiced at thinking about and discussing how much jesus has done for us do you know how much jesus don't forget how much let's remember how much can you even imagine how much let's never forget how much jesus has done for us but i know for a fact that i am not as good at showing it as i am at knowing it my friends marty and liam were converted in late high school a couple of years older than me i'd been around at church and youth group a long time i was pretty comfortable at home probably a little bit too comfortable marty and liam were converted about the same time and we were amazed at how they changed it wasn't just a honeymoon period for years we marveled at their love we tell stories even joke about their almost out of place kindness and goodness and love it was so clear it's so clear now that they not only knew what jesus had done for them but they had a deep desire to express it in the way they loved they didn't care so much about fitting into our evening church clique they just wanted to love and serve because jesus had loved and served them this is the example of the sinful woman in the passage isn't it she doesn't wonder about what is socially acceptable she doesn't fear ridicule and mockery she knows that she owes her life and if we follow her example sometimes showing our love for jesus will be socially unacceptable we may be looked down upon we may be out of place you might get sat you might break up you might lose friends you might be threatened and worst of all worst of all you might be socially excluded that really is the worst isn't it

I'm not mocking social exclusion it seriously is one of the hardest oppositions we face isn't it it's the thing that stops us from loving nearly more than anything else but we have been given something that is so much more valuable than social acceptance forgiveness let's ask god for the help to show the great love that comes from forgiveness will you pray with me heavenly father father we thank you for this passage and for the example of this woman who showed her great love to Jesus because she knew how much she'd been forgiven thanks father that shame and social expectation didn't prevent her from showing how much she appreciated what Jesus does for us father make us brave like this woman cause us not to think our christian culture makes us friends with Jesus teach us tonight and every day how much we need forgiveness and strengthen us every day to show our love because of what you've done amen