

Loving the Saviour who Forgives

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[0 : 00] Let me start by saying our actions often reveal something about us, don't they? They can reveal who we are, but they can also reveal what we think or how we feel, like how much we love someone or something.

For example, have a look at this child's action when it comes to eating vegetables. Clearly, they don't love, I think it was broccoli, I think, I can't, I don't know.

So, actions reveal love or lack of, but here's another one. Take a look at what this couple's wearing together since 1952.

And so their action reveals their love for one another and their faithfulness. 1952, wow, look at that. I like this one. If lost, return to Jan and his wife, I am Jan.

Their actions reveal not only their love, but their sense of humour. Our actions, as I said, say something about us, who we are, what we think, and even how much we love.

[1 : 22] And so far in Luke's Gospel, Jesus' actions have revealed who he is. It's the underlying theme that we've seen. It will reach a climax in chapter 9 when he asks that question of his disciples, but it's been popping up every now and again.

For example, two weeks ago when he raised the widow's son, the people said he must be a great prophet who has appeared among them. And the news travelled far and wide.

And then even last week, John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus, are you the one who was to come? Are you the Messiah? Is that who you are? And notice what Jesus did, as we heard last week, he pointed them to his actions.

At the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy, cleanse the deaf hear. Of course, the Pharisees saw other actions of Jesus, which made them think he was someone else.

Actions like eating with sinners and tax collectors such that they thought he was a party animal. You know, a glutton and a drunkard. Clearly, they are not fans of Jesus, are they?

[2 : 29] They don't have much love for Jesus, do they? And one of the reasons why is because they don't know forgiveness from Jesus.

And that's the lesson that I think Luke teaches us today. Only those who know Jesus and forgiveness from him will show great love for him.

And Luke teaches us this, I think, through some more actions, the contrasting actions of a Pharisee and a woman. So at point one and verse 36. So if you have a look at verse 36 in your Bibles.

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 learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house.

So she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. And so the first action we meet is the Pharisee's invitation. And now his action might suggest that he wants to honor Jesus.

[3 : 33] After all, he's no doubt heard that Jesus has been called a great prophet. That was the news that's been spread throughout the region. But the fact that Luke calls him a Pharisee three times in two verses, after last week, where we heard that the Pharisees had rejected God's purposes, well, it gives us pause to think.

And as we'll see, this Pharisee is undecided about Jesus. He hasn't invited him to trap him, like we see of other Pharisees elsewhere in the Gospels.

But nor has he invited Jesus to really honor him. He's undecided. But it is still a special meal, because they were reclining at the table.

At family meals, like we do today, you know, you sit at a chair and a table. But special meals involved reclining, with your kind of feet out the side. Let me get you a better illustration on that.

So here they are. They're kind of lying on the side, on cushions. And sometimes the cushions were even on tables. So they were kind of elevated, with their feet sticking out the back. I think the Romans did it as well.

[4 : 41] They called it a triclinium. And that's what you have there. It doesn't look very comfortable to me. Maybe it stops you dropping food down the front of you.

Either way, that's what it was. And these special meals, at them, the door was left open for the public to come in and sit against the wall and to listen in to the conversation. Which is why this woman wanders in without a problem, it seems.

But what she does next is a problem. Have a look at verse 38. As she stood behind him, because presumably his feet were elevated on the table, 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. Have you ever been to a dinner where one of the guests did something that was socially awkward?

Have you ever been to one of those? I wasn't at this dinner, but I did hear about it. The host brought out a dessert, it was a cheesecake, I think, on a really nice plate. And one of the guests said, oh, that's a nice plate, I wonder who made it.

[5 : 51] And they picked it up and turned it over to look at the bottom of the plate. No doubt, as you can imagine, the cheesecake went splat and the dinner table went quiet.

It was a socially awkward situation. But that is nothing compared to this. I should say, I think this is a different woman to Mary who anoints Jesus with perfume for his burial.

That happens closer to his crucifixion and that is recorded in all the other Gospels. Rather, this one is known for living a sinful life.

Perhaps she is a prostitute. So can you imagine the scene? It's the middle of dinner. In walks this sinner and starts crying at Jesus' feet.

The conversation stops. All eyes turn to her. She wipes his feet with her hair. Hair in those days of women was supposed to be kept up, so that's already awkward.

[6 : 56] And then pours this perfume, the smell of which fills the room. And everyone is glaring. It's a pretty socially awkward situation.

In fact, it's probably scandalous given who she was. And yet despite how socially awkward or even perhaps scandalous it was, she is unashamed of doing it.

She doesn't care what people think. Jesus matters more. Here is the woman's unashamed action, which is then followed by the Pharisee's indignant reaction.

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 is a sinner. If this Pharisee was undecided about Jesus, he's fast making up his mind, isn't he? Because did you notice his annoyance is not directed to the woman? It's actually directed to Jesus.

[8 : 07] He doesn't tell the woman off. He doesn't even think ill of the woman. But he thinks ill of Jesus. He can't be a prophet. And so Jesus teaches him a lesson to explain both the woman's actions and who Jesus is.

So point to verse 40. Jesus answered him, Simon, I have something to tell you, to teach you. Well, tell me, teacher, he said. Notice for a moment, by the way, that Jesus answered him, but Simon didn't actually say anything out loud.

Jesus answered his thoughts. He knew what this man was thinking. That alone should have signaled to Simon that Jesus is at least a prophet. But also notice Jesus doesn't rebuke him, but now calls him by name.

Not the Pharisee, but Simon. Jesus, you see, hasn't given up on him. He wants to tell him something, if he'll hear it.

And I think this is a little bit of nice encouragement for us, not to give up on our non-Christian family and friends, just to be willing to tell them something if they're willing to hear it.

[9 : 22] And Simon is. He says, tell me, teacher. And so Jesus begins with a parable, verse 41. 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 them both. Now, which of them will love him more? Simon answered, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven. You have judged correctly, Jesus said. Now, denarius was equivalent to one day's wage, and so 50 denarii was about two months' worth of pay.

And so 500 is almost 18 months of pay. That's quite a bit of money, isn't it? I mean, can you imagine your bank manager calling you up and saying to you, look, I'm going to knock off your mortgage, 18 months' worth of salary.

I mean, you'd love him for it, wouldn't you? And so the answer to Jesus' question here is kind of obvious, isn't it? Which one will love the moneylender more? Well, it's obvious.

[10:32] Which is why I think Simon says, I suppose, wondering if there is more to this answer. And there is. There's the lesson, verse 44. 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, as her great love has shown.

But whoever has been forgiven little, then loves little. Jesus tells Simon to look at this woman and learn a lesson from her. What's the lesson?

Well, that love for Jesus shows that you know forgiveness from Jesus. The woman's great love for Jesus is her grateful response to forgiveness from Jesus.

[11:41] And that's what we see in the parable. They are forgiven the debt, then they show love. That's what we see with the opposite. They are forgiven little, then they love little. But the question then comes, well, when was she forgiven?

Because it looks like it's after she shows love. Well, we come to verse 48 in a moment. But it seems as though there was another occasion that we don't know about where the woman was forgiven. And as I said, Jesus will declare it again in a second. But perhaps she heard Jesus proclaiming the good news earlier in Capernaum. That's where they were.

Or perhaps she was one of the sinners with whom Jesus ate with. Remember, he ate with sinners and tax collectors. Either way, she knew she was a great sinner, but now believed Jesus was a great saviour, the great saviour, and received his offer of forgiveness, whenever that was.

And now, knowing that forgiveness, knowing her 500 denarii debt has been cancelled, then she shows this great love. Without caring what others think, she washes his feet with tears of gratitude and relief.

[12:53] She kisses not his cheek, but in humility, his feet. And she pours not oil, but something more expensive, perfume.

All while the others were watching. Her unashamed action showed great love for Jesus because she knew great forgiveness from Jesus.

But not so Simon. It's interesting in verse 47, Jesus specifically refers to the woman. But then says, whoever. He doesn't say, you Simon, have been forgiven little, and then therefore you love me little. He just says, whoever. And I wonder if that's because Simon has not even shown little love. While washing feet and anointing heads weren't required by the host for every guest, they were often done for special guests.

And this Simon hadn't done it for Jesus, even though he thought he could be a prophet. Certainly kissing on the cheek was customary, like us shaking hands.

[14:00] But Simon didn't even do that for Jesus. He didn't even have COVID as an excuse, you know, social distancing. He invited Jesus to a special meal, yes, but he hadn't shown any real love.

Because he didn't know any real forgiveness yet. And why is that? Well, it's that underlying issue I mentioned at the start about who Jesus is.

You see, Simon may have called Jesus teacher. He may have thought he might be a prophet, but he hasn't really recognized his need for forgiveness, nor who Jesus is, who gives it.

It's why our non-Christian friends and family don't really show love for Jesus, isn't it? Because they don't really know forgiveness from him. Well, they've not yet recognized their need for it, nor who Jesus is, who gives it.

which is why I think we need to keep telling them both. Both their need, as well as who Jesus is. Some Christians have told me over the years that we shouldn't talk about sin.

[15:15] And some people even said, our church talks too much about it. It's too negative. But the thing is, it's real. And people need to hear it so that they might then look to Jesus to be forgiven for it.

For he is the Savior who forgives it. Which is exactly what we see next. So point three, verse 48. 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.

Now, as I said before, verse 48 may seem odd. If she's already been forgiven, then why does Jesus say it again? Well, I think for two reasons. First, to reassure her.

To reassure her that she has been and continues to be forgiven. Because it would be easy to start doubting. Especially after all those eyes glaring at her.

[16:23] And not to mention her social standing. After all, she was a social outcast in a Pharisee's house. No less. This was no home court advantage for her.

And so, Jesus reassures her. Then in verse 50, he unpacks what it means for her. And that her faith in him as the one who forgives means she is saved from judgment and can go in peace.

That is, peace with God. Which brings us peace of mind and heart. But the second reason Jesus repeats her forgiveness is to provoke that question.

Remember, he's trying to teach Simon. He hasn't given up on him. He wants Simon to see who he is. And so, he says this to the woman again to provoke that question from the guest.

Verse 49, Who is this who even forgives sins? That Simon might see, think, and recognize Jesus and put his faith in him.

[17:28] And can I say, this is similar for us. I think Luke has, he didn't record Simon's response but he has recorded this event to both reassure us and provoke others. Remember Luke's purpose which Harry mentioned at the start of the service that you may know the certainty of the things that you've been taught about Jesus.

Because we can sometimes doubt too. And we heard that that's possible when we're at uni. Tim mentioned that before when we're at work and so on. And so Luke reassures us not only by showing us the miraculous evidence like raising from the dead that Jesus did but also showing us this woman's great love.

Unashamed love. I mean, people don't love like this for no reason. Do they? But this woman's real love shows she knew real forgiveness.

And that's more evidence that Jesus is the real saviour. Which reassures us. He really did die for our sins. We really remain forgiven.

But Luke also wants to provoke others like Simon to ask who is this? that like the woman they too might come to believe to have faith to trust. And so the first application for us is to ask ourselves who is Jesus to me?

[18:55] Is he my saviour? The one who has forgiven me? Or is he just a prophet or teacher who has some good morals to say?

Do you like the woman have faith in him? And whether you're in the room or online and you've just tuned in to check out church and you don't yet believe then can I encourage you to check Jesus out to believe.

Because if you don't then you won't have forgiveness nor peace with God. But for us who do then the second application is to know our great forgiveness from Christ.

It's no good me just telling you we should love Jesus more because it's firstly knowing we've been forgiven much that helps us then to love much.

That's how the parable worked that's how it worked for the woman. And so do you know you've been forgiven much? I know it's also sometimes hard to feel this particularly if we've been Christians for a long time.

[20:02] After all we're pretty good people. We haven't killed anyone this past week or forever actually I hope. And by society's standards as I said we are pretty good but are we by God's standards?

We may not have done those big sins like murder but have you ever lost your temper? And doesn't Jesus say to be angry in your heart is like murdering?

Or there's that prayer confession which talks about not only the things we have done but the things we have left undone. Sin is not just doing the bad stuff like losing our temper it's also not doing the good stuff like remembering God each day.

Or there's David who said in Psalm 51 that his transgression and sin is always before him and that surely he was sinful even from birth all those years.

that's a lot of sin when you think about it. But then there's also the great promise we have like this one where sin increased grace increased all the more.

[21 : 13] I love that verse. No matter how much sin there is there's always more grace to forgive. And so we're to realise how sinful we are not so we feel guilty but so we feel the sweet relief of knowing how much forgiveness we have in Christ.

That we then thirdly might show great love for Christ by our actions even unashamedly. Back in 2020 there was a man in the US whose wife had dementia and he could no longer care for her at home but he would visit her every day until COVID came and her aged care place went into lockdown.

And so this is what he did. I love you. I'm going to sing you my song. Listen. You are my sunshine my only sunshine you make me happy when skies are grey you never know dear how much I love you so please don't take my sunshine away.

did you know you my sunshine now apart from the annoying bird in the background like this one out here how sweet is that and what's more it was unashamed I mean here he is on a public foot bath staring through a window singing with someone probably a family member filming but he doesn't care his unashamed action shows great love for her because he's known great kindness from her all those years as his wife.

Well how much more so are we to unashamedly show love for Christ because we know forgiveness from Christ all those years as our saviour.

[23 : 15] And so will you show great love for Christ unashamedly. Whether it's being known as a Christian amongst your family or colleagues at work which is increasingly becoming more socially awkward isn't it?

Or whether it's by reading the Bible in front of others before the lockdowns and people working from home one of our members used to read the Bible on the bus on the way to his work.

You know got a few looks but he didn't care. Or perhaps loving Christ by asking to move the family function so you can still come to church. I mean that could be a bit awkward couldn't it?

Or by saying grace even when you're eating out at a restaurant. Or by listening to Jesus and doing what he says as we'll see particularly next week.

Like the woman will your actions show that Jesus matters most. Will your actions show great love for him because you know great forgiveness from him?

[24 : 23] And so just to end, ask who is Jesus to you? Know we have great forgiveness from him that we might show great love for him even unashamedly.

Let's pray. Our gracious Father we do thank you for your word. Help us to know our great forgiveness from Christ that we may continue to show great love for Christ.

In his name we pray. Amen.