

Extravagant Love

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Preacher: Nigel Anderson

[0 : 00] As you see on the screen there, our main theme for this evening, in the passage we read, this theme of extravagant love. Obviously, above all, the extravagant love of Jesus.

But as we see in the passages, we're going to see in the points that follow, we do see extravagant love given to Jesus. But on the other hand, no extravagant love for Jesus, certainly from the Pharisee.

But then above all, we see the extravagant love of Jesus towards that woman who at one time was very much a sinful woman in that small town and yet shown the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus. Extravagant love. You know, we live in a world that's so dominated by the theme of extravagance. You might even say extravagance is idolized.

Extravagance, certainly material extravagance that, you know, that we see so often in our media and our TV programs. The sort of themes that, you know, direct us to see what the rich and famous do, how they live their lifestyles.

[1 : 12] The lifestyles of these super rich that we're supposed to admire and drool over and even seek to aspirate. But what about true extravagance?

How extravagant are you in your love for the Lord Jesus? Do you show that extravagant love, that overflowing, abundant love to the Lord Jesus?

Do you show him that love in offering your very self to him, in denying self, taking up your cross, following Jesus and showing that extravagant love towards him that seeks no other, but seeks above all to love him, to serve him, to give your life to him?

Because that's the kind of extravagant love that the Lord Jesus demands of us, of any who follow him, who call him by name, who profess his name, who profess to be those who are in Christ. Demands that extravagant love towards him. Because how you respond to his forgiving you, that will show the extent of your love for your Savior.

[2 : 26] Because your love to the Savior, the measure of your love, will indicate the measure of your gratitude to him for all that he's done for you, even in giving himself for you and giving his life for you.

The measure that you use in showing your love for the Savior will indicate whether indeed you have a heart that's truly grateful for what the Lord Jesus has done for you.

Because if you're a Christian, and you know that you've been forgiven through the extravagant love of the Lord Jesus, then how can you not show in return extravagant love for the Savior?

And when we come to the story of Jesus, of Jesus in this home of the Pharisee, Simon the Pharisee, we see this theme of extravagant love.

In fact, we see two individuals, of course there's Jesus himself, of course, but two other individuals, two people who showed contrasting love to Jesus. We've got this woman, this woman, this woman who showed, we would say, unrestrained, unembarrassed, extravagant love towards Jesus.

[3 : 48] And then the other person, this named man, this Simon the Pharisee, this member of the religious elite, this man who lacked love towards Jesus, who had no extravagant love towards the Lord Jesus Christ, this man who showed such a lack of honor to the one who came as the Christ, as Messiah.

And these were two individuals who encountered Jesus. One, the woman who was a social outcast, somebody who was despised in society for her, for the kind of life that certainly she once lived.

But this woman who showed extravagant love towards her, in her one true faith, towards the one who saved her. And on the other hand, we have this Pharisee, this man who wasn't an outcast in society, but somebody who was respected in society because of his status, because of his standing, because of who he was in society, this Pharisee, this member of the religious elite.

And yet, underneath it all, somebody who didn't know the Lord Jesus as Saviour, somebody who had no awareness of his need for forgiveness.

So these two individuals, keep them before you as we turn to the setting. Because it seems very much that Jesus is still in that small town of Nain, that town where he healed the widow's son, remember, when he restored that widow's son to life.

[5 : 24] And we're told there in the chapter that a large crowd had witnessed this healing. And in their rejoicing at seeing this healing, they spread the news about Jesus.

They spread this news far and wide. And such was the interest in Jesus, Jesus in his miracle making. But it seems very likely that one of the local dignitaries, this Simon the Pharisee, that he wanted to hear more from Jesus.

He was intrigued. This is a man who he certainly at the very least heard of, wanted to know more about this Jesus. This man whom many are referring to even as a prophet.

So Simon invites Jesus to his house for a meal, the social custom of the time. But there's another person that comes to that house.

Not an invited person, but an uninvited person. And this person arrives just as Jesus arrives. And it's that woman, the woman we mentioned a moment ago.

[6 : 33] This woman who had a past. This woman who was certainly well known in that little town of Nain. We know even today there's no such thing as a secret in a small place.

And certainly in this woman's case, she was well known for her, certainly her former lifestyle.

There's no doubt that this woman would be avoided. She'd be talked about, talked against.

She'd be considered an outcast in that tight-knit community. Certainly there's no doubt that she certainly had been a sinner. We've told that in verse 37.

She appears at this banquet. She hasn't come invited. She's uninvited. This is a Pharisee's house. And the last person that a Pharisee would want to be in his house was somebody like this woman. He certainly wouldn't have invited her. He wouldn't have wanted her to be in his presence. Jesus, the sinless son of God.

[7 : 36] He wanted that woman to be there. He had absolutely no objection to her being in that house at that particular moment as she's reclining at that table. See, Simon the Pharisee may not have invited her.

Jesus had given her that eternal invitation. He had invited her to come into his kingdom. And all whom Jesus invites and who receive Jesus by faith come into his kingdom.

And this woman came into Jesus' kingdom. We're told of her past. Certainly in verse 37 we're told that she was a sinner.

Certainly there's no doubt she'd lived a most immoral lifestyle. She no longer did what she once did. That mattered little to those who still saw her as the kind of person they didn't want to be associated with.

They still saw her as an immoral woman, a social outcast. In their eyes she was still that kind of person. In their eyes she was unclean. In their eyes what she'd done in her past would stay in her life forever.

[8 : 53] In their eyes she was still a sinner whatever her present circumstances now were. And just in case, you know, we're tempted to point fingers at that kind of attitude, the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisees, be very careful that you don't have that attitude yourself.

Because even in the church, even amongst Christians, there can still be that pointing of fingers, there can still be that attitude that denies anyone salvation, even though it's absolutely clear that Jesus has come into their life.

So please remember, even in this story here that we see of Jesus receiving the sinner to himself, that he saved her by grace, he received her in grace.

And if you're to be Christ-like, it's for you to see others as the Lord Jesus sees others. Those who have repented of their sins, who have been forgiven, who have been cleansed and restored, to see them as Jesus sees them, as a new creation.

And to see us, so many new converts show. Indeed, we pray every convert shows extravagant love to Jesus.

[10 : 08] You see that in the passage there, in the account of the woman's response to Jesus. She comes into that house. She's there in true devotion to the Lord Jesus.

Because she's got to be with him. Jesus has come into that little town. She wants to be near him. She wants to show her love, her devotion to her Savior. And so we're told there in verses 37 to 38, that in hearing that Jesus is at the home of Simon the Pharisee, in hearing that, she goes to the house.

She's not embarrassed to be there. She knows that she's not wanted there, certainly by the others. Not Jesus, but the others. But then she goes through that open door.

And she sees Jesus reclining at the table. And she stands behind Jesus. Of course, in the posture of recline, she's got to be at Jesus' feet. And she's overcome with sinless emotion.

And she can't stop crying. She's crying because of her love for the Savior. And her realization that Jesus has forgiven her her sins. And with such profuse tears coming from her eyes, she actually wets Jesus' feet with her tears.

[11 : 31] And she uses her hair, her long hair, to dry Jesus' feet. She's acting as a servant. She's doing what a servant ought to have done. She's, as it were, showing this servant-like devotion to Jesus.

And then she pours this expensive oil and extravagant act of love on Jesus' feet. This woman, this woman, this outcast, this woman whom nobody wanted to be near.

This woman whom others considered unclean. This woman whom others were doomed to destruction, eternal destruction because of her past. Well, this woman's life's been changed.

She's a new person. She's a new creation. And all because of the extravagant love of Jesus. She knows that her sins are forgiven. She knows that she's been shown this extravagant love.

And so in gratitude to Jesus, she's going to show extravagant love towards Jesus. That flask of oil that she had, this sort of highly perfumed oil, it was normally poured on the head of a person and done on rare occasions because of the expensive nature of this oil.

[12 : 48] But as she sees Jesus, she's overcome with emotion. This emotion of thankfulness, of gratitude. That she, as we said, she weeps.

She weeps because she knows her sins are forgiven. And she knows that she's been a sinner, but forgiven for her sins. And she's going to show that love by pouring that expensive perfume on Jesus' feet.

And what she did in that room would have been considered utterly, utterly offensive to those around. She lets down her hair.

Loose hair was associated with immorality. But she uses that hair to wipe out Jesus' feet. These other guests, I mean, you know, you can just imagine what these other guests are thinking.

This woman letting down her hair in public and doing this over a great profit. Wiping her hair with the symbol of shame.

[13 : 55] And using expensive perfume that could have been used for other purposes. And no doubt they would have thought that a good meal that they were enjoying was ruined by this uninvited person.

And the thought, even as Simon the prophet thinks, how can this man, how can this Jesus be a great prophet if he allows the sinful woman to do as she's doing to him?

That attitude, the attitude of Simon the Pharisee, that attitude of self-righteousness.

Self-righteousness. Self-righteous pride that would prevent a sinner coming to the Lord Jesus.

This doesn't just happen 2,000 years ago. It happens even in the present day. Even in so many of a turning up people away from Jesus.

And doing it by so many different ways. One way, as we see there in the passage, by a sort of superior attitude. You know, branding somebody else a hopeless sinner because of some particular sin in the past.

[15 : 06] How can such and such a person possibly want to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour?

How can Jesus possibly want to save this person? But for the believer who loves the Lord Jesus, who truly knows that at one time he or she was a hopeless sinner, that person will welcome the lost, will rejoice when a sinner comes to faith in the Lord Jesus.

Jesus knows those who are his. And that's the extravagant love of Jesus for sinners. That Jesus was willing to welcome this woman there into that house.

And for her to show her extravagant love towards the Saviour. What of the opposite of that extravagant love? What of the attitude of no extravagant love for Jesus?

In fact, no love at all for Jesus. Because Simon the Pharisee is there to show the contrast between the woman and her extravagant love for Jesus.

And that individual Simon who showed no love towards Jesus. I mean, the Pharisee certainly did want to know more about Jesus. But at that point anyway in his life, he wasn't right with God.

[16:25] He didn't know Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. He had no extravagant love towards the Lord Jesus. And right from the start, his attitude to Jesus was wrong.

You know, you see there in verse 39, he's thinking to himself. And Jesus knows what he's thinking. He's thinking to himself, this man, this Jesus, this person whom the crowds are calling a great prophet.

How on earth can he be such? When he's allowed this woman not just to come into my house, but to do what he's done to him, surely no prophet would allow this to happen.

No prophet would allow an unkind person to be anywhere near him. Surely, if this man were a great prophet, he would know of this woman. He would know by divine insight that this was somebody whom he must have nothing to do with.

Simon's using his own reasoning, his own judgment. He's assuming things about Jesus that were utterly false. But of course, Jesus was and is that great prophet.

[17:32] Jesus knew exactly who that woman was. Jesus knew exactly what her background was. Because Jesus had known her from all eternity. Jesus, remember, he'd come, he told the followers of John the Baptist, as we saw last Sunday evening, Jesus had told them that he'd come to rescue the poor and the blind and the oppressed.

Such as this woman here. She who was blind in her sin. She who was poor, had been poor in the poverty of her sinning.

This woman who'd been so oppressed by a life without Christ. A woman whose sins had so oppressed her. Jesus knew all about this woman, but Simon didn't.

Simon couldn't see that Jesus had come to rescue the lost, such as that woman. All that this Pharisee could see was Jesus welcoming an outcast.

Jesus breaking the conventions of the day. And in Simon's thoughts, Jesus was disgracing the society, even the company that he'd been invited to.

[18:48] But of course, in one sense, Simon was right. Jesus does welcome sinners. In fact, Jesus so welcomes sinners that he identified with sinners. He identified with sinners on the cross when he became sin for us.

And so Jesus is the friend of sinners. He does and continues to welcome the despised and the outcast, the poor, the blind, the lame, the oppressed.

And yet, many still don't see Jesus as he truly is. And many still are offended by Jesus. Because Jesus welcomes sinners.

Because there's an attitude in certain quarters that thinks that, you know, Jesus only can have time for the so-called nice people, the so-called good people, the religious people.

Jesus is the friend of sinners. So that means you can go to him in your sin. You can go to him knowing your sin. You can go to him knowing that he knows your sin.

[19:54] He knows your past. He knows your present. You come to him knowing that all who come to the Lord Jesus in faith and in full repentance of their sins, you come to him knowing that these sins are forgiven.

Why? Because of Jesus' extravagant love for sinners. What if you've not yet come to the Lord Jesus? What if you have not yet come to him, confessing your sins, seeking him to be your saviour?

Maybe you think you're somebody who Jesus can't possibly want to see. Maybe you're thinking, how on earth can Jesus possibly want somebody such as me? Maybe you're thinking of a particular sin in your life and think, how can the Lord Jesus forgive me for that sin?

No, Jesus shows extravagant love even to the chief of sinners. He showed that to the apostle Paul who one time persecuted the church. He showed extravagant love, as we're thinking this morning, to Peter.

Peter, who denied Jesus three times. He showed extravagant love to you who were once dead in your sins, and are now alive in Christ, all because of the extravagant love of Jesus.

[21:14] That's what we're going to look at finally there in verses 40 to 50. Jesus knew all about the woman. He knew all about Simon.

He knew what Simon the Pharisee was thinking when Simon was denigrating Jesus. Because Jesus knew that Simon really hadn't grasped who Jesus is. He hadn't really grasped, too, the forgiveness of this woman. All that Simon could see was a woman who was defined by her past, and not defined by her relationship with the Lord Jesus. And so, Jesus and his grace towards Simon. Jesus tells Simon a story, a parable. This parable that emphasizes the extravagant love of Jesus. Simon's willing to listen. He's not going to stop Jesus telling this parable. And the parable itself, a very simple parable, but yet such an important lesson to gain from it.

[22 : 19] Remember the parable. Two men owe a creditor particular sums of money. The first creditor owes 500 denarii. I suppose in today's terms, something like 50,000 pounds. The second person owes the creditor 50 denarii. Something like 5,000 pounds today, I suppose. Something like that. Two men owe these different sums of money. But the creditor and his grace and his graciousness cancels both debts. Now, obviously, both men are extremely grateful that their debts have been paid for. But, of course, this is a parable. This is a parable that brings home the truth of the love of the Lord Jesus and the importance of knowing the kingdom of God, what the kingdom is, and receiving those who are forgiven their sins. And so Jesus asks the Pharisee there, which of these debtors will love the creditor most? Now, Simon knows exactly what Jesus is giving them.

[23 : 31] And grungingly, Simon says, I suppose, the one who had the bigger debt cancelled. I suppose he was more grateful to the creditor. Now, of course, that affirmation by Simon, well, leads Jesus to do something.

Do something that's going to drive home to Simon the wrongness of his assumptions and the rightness of Jesus forgiving this woman of sins. You see, from verse 43, Jesus, in his grace, Jesus affirms that, Simon, yes, you've judged correctly the one who owed the greater debt. He's going to show the greater gratitude. And with that still fresh in Simon's mind, Jesus does something remarkable. He turns to the woman, turns his face towards the woman, and he looks at her. And as he's looking at her, he gives this object lesson in true, extravagant love.

[24 : 34] And he's looking at her to show and to prove to Simon, this isn't someone who's remained immoral and unclean and some kind of undesirable object of contempt. This is a person who's been made right with God. And in this wonderful grace of Jesus, tells her that her sins are forgiven. Her sins are forgiven. She's been made right with God. And he's just saying to Simon, you see this woman? And see, not just physically see her, but see her and all that she is. She truly is, she is someone who's been forgiven her sins. She's the one who's been represented in the parable as the one who owed least to the creditor. But because she owed least, she'll love most. And that's why she's so extravagant in her response to Jesus. She washed Jesus' feet with her tears. And Simon hadn't even bothered to wash Jesus' feet, as was customary at that time for visitors when they came into a house.

[25 : 44] Simon didn't give Jesus the customary kiss of greeting at the door. But this forgiven sinner, this woman, wouldn't stop kissing Jesus' feet. Simon hadn't done anything to make Jesus a special visitor. He hadn't poured olive oil in Jesus' head as a mark of respect. But this woman had poured expensive ointment in Jesus' feet. And she showed Jesus' full honour as befitting who Jesus truly is, the Christ, the Messiah, the great prophet. And so Jesus tells Simon, as we read in verse 47, Therefore I tell you, her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little. See, Simon had observed this woman from a human perspective. And that perspective is really quite a horrible perspective. Because it continued to see her misdeeds, it continued to look at her past, and it continued to condemn her for her past actions. But Jesus' perspective towards the woman, that perspective was totally different.

[26 : 54] Because Jesus, in his grace, was telling Simon of Jesus' perspective on the woman. Because she had been forgiven her many sins.

She was showing so much love to Jesus. Because Jesus had shown her the greatest love of all. Just think of that for a moment.

Think of the tender, loving heart of Jesus. That heart towards this woman. Because Jesus saw that person, that woman, not as an outcast. But he saw that woman as part of the kingdom of God.

And so he's assuring her, reassuring her, her sins are forgiven. This woman obviously placed her faith in Jesus. Maybe sometime before she'd met Jesus.

But now Jesus is reassuring her that, yes, her sins are forgiven. That any anxiety she had can be removed. Because she's heard from the Savior himself that her sins are forgiven.

[27 : 57] And you who know the Lord Jesus, hear again his words to you. Your sins are forgiven. Yes, there are times we can look in our past life.

And yes, be ashamed of past sins. Sins that we know disgrace the name of the Lord Jesus. But come to him in repentance. Yes, even with tears.

Profuse tears. And know that the Savior looks upon you in extravagant love. As he forgives you these sins. What about those, if we go back to the passage, those at the house there?

You think that the guests there at that table would have, well, would have rejoiced to know that this woman's sins had been forgiven. Think that they would have been glad that Jesus was saying that, in a sense, she was right with God.

But what do we see? They muttered. They still thought of her as the woman, as the sinner of the city. And so they're asking, and they're asking, asking of Jesus.

[29 : 00] Who's this? Who is this? Who even forgives sins? Of course, even in these words, we're seeing a tragedy of eternal proportions.

Because unless you believe in the Lord Jesus, unless you believe that he came from heaven to earth to give his life for sinners, and unless you come to him as a sinner, confessing your sins and receiving him as the friend of sinners, unless you come to him for forgiveness, you're going to know a lost eternity without the Lord Jesus Christ.

But you come to the Savior. Come even this night. Come when you're hearing this word proclaimed. Come to Jesus. And you'll know that extravagant love of the Savior.

That love that's eternal. That love that's deep. That love that's broad. That love that's eternal. You'll know rejoicing.

Rejoicing now. And rejoicing for all eternity. Amen. Heavenly Father, we truly do give thanks that, as we have been reminded again of your extravagant love towards sinners, may we respond with thankfulness of heart, gratitude, and show forth the love of the Lord Jesus, even in our own lives.

[30 : 30] Forgive us, Lord, when our love has been half-hearted, when our service has been half-hearted, forgive us, Lord, and strengthen us so that we might truly love you with all our heart and mind and strength and will, so that we truly will show that, even in loving our neighbour as ourselves.

Hear us, Lord, as we continue now in praise before you. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.