

Forgiven Much by the Friend of Sinners

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Date: 18 August 2013

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[0 : 00] Brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a privilege to be here with you this evening to worship the Lord together with you as we have done today and also again this evening.

And it is my privilege to bring to you the preaching of the word of God. As you have been informed, I come from New Zealand.

I'm the pastor of the Reformed Church of Omeroo, which is a small town of 13,000, located about an hour and a half north of Dunedin.

I've been at that congregation for three and a half years. Prior to that, I was in two congregations on the North Island, and we have, as a family, been in New Zealand for 31 years, since my wife and myself and five of our children moved from the United States.

Originally, I was ordained in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church and pastored in a small congregation just outside Memphis, Tennessee. So that's a bit of my background. It's a pleasure also to be here for the first time in Scotland and to see something of your country.

[1 : 20] I was told this morning that it was the first country in the world, the most beautiful country in the world. I don't want to get into an argument, but I would at least rate it second.

Brothers and sisters, as we look at this passage of Scripture, Luke chapter 7 and the verses 31 to 50, we see that Dr. Luke is giving an answer to a question, a question that has no doubt concerned him from the time that he began to do his research to write the book of Luke and to explain in particular to Theophilus, to whom he first addressed this book, the things that have been happening amongst them and those wonderful activities of God in their midst.

And of course, as we well know, having the full Bible now and the whole gospel of Luke and have read it many times, we understand that Dr. Luke was answering a question in a real sense, not only for Theophilus, but for men and women down through history.

And that question is this, who is Jesus? And what does it matter? Who is Jesus?

And what does it matter? Now, for several centuries since the Great Reformation, Christians in Bible-believing churches, in particular in Reformed churches, have grown up on the Word of God.

[3 : 15] And we've grown up from infancy knowing a great deal about who Jesus is. And so it's not a question that comes into our mind very often.

However, we today live in a biblically illiterate society. That's true in New Zealand. And I suspect that it's true here as well. That most of the people in our society are biblically illiterate.

Of course, they know Jesus in the sense that they know that there's a person named that back in history. They know of Jesus as one who reputedly died on a cross and rose again.

And most people are aware of that with the Christian traditions we have. But really don't know him well at all. And certainly don't know him as he is revealed in Scripture.

And Dr. Luke, in passage after passage after passage, is setting before us who Jesus is. That we may know him as he reveals himself.

[4 : 21] And that we may know God through him. Luke begins by telling Theophilus that he's writing and he's carefully researched these matters so that he can set before Theophilus the things that have been accomplished among us so that Theophilus may know with certainty.

In other words, Luke wants Theophilus to not only experience Christ, but to know with certainty what Christ has done.

What God has done through Christ. And so he sets forth the great work of Christ. And he sets forth the great things that God accomplished through him.

And we see, of course, how he began with the account of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ as God came into our human race and became man, taking to himself human flesh.

We saw in earlier chapters of this gospel how the Lord Jesus fulfills many of the prophecies of Scripture. Not only as he came from heaven into our race, but he came in order to heal, to forgive, to accomplish salvation.

[5 : 44] And he does those works with great power. And he comes also to teach. And he did teach. And the people recognized that he taught as no other teacher, for he taught with authority.

And, of course, that was a threat to many of the leaders and teachers of the day. Jesus was so bold in his teaching that he made a statement earlier in this gospel that is astounding if you just think about it as it were for the first time.

He says, listen to my words. I wouldn't dare say that. I wouldn't dare say that as the Lord Jesus said it.

Because he said it in contrast to all other teachers. And so he reveals himself, you see, to be the one who gives the very truth of God.

And he commends those who listen to his word as those who build their house on a solid foundation. And those who don't listen to his words and pay no attention to his words as those who build a house on sand which will collapse.

[7 : 02] The Lord Jesus, you see, speaks with the authority of God. And as we consider that, we realize that Jesus is no ordinary man.

Over and again, the question comes into people's minds as they see what Jesus has done and as they hear his teaching.

Who is this man? You see it at the end of our chapter, don't you? Verse 49. Who is this?

They asked. Who even forgives sins? And so in this passage, we want to consider Jesus as the friend of sinners.

The friend of sinners who forgives sins. This is the second occasion in Luke's gospel on which the Lord Jesus declares a person's sins have been forgiven.

[8 : 07] And back in chapter five, you might want to look at that chapter later. There we have the account of the paralyzed man who was let down through the roof in front of Jesus because they couldn't get the paralyzed man in through the door of the house.

And Jesus declares his sins to be forgiven. And the leaders, the Pharisees, the religious leaders, the scribes, they ask the question, Who is this?

Who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? Now, the Pharisees and the scribes had their theology correct.

Only God can forgive sins. But their conclusion was wrong. Because, you see, they concluded that Jesus, because he declared this man's sins forgiven, was a blasphemer.

They didn't draw the correct conclusion, and that is that Jesus was and is truly God in the flesh. And so the Lord Jesus, as Dr. Luke records it for us, wanted these leaders to understand that he really was God, and therefore was not blaspheming, but was acting as God in that capacity as he forgave this man's sins.

[9 : 43] And so what did he do? He said to these leaders, Which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven? Or to say, Get up and walk, To this paralyzed man.

So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, He spoke to that man, And said, Get up and walk.

And he took his bed, And went home. But those Jewish leaders didn't learn. They didn't listen to the word of the Lord.

And so here they are again, you see, With the same question, In a similar circumstance, Where Jesus says, Your sins are forgiven. And they say, Who is this who even forgives sins?

Who is Jesus? He is a friend of sinners. He is a friend, note very carefully, Of both the outcast sinner, And also the self-assured sinner.

[10 : 52] There are two sinners here, you see, That are set forth in this passage quite clearly. Two sinners. One is an outcast, A woman, An immoral woman, Everyone knew she was a sinner.

And there is a Pharisee. A Pharisee that everyone knew was a righteous man. And even though the stereotype of Pharisee today is often that they are not well liked, And arrogant and so on, That wasn't the way Pharisees were viewed at the time by the Jews.

The Pharisees were viewed as upstanding citizens, Highly regarded in society. Nevertheless, This Pharisee, As were many, Thought he was pretty good in the eyes of God.

Jesus was at his house by invitation. His name was Simon. And he had invited Jesus to come to dinner.

We're not told exactly why. But we can draw some conclusions from the text as it proceeds. That the invitation wasn't because he had high regard for Jesus.

[12 : 19] It wasn't because he loved Jesus. It was no doubt for the same reason that the Pharisees often tried to attack Jesus.

And he was looking for an occasion, No doubt, To find some fault in the Lord Jesus. The woman was there at the house as well.

She heard Jesus was going to be there. And when she heard that, She took a very expensive bottle, A very expensive perfume.

After all, You don't keep cheap perfume in an expensive bottle, Do you? So this is a very expensive bottle and expensive perfume. And she takes that perfume, That ointment, And she goes into the house.

Now, We might consider that rather impolite for someone to just come into the house during a banquet. But that wasn't considered impolite then.

[13 : 22] It was fairly common. So I understand. I don't have any first-hand experience of that, of course. But I understand from other sources that that was fairly common. And they would listen to the conversation that took place around the table.

As the guests lay reclined at the table, There would be conversation. And there she is. One of those listening. But not just listening.

Here is a woman Who shamelessly weeps And her tears fall on Jesus' feet. And as her tears fall on Jesus' feet, She shamelessly Unbinds her hair.

Something no proper woman would do in public. And wipes Jesus' feet And keeps wiping them As she continues to cry. And not only that, She shamelessly Is kissing his feet.

And then taking that bottle, Breaking off the top of it, And pours out this extremely expensive perfume. Anoints his feet With that perfume And wipes his feet with her hair.

[14 : 41] Now that is a very uncommon thing. It just doesn't happen In Jewish society. And it certainly doesn't happen To a proper man. He wouldn't allow it.

That Jesus does. He shows no embarrassment. Even though In that society A woman wouldn't even touch A man in public.

He allows her to continue. Even when she takes This expensive perfume And breaks it And pours it on his feet. He allows her to continue As she wipes his feet.

Doesn't Jesus know What kind of a woman this is? Why doesn't he say something? Why doesn't he stop her?

That's what the Pharisee And no doubt Many other people At that banquet Were thinking the same. Why doesn't he stop her? Doesn't he know What kind of a woman?

[15 : 46] Everybody else knows. Why doesn't Jesus know? Well of course Jesus did know. He knew exactly What kind of woman she was.

And he knows As we're told In verse 47 That she was a woman Who had many sins. And he knows The reason for her Stream of tears That she is weeping Onto his feet.

And he knows Even more He knows her heart. That she is deeply Ashamed of her sins. And she is very grateful To him For what she has received From him.

Yes Jesus knows her. He knows her through and through. And he doesn't turn away from her. He is a friend To an outcast sinner.

Though her actions Are socially improper He doesn't turn away From an outcast sinner.

[17 : 00] There's another sinner here. The sinner Simon the Pharisee. And Jesus Was willing to come Into his house Even though No doubt Jesus was well aware Of his Evil motives.

He knew That he wouldn't be Well received In that house. But he went. Now Simon As I mentioned Is a Pharisee And therefore Well regarded In society.

And he's also Well regarded By himself. He was righteous. He was not The kind of man Who would associate With this woman.

No. By no means. And Jesus Also knows Simon. He knows Exactly What kind of man He is.

Although he thinks That Jesus Doesn't know What kind of woman Is touching him. Jesus actually Knows Both the woman And Simon Very well What kind of people They were.

[18 : 20] He knows That this Pharisee Is a proud man. A self-righteous man. A hard-hearted man. A man who is Blind to his own sins.

A man who considers Himself Above Jesus. And Jesus' Action Of not taking Any action When this woman Is weeping On his feet.

Proves that He's a better man Than Jesus. He's a man Who didn't Even And apparently Wasn't even Willing To show Common courtesy To Jesus.

Here's a man Jesus knows Whose sins Are very many. And whose sins Are very great. Pride is Surely A most harmful Sin.

Sin. And in God's Eyes A most hateful Sin. It is a root Of all Kinds of Other sins.

[19 : 33] Its first Fruit Is self-righteousness. And its Continuing fruit Is a refusal To acknowledge One's own Sinful condition.

Sin. And its Final fruit Is separation From God. And Jesus Is a friend Also To this Proud Self-righteous Sinner.

And we see That As Jesus Interacts With him. What a comfort For us As we read This account And reflect Upon it That Jesus Is a friend Of all Kinds Of sinners.

The outcast Sinner As well as The one who Is not Outcast By society And yet Nevertheless Needs God's Saving Work.

He is a Friend of The wretched And despised Sinner And he is A friend Also To the Self-assured And respected Sinner. Now To cause Us to Pause For surely The Lord Jesus Is set Before us In scripture Primarily As our Savior But also As our Example And in This Do we Not have Much to Learn From our Lord A friend Of all Kinds Of sinners Notice How Dr. Luke Presents To us The response Of these Two sinners To the Lord Jesus Jesus Is loved By the One And he Is despised By the Other These two Sinners Are very Very Different There's a

[21 : 37] Woman who Doesn't Stop Weeping And wiping And kissing And anointing Jesus feet Why Why doesn't She stop Because Of her Great Love For him We're told In verse 47 You see She knew She knew Her Need And Jesus Had met Her Need We're Not told The background To that We're not Told when She came To understand That Jesus Is the one Through whom She is Forgiven We're not Given That But We know That she Has been And she Is very Very Thankful But please Understand That Jesus In meeting Her need Never Ever Minimized Her sin He says It Doesn't He Her Sins Are Many Simon However Regards Jesus As a

Man Who Is Compromising His Moral Integrity By the Fact That he Doesn't Stop This Woman From Doing What She's Doing Doesn't He Know What Kind Of Woman This Is Why Does He Allow Her To Continue Touching Him So You See Simon Just Realizes That Jesus Has Really Compromised His Moral Integrity But Jesus His Integrity Wasn't Compromised At All He Was A Man Without Sin He Was A Man Who Sought God's Approval Always And Not Man's Approval And He Was A Man Who On This Particular Occasion Knew This Woman's Heart And He Knew That Her Actions Were The Outpouring Of Real Spiritual

Love For Him She Loved Him Not Because Of Some Romantic Attraction She Loved Him Because Her Many Sins Had Been Forgiven She Was Forgiven Much And So She Loved Much And There Is Simon And How Different He Is In His Response He Shows No Love For Jesus At All But Rather He Shows A Critical Spirit He Found Evidence In Jesus Non Reaction To This Woman As She Touched Him For What He Thought All Along Jesus Is Not A Prophet Now It's Confirmed As Far As He's Concern Jesus Is Not A Prophet Otherwise He Would Know What Kind Of Woman This Is And So No Doubt Even With That Critical Spirit He Has Invited Jesus To

This Banquet Not Because He Loved Him Not Because He Had High Regard For Him But Because He Wanted To Show Him Up Instead Of Repentance He Is Full Of Pride And Self Righteousness And Jesus Is A Friend To Him For Jesus Is A Friend Of Sinners Of All Kinds He's Also A Friend Of Simon You See What Does Jesus Do Knowing Who Simon Is Knowing What Kind Of A Man He Is What Does Jesus Do Jesus Comes To His House To Dinner To The Banquet Despite Simon's Attitude And He Quietly Ignores Simon's Lack Of Common Courtesy And

He Patiently Instructs Simon Even Though He Knew That He Was A Proud And Self Righteous And Hard Hearted Man Jesus Has Already Forgiven This Woman And He Would Certainly Forgive Simon But Simon Stiffened His Neck You Can See In Verse 43 In Simon's Response Can You To This Little Parable That Jesus Teaches What Simon's Response Well I Suppose The One Who Had The Bigger Debt Simon Didn't Want To Say That But He Had To What A Reluctant Admission I Suppose The One Who Had The Bigger Debt In The Story Jesus Talks About Two Men Who Are In Debted One Owes 500

[26 : 40] Denari And The Other Owes 50 Denari Now Those Are Substantial Sums Even Though The Denari Was A Very Very Small Silver Coin In Terms Of The Value Of The Silver Today May Be Worth About Two Pounds But In Terms Of It's Earning Power In Those Days Worth A Day's Wage So 500 Denari Is Two Years Worth Of Salary I Don't Know What You Make Here But Let's Say 30,000 Pounds A Year So We're Talking About 60,000 Pounds Aren't We 500 Denari And 50 Denari Would Be 6,000 Pounds So Both Are Substantial Amounts Of Money And The Men Who Owe This Are Both Of Them Forgiven The Whole Debt Is

Whipped Freely And Now They're Debt Free Which Of Those Two Men Is Going To Be The More Grateful Well It's Obvious Isn't It The Man Who Owe 60,000 Pounds Is Going To Be A Lot More Grateful Than The Man Who Ode 6,000 Pounds No Doubt That Man Who Ode 60,000 Pounds Was Thinking How In The World Am I Ever Going To Pay This Off The Man With 6,000 Pounds Worth Of Debt Probably Was Thinking Similar Thoughts But Thought Well Probably I Can Pay It Off If He Just Gives Me Enough Time And You See In That The Difference Of Appreciation And Love And Thankfulness In The Two Debtors And Jesus Tells This Story To Simon And Then Asks Him That Question Which Of These Will Love Him More And Simon Reluctantly Admits Well I Suppose The One Who Ode

Him More And That Word Suppose Is Critical Because In It We See Not Only Simon's Reluctant Response But We See That He Really Got The Point Of What Jesus Was Intending Him To Understand And The Point Is This Simon Your Sins Are Many And Are Very Great And You Need God's Forgiveness Just As Much As This Woman And So Jesus Says Yes He Who Has Been Forgiven Much Loves Much He Who Has Been Forgiven Little Loves Little Simon Are You Listening Are You Listening Simon Wasn't Thinking About His Sins He

Wasn't Thinking About How Many And How Great They Were He Wasn't Thinking About The Fact That He Needed Forgiveness From God Just As Much As That Sinner Of A Woman And He Despised The Lord Jesus He Despised God's Grace Because He Thought Of Himself As Righteous One Who Needed Little Forgiveness If Any And Surely Here There Is A Very Strong Warning For All Of Us If We Imagine That Our Sins Are Few And Small We Will Be In Danger Of Despising The Grace Of God And Of Loving Him Very Little For It Is By God's Grace Alone

Through Believing And Hearing The Word Of God And Heeding That Word As It Comes To Us It Is By That Means Alone That We Can Be Saved From Our Sins Saved From The Wrath Of God Which We Deserve Every One Of Us Declared Not Guilty By That Means Alone And That's What The Lord Jesus Then Goes On To Assure This Woman Who Is So Deeply Comtrite He Gives That Assurance He Declares The Forgiven One Is Saved And That She May Go In Peace What A Marvelous And Wonderful Assurance Your Sins Are Forgiven Your Faith Has Saved You Go In Peace It's Clear From Her

[31 : 41] Actions That Her Faith Was In The Lord Jesus She Comes To Him Sorrowful Her Tears Are An Open Confession You See Of Her Sin And Her Tears Are An Open Expression Of Her Thankfulness For The Forgiveness That She Received That Implies Faith And She Is Weeping Them On The Lord Jesus And Looking To Him That's Faith In The Lord Jesus She Is So Thankful Because She Has Been Forgiven So Much She Has Been Saved Through Her Faith In Lord Jesus Saved From The Terrible Wrath Of God She Is No Longer Guilty Before God And For This Reason She Can Live In Peace Without Forgiveness And Without The Knowledge That We Are Saved From The Wrath Of God We Cannot Rest Not Really We Must Always Try To Justify Ourselves

And In Some Way To Gain Approval With Men And With God But There's No Way Except Through Christ Through Faith Through Trusting In Him As This Woman Did When We Try To Do It Ourselves Justify Ourselves We Have Taken Upon Ourselves An Impossible Task Oh I Know There Are Plenty Of People In Churches Also And Outside Of Churches As Well Who Keep On Trying And Deluding Themselves That Everything Is Okay Just Like Simon Did Okay Between Himself And God Blinding Himself To His Sins Justifying Himself And Such Will Become Harder And Harder And Harder Until Finally There's No Possibility Of

Salvation Because They Have Become So Self Convinced That They Are Okay They Do Not Need A Savior That Surely Is One Of The Reasons Why The Lord Jesus Gives This Assurance To This Woman Your Faith Has Saved You He Tells The Woman And He Speaks To Simon As He's Looking At The Woman And He Says Her Sins Are For Given And So He Is Calling Simon To Understand That That The Forgiveness Of Sins You See Is Through Faith In Christ And Then He Assures This Woman Who Who No Doubt Is Still Somewhat Uncertain He Assures This Woman That She May Go In Peace Now When The Lord Jesus Speaks Here Peace He's Not Talking First Of All About An Inner

Peace And That's What We Hear A lot Today You Know Inner Peace That's What Religion Is All About Well I Suggest To You That It's Not All About That That May Be A By Product And We're Thankful That It Is A By Product But Christian Faith You See Is First Of All About Peace With God Which Is An External Matter It Has To Do With God's Attitude Towards Me First Of All Is God Okay With Me Or Am I Still Guilty Before Him The Lord Jesus Here Means That Kind Of External Peace As He Assures This Woman Go In Peace Peace With God Your Sins Are For Given You Are No Longer Guilty In The Sight Of God You Have Been Granted Righteousness Jesus

Jesus Is Truly The Friend Of Sin And That's What We See Here Isn't It A Friend Both Of The Outcast And The Rejected That Is The Outcast By Men And The Rejected By Men And Also The Friend Of Those Who Are Highly Regarded In Society And He Freely Grants Forgiveness To All Who Look To Him And He Declares Of Them Your Sins Are Forgiven You Are Saved Go In Peace What A Great Comfort For Us In These Words She This Woman Was Assured And She Was No Longer Guilty And She Could Have Absolute Confidence Now Before God In That Respect And So It Is For Us As We Turn In Faith To Him Grieving For Our Sins Looking To

[36 : 44] Him For What He Alone Can Give For What He Alone Has The Authority To Give The Forgiveness Of Sins Then We Are Granted Salvation Peace With God Freely And Without Cost As The Psalmist Put It In The Version That We Sing In New Zealand From The Psalter Hymnal How Blessed Is He Whose Trespass Has Freely Been Forgiven Whose Sin Is Holy Covered Before The Sight Of Heaven Let's Pray Gracious And Merciful Heavenly Father We See Your Great And Wonderful Grace In The Sending Of Your Own Son Who Came

Into Our Race Took To Himself Human Flesh Not Only That He Might Reveal To Us Fully And Completely As Far As We Can Comprehend It Who God Is But Also That He Might Teach Us The Truth And Finally And Most Wonderfully That He Might Be Our Savior And That Through Faith In Him Looking Only To Him Trusting Only In Him We May Be Assured As This Woman Was Your Sins Are Forgiven You Are Saved Go In Peace Father We Are Thankful Also For The Patience And Love That We See Here Our Savior Showing To This Hard Hearted Stubborn Self Righteous Pharisee For

Father Isn't It True That So Many Of Us Have Been Or Perhaps Presently Are In That Same Condition Blind To Our Own Sins Justifying Ourselves Imagining That We Are Better Than Others Oh Lord Humble Us And Grant To Us The Work Of Your Spirit That We Too May Know Your Forgiveness This Day And That Wonderful Promise As You Say To All Who Put Their Trust In You Go In Peace In The Name Of Jesus We Pray Amen