

Luke 7:36-50 (PM)

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Date: 20 August 2023

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- [0 : 0 0] You may find it helpful to open the Bible in front of you to page 864. That's where our story is. And as you turn there, there's two types of people who are drawn to Jesus.
- And you see both types in our story tonight, in Luke 7. And you actually see the same two types of people today in our own lives, in our own world, maybe even in this room.
- Two types of people who are drawn to Jesus. First, there are the self-righteous. And second, there are sinners. Both are attracted to Jesus.
- So the first group, the self-righteous, are often in leadership in religious circles. Is that a long enough awkward pause for you, Will?
- Okay, good. The self-righteous often include people like pastors, Pharisees, priests, Bible professors. The self-righteous sit near the front.
- [1 : 1 5] We dress up a little bit. We sing audibly, but not too loud. We're polite. We're tidy. We're proper.
- The self-righteous are drawn to Jesus because they think they deserve to be friends with him. They think he's one of them. They think Jesus would like them.
- And he'd approve of their proper, tidy, religious lives. The self-righteous believe in merit and debt and obligation. If I live a proper, polite, religious life, then God will accept me.
- He has to. I've earned his favor. In our story, Simon the Pharisee invites Jesus to his home for a dinner party. No doubt so Simon can brag to others that this new celebrity teacher is his buddy.
- Or even so that Jesus will be indebted to him for his hospitality. That's the first type of person who's drawn to Jesus. The self-righteous.
- [2 : 2 4] The second group are sinners. And we're drawn to Jesus as well. But for completely different reasons. Sinners do not come to Christ because they believe they've earned his friendship or his favor.
- Sinners come to Jesus because he first came to them. Jesus left heaven to seek out sinners while they were still sinning.
- He entered their lives. He entered their mess. And he lived with them. And he loved them. He cared for them. And he had compassion on them.
- The woman in our story is anonymous. She has no name in the text. She is literally a nobody. She's described simply as a sinner.
- That's all she is. All she is known for. Her identity to everyone else is sinner. She learns Jesus is at this prestigious Pharisee's dinner party.
- [3 : 3 3] And she shows up. Uninvited. To lavish upon Jesus outrageous acts of love and humility and devotion and extravagance.
- She washes his filthy feet with her hair. Using the most expensive ointment money could buy. Weeping as she works. Why would she do this?

She's ruining Simon the Pharisee's dinner party. She's also ruining Jesus' reputation as a holy man. By touching him with her sin-stained self.

That's what Simon thinks. And so Jesus tells a story. We just saw it. There's two people who owe a lender some money. One a small loan and one a big one.

And neither of them can pay it off. In response, the money lender cancels their debt. That word for cancels debt, elsewhere in the Bible, is used as the word grace.

[4 : 38] Or the word forgive. It means being given something good that you have not earned. It's used throughout the New Testament referring to what Jesus has done for us.

Jesus has canceled our debts. We pray in the Lord's Prayer, forgive us our debts. It's the same word. God has given us a gift of undeserved grace.

Forgiveness. Canceling the debt. That's the center of Jesus' message. It's the heart of the Christian gospel. Listen to these two verses where you hear this word come up.

In Ephesians 4, Paul writes, God in Christ forgave you. He canceled your debt. Or Colossians 2. You were dead in your trespasses and sins.

But God has made you alive together with Christ, having forgiven us. Same word. All our trespasses. The central message of Jesus' ministry is this.

[5 : 45] Everyone has sinned against God. Everyone is morally, ethically, spiritually bankrupt before him. All of us are poor in spirit.

Whether we recognize ourselves as sinners, or we believe we are self-righteous religious leaders. Regardless of what camp you are in, God has come in Christ to announce your debt is canceled.

Your sin is forgiven. God has come to give you his grace. And that truth, that your sins are gone, that you're forgiven, that your debt is canceled, leads the forgiven sinner to love Jesus extravagantly.

Jesus' forgiveness toward a sinner results in a changed life. It's a life defined now, not by sin, but by love and humility and service and devotion.

This woman comes to Jesus at this pretentious private Pharisee party and shows her love for him extravagantly, publicly, profoundly.

[6 : 59] She empties herself, spending a fortune on the oil, pouring out all status and reputation to humbly, referentially love Jesus.

Sinners are attracted to Jesus because he's come to them to declare that their sins are forgiven. He announces their debt, no matter how great, is gone, forgiven.

They're restored, remade, renewed, redeemed. And from this reality of forgiveness flows love and devotion and humility and worship.

Now notice the order because it's critical. In the English text, it almost sounds like the woman does something and so then Jesus announces that her sins are forgiven because of what she did.

It's actually the other way around. The gospel starts with the reality that you are forgiven by God. Jesus has come before any of us were born to cancel our debts, to forgive us our sins.

[8 : 04] We have not earned his favor and grace. It's a gift. While we were still sinners, Jesus died for us. And this central reality is what fuels this woman's faith and love and devotion to Christ.

Simon the Pharisee didn't see the need for Jesus' forgiveness. His religion is built on his own effort and merit. He doesn't care about God's grace and mercy.

He doesn't think he needs it. And so this whole spectacle with the woman makes no sense to him. It's offensive. It's inappropriate. But Jesus commends the woman because of her love that flows out of his forgiveness for her.

Jesus says to this woman, your sins are forgiven. This woman, whose identity is simply a sinner in our story, is told that her sins are gone.

Jesus has given her a new identity, a new status. He declares, your sins are forgiven. Now the English language is limited in communicating what Jesus says there.

[9 : 17] In English, I'm not a grammar guy, but I'm going to give you 30 seconds of grammar because it's actually really cool. In English, there are three tenses. Past, present, future.

Right? I don't think there's any more. Maybe there are. That's all I was taught in school. I'm sorry. In the original language of this passage, which was Greek, there are more than three tenses.

And this verb is in a super rare tense that's called the perfect tense. And the perfect tense tells you of a past action that's permanent, that's eternal, a past action that continues into the present and will continue forever into the future.

The only example I can think of in English for something that's in the perfect tense is when we refer to death. If I say she died last year, that's perfect tense because it's a past action.

She died in the past that continues to the present. She's still dead and will continue forever into the future. She will remain dead. You can't undo death. What Jesus is saying to this woman, this woman who is known to us only as a sinner, is he's saying, your sins have been forgiven, so they are forgiven today and they will be forgiven forever.

[10 : 41] It's perfect tense. Your sin is gone. It was already gone before you showed up at Simon's house. Your debt is canceled. You are not defined by it any longer.

That's what Jesus offers. He has come to us, to each of us, to announce that our debts can be canceled. Our sins can be forgiven, no matter how deep and how devastating they are.

And he can cancel them because he will take them upon himself for us. He will die the death we deserve to accept the punishment for our sin in our place, that we may be forgiven.

It's all grace. It's all love. It's all mercy. It is undeserved. And it's offered to everyone, even to you. So if you're convicted tonight that you are self-righteous and you've been living feeling like you deserve God's favor, the key that will transform you is hearing of the radical forgiveness that Jesus offers to you.

His grace is what changes us from Pharisees to forgiven, free, devoted, adoring followers. So there are two types of people who are attracted to Jesus.

[12 : 07] Self-righteous and sinners. At the end of our story, the sinner is told your sins are forgiven forever.

And the self-righteous person is left behind, offended by Jesus and his love towards sinners and their love toward him. So who are you tonight?

You're obviously attracted to Jesus. You're here. Do you come here self-righteous or do you come as a sinner? I pray our church is a place where sinners can come and be welcomed and loved and forgiven rather than a place where the self-righteous can come to practice polite religion because all of us are sinners.

And so I invite you to come to Jesus tonight boldly as this woman came boldly and to hear him speak these words to you.

Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven. Amen.