

Self Righteous Condemnation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 February 2009

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the passage we read in Luke's Gospel, chapter 7. And I want us to look at this last section in this chapter.

One of the, verse 36, one of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city who was a sinner.

When she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and so on.

Now this incident that we have in the house of Simon the Pharisee is a very, very interesting and challenging passage.

Because here we meet two totally different people from two totally different sections of society. And they're both displaying totally different actions.

[1 : 13] And as we were highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, we find Christ dealing with different people in different situations, different experiences.

First of all, he was dealing with a dying servant. Then he was dealing with a grieving widow. Then he was dealing with a doubting prophet. And now we find him here dealing with a repentant sinner and a hard-hearted Pharisee.

Jesus got this invitation from Simon the Pharisee to come to his house for a meal. Now, I don't know why Simon asked him.

But I think from reading this passage, it wasn't out of any great motive. I don't think that Simon had a heart full of love for Jesus.

If he had, Simon, as we will see, would have extended to Jesus the ordinary common courtesies of the day. He didn't give him any of the ordinary.

[2 : 13] He didn't greet Jesus with a kiss, which was a customary thing to do. He didn't give him water to wash his feet or to have somebody wash his feet, which was customary in the day.

He didn't extend to him, just as we say, the ordinary, everyday, customary things. So if Simon the Pharisee had any genuine concern and care and love for Jesus in his heart, he would have done that.

I think Simon asked Jesus to come to his house for a meal in order to see him at close quarters and in order to judge Jesus.

I don't think there is any other reason because it certainly wasn't. It's very clear because a heart of love gives. A heart of love does.

Now, of course, it was very kind of him to ask Jesus and to prepare the meal. But Jesus knew Simon's heart. He could read it. And he knew what he was about. And he saw the hard-hearted, critical, condemning Pharisee in him.

[3 : 18] But the amazing thing is Jesus still went. He still went. And Jesus used all the opportunities, however difficult the circumstances, even knowing where he was going, even knowing the difficulties he was going to confront, Jesus went there because Jesus was about challenging people.

And he met with this woman and he met with Simon in his house. So no doubt Simon was just wanting to watch Jesus at close quarters and probably see if he could find any fault with him.

You know, that's an awful thing to do. And there are people who will read their Bibles to see what fault they can find. There are people who will come to church and see what fault they can find.

Well, if ever that is the kind of attitude, we have the spirit of the Pharisee. We're way off the mark. When we come to church, we come to church in order to worship.

We come to church in order that our souls will meet with Jesus. We come to church in order that our souls might be touched, affected, nourished and fed, but also in order that we may worship.

[4 : 30] And if we forget that we're coming in order to worship. You see, sometimes people you'll hear, I mentioned this not long ago, but sometimes you'll hear people say, Oh, you know, I got nothing in church today.

Well, I would suggest if somebody got nothing in church throughout anything of the service, that they didn't come in order to worship. Because if you have come to worship, then you are giving of your heart to the Lord.

And it is inevitable, but that you will get something. There is something that a person will receive into their heart when they meet with God. So sometimes we have it all wrong.

And sometimes we just come to church and we go in and we go out and we say, Right, what will I get? What will I get? But we're involved and we come to worship. We are engaged.

We are involved in the worship of God when we come here. So it's important, imperative that we have this in mind. Well, Simon was this kind of person.

[5 : 33] He was going to be critical. He was going to be judgmental. He wasn't going to be there having Jesus at close quarters out of love. It was to examine him and to be critical about him.

But we find here that the focus moves very quickly from Simon to this woman who enters the house.

And the contrast couldn't be greater because here you have Simon the Pharisee, the most legalistic of all people. This man would have kept to every rule in the Pharisee's book.

And he would have been a man who outwardly would have been incredibly upright. If you wanted to see a morally upright, correct person who was so decent, so legalistic, so law-abiding, and who in many ways would be an example in society, you would point to Simon and you'd say, Poor, fine, upstanding man, Simon.

But he had a problem. And then we meet this woman who was a sinner. And behold, a woman of the city who was a sinner. Now, it's very obvious from this that she was a notorious woman.

[6 : 46] She was a woman of the city. And many people say that this is simply a description for a well-known prostitute. And that she was somebody who would be known. Commentators have agreed on that.

But irrespective of how this woman may have appeared in public, and was obviously somebody who was, because of a particular lifestyle, was obviously somebody who was hard, had a hard exterior.

Somebody who maybe appeared incredibly carefree in the point that she didn't care what anybody said, what anybody thought, what anybody did.

And yet, however she may have appeared outwardly, she was somebody whose heart was burdened, and heavy, and broken, and miserable.

And you know, we've got to remember that there are many people who outwardly may appear that they've got everything under control, and they may appear to be in charge of life, they may appear that nothing really bothers them, but underneath, behind that outward exterior, there's a lot of mess going on within their heart.

[7 : 59] A lot of mix-ups. A lot of heartaches. A lot of misery. And so we've always got to be sensitive to people.

It mustn't just take people at face value. Because people will often appear to be different to what maybe they really are deep down. Anyway, this woman knew her life was in a mess.

And I believe this woman knew her life was in a mess, because I tend to think she must have heard Jesus. Because when she comes to this house with a heart full of love, I believe she has come to Jesus by faith.

Because at the very end of the chapter, Jesus says to her, Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. She came to Jesus by faith. Because she had heard, I believe, Jesus speaking.

And she had been affected and touched by his life, by his message. And when she saw her life, and the mess of her life, and where she was, and how she lived, she came to Jesus.

[9 : 04] And she was somebody who came with a broken heart. Somebody whose heart was just broken in two. And you know, my friend, that's a painful place to be.

To find her heart broken under God's dealings. But you know, it's a wonderful place, because do you know what the Bible says? A broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice.

And if you're here today with a broken spirit, because of how life has been, and you find that under God's hand, there's a breaking in your heart, you may be in pain.

And you may be looking around the church, and thinking everybody else is happy, but you're miserable. But if you're like that before God, because of what you feel that you are before God, it's pleasing in God's sight.

A broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice. And that's how this woman came. And so, she was somebody who was spiritually bankrupt.

[10 : 09] That's how she discovered herself. And while we won't in any way minimize the horrors of temporal bankruptcy, and particularly in the day that we're living in, where people are finding more and more just how difficult life is becoming, do you know what's even worse is spiritual bankruptcy?

It must be the most awful discovery for any person to make at the end of the day, when it's too late, that they're spiritually bankrupt. That they have nothing.

And that's why Jesus Christ came into this world. To give us His riches. We have nothing. He became poor in order to make us rich spiritually.

That's a transaction. We are bankrupt by nature. Spiritually, we have nothing. Empty pockets, spiritually. Empty hearts, spiritually. Good works, empty.

Nothing. Nothing. But Jesus came. And Jesus went to the cross. And Jesus took upon Himself the punishment that was due for us.

[11 : 21] But more than that, He put His, or God put Christ's righteousness to our account. To our spiritual account. So that if we accept Jesus as Savior, we will never again be spiritually bankrupt.

Because Christ's righteousness is put to our account. And before God, we're in credit. Spiritually in credit, so to speak.

And that's what had happened with this woman. And that's why she came to Jesus. And so, she comes to the house, and here we find that there's reclining.

Of course, it was different to the way we pulled chairs around the table. These days, there were kind of reclining couches, which would be in towards the table, but they reclined out from the table.

And that's where she came, and she found. And she had this, we did read this alabaster thing of ointment, where she obviously broke it.

[12 : 23] This would be, these alabaster containers were soft stone containers. And the alabaster, of course, would have been very, very, the ointment in it would have been very, very precious.

And she poured it upon Christ. Her heart was broken, and the tears flowed down. Couldn't stop them. Genuine tears from a broken heart.

And these tears were, as it were, washing the feet of Christ. And then she got the oint, she was kissing his feet, and the ointment poured out. This is a display of love, and that's what love does.

Love doesn't count the cost. If this woman's heart hadn't been touched by Christ, if she hadn't a heart that was filled with love, she would have looked at that ointment in this alabaster, and she said, oh no, I can't afford it.

This is, women used to keep these for special occasions. Well, here was for this woman, the most special occasion ever. Here was the object of her love. Maybe she had never loved before in life.

[13 : 26] But even if she had, she had never loved in this way. Because the love of Christ is different. It surpasses any other love. And so she who had come to receive this love, she takes what is most precious to her, and pours it out upon Jesus.

Now, while this was happening, and it's a beautiful scene, across the table, there's an eye, a hard-hearted heart, and a hard eye looking at the scene.

And Simon, in his own heart, is passing judgment upon Jesus. Now, it tells us, verse 39, when the Pharisee, who had invited him, saw this, he didn't say to Jesus, he didn't say to the people round about, he said to himself.

In other words, all he did was, he was thinking. And Jesus reads his thoughts. It's not an amazing thing. He didn't have to say anything.

Jesus read his thoughts. He's reading our thoughts today. It's reading what we're thinking right now. About him. About the gospel. We cannot, we cannot hide what we really are before Jesus.

[14 : 46] We can hide it from others. We can even hide it from ourselves. We can deceive ourselves. We cannot deceive him. That's what we're sung in Simon 39. He knows our every thought.

He knows our motives. Why do you do the things you do? Is it to impress other people? Or is it out of a heart to God? Out of love to God?

See, sometimes we need to go back and ask ourselves. I need to go back to whatever I'm doing in Christian service and say, am I doing this to satisfy my conscience?

Am I doing this because it's what I've got to do? Or am I doing it to the Lord? Because if we do it to the Lord, then we're doing it by faith. If we're not doing it by faith, then we're told in Scripture it's sin.

So it's important for us to examine our motives about everything that we do because the Lord knows. And the Lord knew what Simon was thinking there.

[15 : 50] And Simon must have got an awful shock when the Lord turned. Because Simon was saying, if this man were a prophet, you see, he's dismissed Jesus.

If this man were a prophet, obviously he's not. He's not a man of God. This is what Simon's saying. If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him.

For she is a sinner. And you can see Simon in all his self-righteousness, puffing himself up, looking in condemnation on Christ and on the woman.

But he's got it all wrong. He is the one who is wrong. The ones he is condemning, the two that he is condemning, are the ones who are right.

This woman is in a right relationship with Jesus. This woman is now expressing her love to Jesus. And whatever Simon did by way of invitation, he had got it all wrong.

[16 : 52] And so we find that Jesus then turns to Simon. And he tells Simon a little story.

And Simon must have got a shock because here he is, Simon, he's condemning Jesus in his heart. Oh, he said. You can see the sort of tut, tut, tut. And Jesus turns around and he says to Simon, Simon, he said, I have something to say to you.

Simon would have wondered, I wonder what he's going to say. And he tells him this little story. Simon knew straight away what he was getting at. And he tells about these two men.

Two men who, about a creditor that had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii, which would have been about a year and a half's wages. And the other owed 50, which would have been about two months' wages.

Round about that. But the problem with both the debtors was that neither of them had any money. Neither of them could pay. Neither the one who had owed 50 nor the one who owed 500.

[18 : 01] But the wonderful thing was that the creditor forgave them both. So what was Jesus teaching Simon here? Well, I think he was teaching him two things.

First of all, the very obvious thing he was teaching him, that the one who was forgiven most is the one who will love most. He says, one is forgiven 50 and one is forgiven 500.

Now the person who was owing 50 would be maybe harboring in his heart, maybe I've got enough friends where I can rustle up sufficient to pay it off.

Maybe he had this kind of hope that somehow he would get out of the fix. But the one who owed 500 hadn't a hope at all. But the fact was neither could pay.

Both were forgiven. Which person would have a greater sense of indebtedness and thankfulness? Well, it's obvious. The person who was forgiven most.

[19 : 05] But I think there's an even deeper lesson here. Because both people, the one who owed 50 and the one who owed 500 are in exactly the same boat.

Neither have enough to pay. And whether it was one denaria or a thousand denaria, at the end of the day both were debtors.

Neither were in a position to pay. And Jesus, I think, is bringing this lesson to bear upon Simon as well. Because Simon, who wouldn't dare say, well, I'm not a sinner, would have certainly put himself in the category of the 50.

And he would have thought that by his own efforts and his own good works that he could have got himself right with God. And that he would be forgiven because of who he is. Somehow, that he would have been able to pay off.

But that woman, oh, she's in the 500 category. You see, Simon had a, and you know, people are always doing that. They're judging particular types of sins.

[20 : 18] And they're saying, oh, well, that's sin. That's poor. That's real sin. Oh, there's condemnation. And the Lord, if you go through the Bible, is forever teaching us that every sin is deserving of God's wrath and curse.

and we are forever guilty of setting ourselves up as judge and executioner and saying, oh, well, because of this. If it was that, it would be different.

And God is saying, no, they're all, every sin is deserving of God's wrath and curse. So the fact of the matter is, everybody is under condemnation.

Everybody needs the same remedy. Whether it's 50 sins or 5,000 sins or 500 million, trillion sins, it doesn't matter. We are all guilty before God.

We are all condemned. And that's what Jesus is showing. There's no place for us in sort of sitting in condemnation of others because it's going back to what Jesus earlier on was talking about, the person who had this great big beam in their own eye.

[21 : 31] and they were pointing to the person with a speck and they were saying, hey, you've got a speck in your eye. And yet this person has a beam in their own eye.

Now, it's ridiculous language in a sense Jesus is using. But he's exaggerating the point to show how absurd our judgments are.

Where we sit in self-righteousness because we think we're better than this person. Oh, see how that person has sinned. And the Lord is saying, if only you could see yourself.

And that's what Jesus is doing. He's trying to turn the spotlight round upon Simon and saying, Simon, have a good look at yourself. You aren't in the business, though you think you are, of passing judgment upon others and condemning others.

Look in upon yourselves. And the Lord is saying the same thing to you and to me today. Because, you know, the leper doesn't change its spots. And human nature is the same.

[22 : 35] And we are forever falling into the same trap of sitting in judgment upon others. And the Lord is saying, hey, turn it round, look upon yourself. Before you accuse somebody else, have a good look at yourself.

And that's what the Lord is doing. And then he moves on and he says to Simon, you know, Simon, I'm going to say something to you. And I want you to look at this woman not so much at the spirituality or even at the morality.

I want you to look just by the common courtesy of the day. And as we said at the beginning, here was this woman and here was Simon. What did Simon do when Jesus came in?

I don't know. But he didn't extend today we may kiss or we may shake a hand. He obviously didn't bother. Didn't extend any courtesy to Jesus other than the meal that he set before him.

And he said to Simon, you're there condemning this woman and she's she's given me the ointment. She's given me the kisses. She's given me the foot washing.

[23 : 49] You didn't do any of these things which is the ordinary thing of the day. Although she did it in a different way. And Simon comes out of this in a really bad light.

You know my friend, we can be very religious. We can be very upright. We can appear to be very morally correct. And yet we can have a hard, hard heart.

I hope there's nobody here today like Simon who is looking at Jesus, examining Jesus and then ready to dismiss him because that's what Simon was going to do.

I don't know what eventually happened with Simon. I would love to think that through this meeting with Jesus that Simon was so challenged in his heart. I would love to think that maybe later on down the line that he came to know Jesus because he was a man who had great privileges and for whatever reasons he asked Jesus it was good that he actually asked him into his house even although the motive might have been wrong.

And I would love to think that through this meeting and through this where Jesus challenged Simon that he may have actually had a whole rethink about life. where do we stand?

[25 : 14] I hope there's nobody here today like Simon who's just looking at Jesus as somebody that you take you examine and then you dismiss or somebody that you take and you examine and say well I'll look at again like as we were saying with the snooze button on the alarm clock something for looking at later on but not just now.

My friend Jesus is challenging us. challenging us as to where we are with him. Challenging us about our attitudes to him and towards one another and what we are in and of ourselves.

We see at the end of the day that this woman she was saved because of her faith and that faith go your faith has saved you go in peace and that faith that she had was demonstrated the faith that she had showed itself by her love because love and faith are inseparably bound the Bible tells us that she was showing this heart that she had for Jesus.

I hope today that you will hear these words of Jesus echoing in your own heart your faith has saved you go in peace and you know when you are saved by faith that's how you go in peace because Jesus has come into your heart the prince of peace to give you a life of peace.

May we know this in our own heart and life. Let us pray. Lord our God we we give thanks again today for the word and for its challenge to us and so often we find that the word is making us rethink who we are forgive us Lord for how prone we are to condemn how ready we are to condemn others and maybe how slow we are to condemn ourselves we pray that we might be honest in our own assessment of ourselves that we may come before the Lord confessing our sin and asking to be forgiven we give thanks oh Lord for a saviour's heart of love and we pray to bless each and every one of us bless all whom we love help us Lord in all our different relationships one with another in all the different issues that we have to confront day by day we pray for thy guidance and thy leading in everything bless us and do us good and take us all home safely in Jesus name we ask it

[28 : 05] Amen