

True Worship - Jesus anointed by a sinful woman

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Preacher: Craig Dowling

- [0 : 00] Before Craig comes and continues his series in Luke's Gospel, we're going to read together in Luke chapter 7.! That's Luke chapter 7, beginning at verse 36.
- Jesus anointed by a sinful woman, it says in my Bible. Now, one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him. So he went to the Pharisee's house and declined at the table.
- When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume.
- And as she stood behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them away with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them.
- When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know who was touching him and what kind of woman she is, that she is a sinner.
- [1 : 02] Jesus answered him, Simon, I have something to tell you. Tell me, teacher, he said. Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him 500 denarii, the other 50.
- Neither of them had the money to pay him back. So he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled.
- You have judged correctly, Jesus said. 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, for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little. Then Jesus said to her, Your sins are forgiven.
- [2 : 10] 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. Amen. May God bless the reading of his word. Thanks, Gerald.
- Thanks, Gerald. Thanks, Gerald. There's a better way.
- There's a better tool, a better piece of equipment, better book, better engine. It's a bit of a well-used slogan from advertisers.
- It's not that our previous item was poor, but that we've improved. Dr. Luke's biography of Jesus' life offers a similar advertisement.
- [3 : 29] He says there was nothing inferior about the Jewish religion. It was given by God. It was designed by God.
- Every principle, rule, and ritual had a great wealth of meaning. It was steeped in God's ways. And it was the very best.

It was God's best for people. But when Christ came, the best, the Jewish religion, got even better. God's best got better again.

And as Luke describes this event here in our reading today, he is like screaming it out. Simon, Simon, Pharisees, religious ones, and everyone else.

Why are you so bogged down in this and in that? Who this lady is, who she isn't, what rules are being broken, what rules are being kept, what rituals weren't abided by, what religious acts have been taken too lightly here?

[4 : 49] Why? Why, Luke is saying, because the better is here. The best is here. The greatest is here.

And it's Jesus. And it's Jesus' ways. And it's his kingdom. And it's his covenant. Jesus is the one true great high priest.

Jesus is the only atoning sacrifice needed. Jesus is the better way. And it's all simply about Jesus.

And in a crazy kind of way, it's very simply just called friendship. friendship. And it's a friendship sealed in a worshipping relationship.

And this lady here, this broken, busted, desperate lady, she gets it. She gets it. She has it.

[6 : 04] And in the end of the day, it's what we were created for. And in the end of the day, it's actually how it all started.

In the beginning, there was a garden. There was Adam, there was Eve, there was God. And the three walked in the garden in the cool of the day, chatting.

There was no guidebook. There was no rituals. There was no regulations. No stances or positions. Or anything else. There was just face-to-face personal friendship between man and God.

And it was perfect. Man loved it. God loved it. It worked so well.

It gave humanity the perfect, safe place to live and to be all sealed up in worship.

[7 : 13] but very important to point out all sealed up in a completely unstructured and a spontaneous worshipping relationship with God.

That's what was there in the beginning. And X amount of years later, since the days of Eden, here this lady at this point in history is doing it again.

Just doing it again. And it's perfect. So worship. I want to think a little on that word worship.

It's meaning and just what exactly it is. And to do so, let's get a little help from Hebrews. Because the advertisement that better is here of course belongs to Hebrews, doesn't it?

Because across the first ten chapters, the writer of Hebrews states that the journey through Judaism is fulfilled. It's not void.

[8 : 25] It's not scrapped. It's just fulfilled. It's a better way. He lays out the perfect doctrine of the better way and it's beautiful. And then he summarizes it all up with Jesus is the one and only great high priest.

And after ten chapters of heavy doctrine, he strips it all back right down to the core and simply says, and here's how to apply all that doctrine.

Here's how to actually live all that heavy doctrine out in your life. And what does he say? He says, worship. The very first instruction is simply have a friendship, a worshipping friendship with Jesus.

Hebrews 10 verse 19. It begins, Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have a confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened up for us through the curtain that is his body.

So the old rules for worship are then, stay here. Don't go in there. Worship here. It's all gone. It's now, come right in to the presence of God.

[9 : 58] And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, there's only one to worship. There's no priest in the middle. And because there's no priest in the middle, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart.

I, personally, friendly, face to face with the wonderful Father. no structures, no rules, just like the lady did in today's reading.

And then verse 24, so let us consider how we spur one another on toward loving good deeds. Because worship is so much more than a song.

Again, just like the lady here, she gets it. And not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another. So to begin with, this clears up an age-long question.

What about the rest of the week? When exactly am I worshipping? Do I need to be in church on a Sunday? It's a daily action, as Hebrews here teaches, and we're going to learn more about that.

[11 : 17] But yes, also, don't give up meeting together. But, it's how you come, and the position of your heart when you come.

It's so sad to meet Christians who have got so used to the rhythm of the normal Sunday morning church service, that that hour or two on a Sunday morning really is the height of their worship for the week.

I've come across churches where people come in on a Sunday morning like they are making a weekly prison visit, visiting God in that big old building they keep him locked up in.

They arrive, they grab that same seat laid out week by week by the church guards, and sit and wait for someone up front to call it a cell number, sorry, hymn number.

And in the midst of it all, you can almost hear an unacknowledged conversation with God. Good to see you again, God, and how's life been this week?

[12 : 26] Sorry I couldn't get here the last couple of weeks. Uncle 70th, garden to mow, you know how it is. And looking around this building, do they treat you okay in here? It's not too boring Monday to Saturday when we're not here, is it?

Before you know it, morning service done, off they go. See you next week, God, if I can make it, of course. But if, but if the ultimate priority of man being created is to worship God, then maybe, maybe, I'm only saying maybe, maybe doing it for two hours on a Sunday morning, in the one same place is an ultimate sin, perhaps.

So the big massive question we need to answer is, what just exactly is true, real, proper worship?

And just exactly how does one do real, true, proper worship? worship. Another couple of verses for you, and I'll read them to you.

Romans 12 says, therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice. Christ. This is your true and proper worship.

[13 : 52] Real, true, and proper worship is your entire life given over to God. Being in his presence 24-7, and making all you do about making Jesus happy, about being close to him, it's the position of your heart.

1 Corinthians 10 says, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. So put these two verses together and they say, let everything, everything within your 24-hour day, everything within your 24-hour day, day about worshiping God.

And sometimes I like a good list of pointers to make things clear. It helps simple ones like me, so here goes one. 24-7, real, true, proper worship, is your waking up with a thankful heart and giving the day ahead to God.

Your morning connection with God in Bible and prayer, your songs of praise as you drive to work or work around the home, the way you treat your family and work colleagues, the way you do your best in your employment, the way you spend your money, the way you give to the poor, to the needy, to the hungry, the way you and your family gather in the evening, the way you enjoy coffee with friends, the way you tell someone about God's love for them, the way you pray with your children as they go to bed, the way you care and are faithful to your spouse, the way all your day's choices, small and big are given to God, and the way you end your day in thankful prayer and praise to God.

That's perhaps, perhaps a 24-7 life of worship. And if that's what a 24-7 life of worship may look like, well next we need to think about where it comes from.

[16 : 05] because this sort of 24-7 life of worship only comes from each person individually making a decision for Jesus from the heart, a decision of devotion, a decision of devotion to Jesus from the heart, making a decision to be fully focused on Jesus as the one true God, as their God.

because as Jesus also taught, whatever has more of our attention will in the long run become our God and the one we will worship.

So it very, very much starts right at the very beginning, making a heartfelt decision early on to be fully devoted to Jesus.

Then that 24-7 worship will flow from it. I'll tell you a little story. You may have heard it before. The Franciscans have always held a nice little presence near the famous Wall Street of New York, capital of finance.

And all the leading money lenders and money makers make Wall Street their home. money. So the Franciscan brothers made a decision. It was very worthwhile investing in a monastery close by to pray for the people of the street.

[17 : 40] When people visit the monastery, sometimes a monk may take them for a walk, point out the landmarks, etc. On one particular visit, a monk took a visiting minister for a walk through the street.

About halfway through, the two of them stopped and they stopped near one of those little city mini, when I have a tree and a patch of grass and a couple of flowers. And amongst all the mass noise of fleeting taxis, business chat, bus horns, sirens, money discussions, the monk says to the minister, can you hear that?

The minister rightly responds, well what exactly? I hear all the cars, the endless voices and whatever else. The monk says I know, but can you hear that?

Pointing to that small patch of the tree. It means little to the minister, well all I can hear is the business talk, the phone calls, the cars. The monk now taking him right to the patch of green, again asks, can you hear that?

The minister getting rightly irritated now responds refutely, no. All I can hear is them. Come closer, says the monk, in fact, much closer.

[19 : 01] In fact, get down on your hands and knees. So after all that, he just obeys. They get down and copying the monk, they both put their ears right to the grass.

It's beautiful, isn't it? Asks the monk. Can you hear those little crickets in there? The buddhy bees around that floor? That's God's work. That's his creation.

That's the one we at the monastery worship. They stand up and they stand up and give me your loose coins. The minister gives the monk his loose coins.

The minister holds them out. The monk holds them out and lets go. And they all fall and they bounce and they ping all around this little patch.

And true story, true story, heads from as far back as a few hundred yards stop, turn and leak. Conversations stop for about five seconds as the entire focus of the people in that immediate zone all zoom in as all the Wall Street worshippers stop to look and worship their God, mummy.

[20 : 17] Jesus said where your heart is is where your treasure is and where your God is and in the end you will end up worshipping that. They may never have heard God's created bees and crickets but they sure heard those man made coins hit the ground for that was their God.

And they had long ago back at the very beginning of their career made a decision of devotion to money. Hence, hence why the importance is making that decision of devotion to Jesus at the start so that he and his kingdom will always remain first in your heart.

So let's ponder upon making that decision of devotion to Jesus today so that we can do the proper 24-7 worship that the Bible talks about.

One of the dangers we all face in our spiritual journey is that although we acknowledge we love God, we often only communicate with him in a very dry, plain way.

But that's the whole point that Hebrews is keen to deal with. Our relationship with God does not have to be like this. There is a real beauty and fun and excitement and fulfilment from a full-blown relationship with God.

[21 : 50] the relationship is not just knowledge and depth but also fun, excitement, love. I mean like at another time, Jesus in a great bid to deal with this very misunderstanding actually said to the Pharisees, you search the scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life.

These are the very scriptures that testify about me yet you refuse to come to me and have life. Jesus right on it says yes, know your scriptures.

Brilliant. Know them inside out but it doesn't stop there. It can't stop there. Go well beyond. Don't sit on the good news in the Bible.

Actually move forward and do have be because the relationship that those scriptures invite you to is a real physical active with God.

So somewhere along the line you have to become outward in a friendship with him and that's just dire. Jesus is clear. you have to move beyond the dry static ways that knowing scripture gives and actually do it.

[23 : 23] You have to act on the knowledge of scripture otherwise it will remain a little dry and a little static and that's not good for any human. And maybe to get around that all it requires is a little bit of self discipline.

Relationships of any kind require a sense of discipline and we need to be a little disciplined in making the effort with God. Perhaps you've noticed the excitement of some new Christians over the years.

Sometimes when people first discover Jesus they just can't get enough. Life is fresh and exciting just as it should be. Everything is Jesus this, Jesus that, all the books, all the movies, ask them how they take their coffee, coffee, Jesus flavour please.

And it goes on and on and on. But what sustains the person in the long run? It's all too easy to lose our enthusiasm for worship, for Bible reading, for praying, for coming to church.

And they slowly become chores and too much to do. That's why on a Sunday evening we quote that famous verse there, Romans 10 that we read, spare one another on, encourage one another, be together with one another.

[24 : 47] Because as humans it's so easy to get so busy and feel so mundane that slowly these things could easily just slide away.

But God says no, you, I, we here, Wester Hills Baptist Church, get around each other, talk with each other, spur one another on, be in each other's lives, be friends.

Be friends. And that's why Holy Spirit has this line in Scripture, for God knows how easily we can be put off. So look after each other, talk with one another, encourage one another, be in each other's lives, get together.

The truth is, the wonderful, exciting, amazing truth is, on his end, on his end, God does not see the relationship as a chore, or too much to do, or unnecessary, or overburdening at all.

The truth is, as we've been saying here, God first created us for a full-on, living, personal friendship. Remember, that's what it all was back in the beginning, there in the garden, and that's what he wants back.

[26 : 03] which is why this wondrous encounter in today's passage is of extreme importance, right? Jesus is at home, Simon the Pharisee's home, reclining, dining, when along comes a lady, a lady who's at a dead end, with nowhere else to go.

she's made too many wrong choices, choices that have sent her in a different direction than she would have liked to. But she's clearly been keeping an eye on Jesus, on his ministry, his miracles, his teachings, his claim to be God, and very importantly, he's been keeping an eye on the way he treats people, particularly the way Jesus treats people who have lived more than questionable lives.

Because whereas the rabbis of the Pharisees brand such people, scold such people, the rabbi Jesus loves them, forgives them, blesses them, and she's seen that with other people.

This has never happened before. This has never been done before. Rabbis don't do that. But this rabbi Jesus is. And so given what Jesus told the Pharisees that they couldn't see, they couldn't see that scripture points to him, somehow this lady could see it.

She could see what God was offering. She could see the living relationship that Jesus was inviting her to. She wanted his friendship. She wanted a place of God.

[27 : 51] She wanted his forgiveness, his joy, and his peace. And she had faith. Jesus was the chosen one. And so in faith she enters the scene. Weeping, weeping tears of joy, tears of desire, tears of excitement, tears of worship.

And the worship service begins. And her life of 24-7 worship begins. and her decision of devotion to Jesus and Jesus alone has been made right at the very beginning of her Christian walk.

She dries the tears with her hair, kisses, annoyance, pours perfume, and in her heart proclaims Jesus as her king and her God.

Many theologians have identified this as the most amazing account of active worship to Jesus ever.

Because it displays an act of worship that is utterly selfless and totally spontaneous. It was outside of the synagogue or any other religious church building or whatever else.

[29 : 03] It was simply at home. It was totally unrehearsed. There was no liturgy, no rituals, no books, no rotas, no guidelines, no regulations, no rules, nothing.

It was simply and fully out of the blue, off the cuff. It was intimate, it was personal, it was lively, it was adoring, straight from the heart. It was indeed the real, true, proper worship that Romans 12.1 calls us to live by and do.

And actually, there's another similar event in another Simon's home towards the end of Jesus' ministry. It has all the same acts of worship, the tears, the hair, the perfume.

And in that account, Jesus is so moved that he responds with, this is so beautiful. She has done a beautiful thing and wherever the gospel is preached, this will also be told.

why? Why? Why did Jesus want these events recorded and preached about? Because they are exactly the way he wants to be with us.

[30 : 23] They are by far the greatest and best examples of what it truly means is to be a Christian, to be devoted to Jesus, to worship Jesus.

It is the perfect example of what the new covenant is introducing. These accounts tell us that worshipping God in structured, regulated, liturgical, old covenant ways is over.

and this lady here, this so-called sin-filled lady, has given the best teaching lesson, the best teaching lesson on what the new way to worship God looks like.

And it needs to be told in scripture for all time to come so that the people of 2025 know there's no restrictions, no regulations, no structures, just come and do everything with a faith-filled heart.

And out of that will come spontaneous acts of worship to Jesus. And don't be intimidated by the ones who appear to do it better. For one, they don't, and two, this lady didn't care that her act would be misunderstood.

[31 : 43] She had made a decision of devotion to Jesus. She was clear nothing else would be her God. And out of that mindset flowed this. She realized just how much Jesus really, really loved her.

And when you take a moment to really consider just how much he loves you, just how much he has forgiven you, when you really get that in your mind about who he is, then you will do the same.

And I know you will say you've got that in your mind, you've been through that, but I suspected a few here who haven't. So when you do, all you will do is worship, worship, and worship like this lady, in all ways and at all times, just like that Corinthians verse, whether eating or drinking, or whatever else, worship.

Consider again just what exactly we are worshipping. Consider again the full sacrifice of Jesus. Having created the world and ruling it in comfort, he sacrificed heaven to instead grow up human, obey human law, pay taxes, get sick, get tempted, work for a living.

Then after three years of hard, non-stop ministry, of his healings and his miracles, and caring for everyone, those very same ones that he loved and cared for, chained him, spared him, beat him, crucified him, and laughed at him.

[33 : 20] And upon rising back to life, he visits his disciples, and get this one, he says, I'm so in love with all the people out there, those very same people who spared, crucified, and killed me, I'm so in love with them all, I want them all to come to heaven with me.

Now go and tell them, they're invited to heaven, I'll save them. It's bonkers, but the depth of it is out of our mind. When you get that through your mind, you will not stop making everything you do about worshipping him either.

Worship is not just music. Worship is loving God with all your heart. Giving all areas of your life to God.

Worship is living in line of the Holy Spirit. Worship is enjoying God in creation, food, drink, reading, movies, days out. Worship is being an honest, joyful, friendly person to everyone.

Worship is honouring God, knowing God, obeying God, adoring God, proclaiming God. Worship is not a set activity. Worship is a way of life.

[34 : 40] Live that every day with Jesus and don't go home fretting, I can't do that. I can't live up to that. I can't either. But I'm focused on trying.

And Holy Spirit is more than enough to enable me to succeed as he is for you. When we get that understanding of 24-7 worship, correcting our lives, it means that Sunday morning church attendance will be much more about taking all of our worship from Monday to Saturday and then gathering with fellow Christians on a Sunday to do it together as a group before going back out to do it another six days out there.

So that both individual and community worship is happening in your life. Both are very important. And for all the Bible says about personal worship that we've looked at here, it for sure calls us to community worship as well.

Jesus promises to reveal himself in the context of a committed relationship, flowing from love and worship. Not from theology, not from academia.

He cleared that up with that John 5 verse to the Pharisees. The Pharisees, the rich young ruler, they were top notch in their knowledge in scripture, but they never, never, ever, ever enjoyed a friendship with Jesus.

[36 : 09] The rest, the commoners, this lady here, they all got very close to Jesus by just simply loving him and worshipping him in a face-to-face friendship that flowed from simply realising how much she was forgiven.

love grows and deepens even more. Worship is not a set activity.

Worship is a way of life. It's a way of existing. It's a way of living, a way of being. Let's pray. Amen. Lord Jesus, my prayer is that you would call this fellowship to worship you like this.

Our prayer is that you would call us all together in unity to worship you like this. your prayer is that we would in unity with you, Holy Spirit, live safe in a worshipping relationship with you.

So Lord, bless our hearts, bind our hearts, deepen our hearts to make decisions of devotions to you today. Keep a stewed there, planted there, and safe there.

[37 : 36] But Lord, help us take this into the week ahead, into the community places where you will go, workplaces, colleges, wherever it may be, and live out our relationship with you.

Help us grow and get closer to you. In your name, Jesus. Amen. Well, now is the time to worship, so let's have that fantastic song in.

Come, now is the time to worship.