

Reaction of two Sinners to Jesus

Luke 7:36-50

After the great invitation of Christ, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” We find this reaction of two sinners. One took up the easy yoke of Christ and found peace, the other remained yoked under their sinful, judgmental, and legalist burden.

“And one of the Pharisees desired him (“invited him”) that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. ³⁷And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner (a prostitute), when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, ³⁸And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.” Luke 7:36-38

I. Setting – Do you realize we are just getting a little glimpse of a wonderful story of God’s mercy and forgiveness in the life of this woman? But let’s set the stage to this event. Every harmony of the life of Christ put this dinner after the call of Christ to individuals to “come.” Most believe it was in one of the cities Jesus had just condemned because of their unbelief, probably Capernaum.

As we read the passage, we find it was not a private dinner for two, but a larger VIP-type banquet. These would be served around a U-shaped table with flat couches all around. The men would recline on their elbow and their feet would be behind them. To us, another strange custom would be the open invitation to spectators, usually, it would be only men who would come. They would not eat but could watch, listen, and observe the spectacle.

Why did Simon invite Jesus to dinner?

1. **Jesus’ popularity with the people.** Simon had the means and opportunity. Keep in mind, Jesus was well known; He has been drawing large crowds with His teaching and miracles of healing for over a year. Jesus had just raised a young man from the dead!

2. **Entrap, spy, or find fault with Jesus.** Luke gives us three occasions Jesus ate with Pharisees and every time they had a critical, judgmental spirit. Yes, Christ ate and was a friend of sinners and sitting around a table with a bunch of self-righteous religionists certainly proves it!

II. Individuals

Simon the Pharisee – Notice Simon is “one” of the Pharisees who seemed to be part of the multitude of Matthew 11/Luke 7. Let’s review our previous lesson, Jesus’ words of judgment on the three cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were very strong and offensive to the listening Jews. Much of what He said was a direct attack on the religious leadership as well. They were very proud of their knowledge and keeping of the law – Jesus said they were the “wise and prudent” But then notice, that Christ thanked His Father, “because thou **hast hid** these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” These words would make the Pharisees very angry! You can almost hear them say, “God has hidden nothing from us! Who does He think He is?” It is pretty clear when putting these facts together along with Simon's revealed words, attitudes, and actions, this Pharisee was not a lover or follower of Jesus and was not seeing Jesus in any positive light.

Woman of the city – It is likely this woman was also part of the multitude of Matthew 11/Luke 7. Almost every commentary, study Bible, and scholar pointed out the fact that the last event in the life of Christ was the passage that began, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” So on this day, Simon’s dinner was an opportunity to see Him, and when this woman “knew” Jesus was in this

Pharisee's house she came prepared to honor Him! I have to admit that I've debated two possibilities concerning this lady's intentions at the banquet and, unfortunately, some of my study books were also unsure. Did she come to the banquet hall that night seeking forgiveness from Jesus, or did she come forgiven and to pour out her thankfulness? We will go through this lesson and see if we can discern her intent from the facts given in the Scripture.

Jesus – Let's also remind ourselves, that Jesus was already known to love and receive sinners. His critics said He was a "friend of sinners and publicans." It was true, that Christ was not like the Rabbis and Jewish elites of His day; He saw all as equal; needing truth and healing both spiritual and physical. Just like Matthew the tax collector, the woman at the well, Zacchaeus, and the woman taken in adultery; they were all sinners who found forgiveness in Christ and learned to love Him. But don't miss the fact of where Jesus is in this event! He is at Simon the Pharisee's house! Christ was willing to go, be disrespected and misjudged by a religious, self-righteous sinner. Jesus loved and sought all sinners, but unfortunately, only a few will come to Him!

Other attendees – v. 49 Keep in mind there were others at this dinner. We read in verse 49, a question "they" were thinking against Jesus, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?"

Get the Facts: Here are two points almost every scholar and commentary I read wanted to make clear concerning this event of Christ.

Not Mary Magdalene – There seemed to have been rumored around 350 AD that this story is about the coming of Mary Magdalene to Christ. No modern-day theology feels that there is any credence to this theory. Mary is not mentioned until Luke 8:2 and the only tag to her name was "which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities." The Scriptures are not shy about revealing the truth of someone – Rahab the harlot, Matthew the publican; so we have no need to think that they are protecting Mary's name or her reputation.

Two Anointings – This anointing of Jesus should not be confused with the one done by Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha shortly before His death. It is a different occasion. (Matt. 26; Mark 14; John 12)

III. Reaction of the Woman to Jesus

Alabaster Box of Ointment – Alabaster is a soft stone often used for carvings and is slightly translucent. Many cultures still use alabaster for gifts and ornaments. In India, I bought a small jewelry box made of alabaster with inlaid colored stones. The word "box" would be better translated flask made for liquid, and "ointment" should read perfume. This would have been very costly. Keep in mind, that there are other ways to hold wealth besides coins. In the ancient world spices and perfumes were an easy way to turn heavy coins into lightweight assets, that would be easy to transport and hide. This was her bank account, her savings, probably earned by selling herself. This is what she brought with her that day.

Act of Anointing – This was a sacrificial act. But also, a very humble show of emotion. But what kind of emotion? Was it sadness, gratefulness, joyfulness, relief, sorrow, love, guilt? We can get a sense of her heart by the words and reactions of Christ to her.

Weeping/Tears/Hair – We noticed 8 verbs of action associated with this woman. First when she (1)"knew" where Jesus was that day, she (2)"brought" her flask of perfume to the pharisee's home. At this VIP event this woman, known as a "sinner," (3)"stood" behind Christ (4)"weeping." This crying brought on a

shower of tears that dropped onto Jesus' precious feet and the Greek tenses tell us she quickly did (5) "wipe" them with her hair. We will see her presence hadn't gone unnoticed and then with her crying and touching Jesus added to the commotion and negativity in the room. It is obvious she came to anoint Christ with her perfume, but probably not with her tears and perhaps having nothing else available, sacrificed her hair to the task of (6) "washing" His feet because they were still dirty from being out and about that day. We will learn from Jesus that no one had offered the common courtesy to help or assist Him in washing His feet when He had first arrived at the dinner. This woman's tears and hair now served to take care of that need. Then the Bible said she (7) "kissed" Jesus' feet. The Greek tense here is one of continuation, she kissed His feet over and over again! This was a pure-hearted sign of submission, respect, and adoration. There is hardly an act of man humbler than to kiss another's feet. Lastly, she (8) "anointed" Christ's feet with her expensive perfume. Usually, one's head was anointed, but that day, this woman only would dare touch His feet. What a display of uninhibited emotion. This woman's eight actions took courage and Jesus, the Messiah, the Anointed One of the Old Testament, accepted them all!

"Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man (Lit. - fellow), if he were a prophet , would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner" Luke 7:39

IV. Simon's Criticism Simon did not address the woman or Jesus, but he sure had negative thoughts about both!

Of Jesus –Notice the Greek's emotion when he referred to Jesus in his thoughts as, "fellow." He didn't automatically think the name of Jesus, or Jesus of Nazareth, Master, Rabbi, Teacher, and certainly not the Christ, Son of God, or Savior of the world! Only referred to Jesus with the haughty, degrading name "fellow." Also, Simon had picked up the popular idea of who Jesus was, a prophet. Even over a year later, at the triumphal entry, this was the rumor concerning Jesus. (Matt. 21:10-11) Yet, based on how Jesus did not rebuke or even reject the attention and unclean touch of the woman, Simon felt vindicated with his cynical and dismissive thoughts about Jesus. Again, like other Pharisees, he saw Jesus as a "friend of sinners," and the self-righteous Religious Leaders had great contempt for all sinners.

Of the woman – It is wonderful to note, that Jesus did know "who and what manner of woman" she was, and He accepted her sacrifice, love, respect, and lavish show of emotion. While Simon was full of disgust and judgmental thoughts, Jesus was quietly and seemingly unaware of the woman and said nothing.

I think we can see a very basic truth of a critical spirit in this part of our story. Too often, when we criticize others, we forget about our sins and shortcomings! We elevate ourselves to the place of a judge and don't remember our sins and needs. Simon was blind to himself but felt he had insight concerning everyone else. How foolish! Let's remember, our hearts, minds, and bodies are very sinful! 2 Cor. 7:1

V. Jesus' Rebuke of Simon

"And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. ⁴¹ There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence (pence/denarius – equal to a day's wages at the time of Christ), and the other fifty. ⁴² And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly (Gk - freely, graciously) forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? ⁴³ Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." Luke 7:40-43

Parable – Don't miss this miracle, I doubt Simon did, Jesus knew what Simon was thinking. Christ interrupted Simon's thoughts with a short parable. Simon posed no question, yet Jesus will "answer" his allegation. The story was pretty straightforward, two people owed a lender. Though the amounts are extremely different, it didn't matter, and neither could pay! (50 vs. 500 – 10 times more) Notice the Greek meaning of the word translated "frankly," it means freely and graciously. The one who lent the money freely and graciously forgave both debts. But remember, one was considerably larger than the other, 10 times bigger!

"which of them will love him most?" – Here's the jest of Jesus' lesson to Simon, "which of them will love him most?" Now, understand the premise, that both debtors were forgiven their debt so both would love, but Jesus' question was which one would love most! The beginning of Simon's answer has been translated this way – "I suppose," "I presume," "the logical answer,"...everyone in the room knew the answer, and Simon had to answer that way or look foolish, "to whom he forgave most." And Jesus commended him on the answer, "thou has rightly judged."

"And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. ⁴⁵ Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman (very strong and emphatically) since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Luke 7:44-47

Reaction of Simon to Jesus – After Simon's correct answer, Jesus will point out Simon's lack of common social courtesies not given to Him compared to the woman's acts. These points left undone were borderline rude, and at the very least, demonstrated Simon's superior mindset, and heart of suspicion against Jesus.

- **No water to wash His feet vs. washed Jesus' feet with her tears/dried with her hair** – this was probably the most glaring of Simon's missed tasks. To offer water or wash the guests' feet was beyond nice, it was essential and was the first point Jesus made when comparing Simon and the woman.
- **No welcoming kiss vs. continual kissing of Jesus' feet** – Not kissing Jesus on the cheek was another show that Simon did not see Jesus as a friend or equal. But in contrast, the woman humbled herself and kissed Christ's feet.
- **No oil for His head vs. anointed Jesus' feet with perfume** – It was a nice gesture to give guests oil to fix their hair or, we might say, "freshen up" before a formal event, especially when the guest would not have had an opportunity to prepare beforehand. Jesus pointed out the woman didn't give oil for His head but for His feet, again a humble act!

Verse 47 is the application directly made to Simon! Jesus takes the parable, Simon and the woman's reactions to His person and says....

"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." – **Please, focus on the miracle of God's forgiveness!** Jesus said, "her sins," and then He added, "which are many," for she was a big sinner, and here Jesus confirmed it! But then Christ added the most wonderful fact, "are forgiven!" Wow! Then comes the phrase, "for she loved much." Don't miss the meaning here, don't get this wrong! This is not why she was forgiven; it is the result of forgiveness! A better rendering of this phrase might be "wherefore/therefore she loved much:" "that's why she loved much:" "hence she loved much:" Jesus had asked Simon, "which of the two debtors would love more?" and Simon had to answer—the one forgiven more would love more – and there kneeling at Jesus' feet before them all was the beautiful living illustration of this abundant **worship** and love!

VI. Jesus Addresses the Woman For the first time, Jesus speaks directly to the lady.

“And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. ⁴⁹And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in (Gk - into) peace.” Luke 7:48-50

The ugliness of verse 49 interrupts the beautiful words of Jesus, let’s center on His words first.

“Thy sins are forgiven.”/“Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace”– These phrases are past tense. Most scholars believe she came to Simon’s house with her sins already forgiven! Look carefully, her forgiveness was based on her faith – not anything she had done, none of the sweet, humble works done to Jesus that day won her forgiveness; Jesus said it was her faith! When was this faith stirred? Had she been in the crowd that day and heard Jesus say, “Come unto me all ye that are labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?” All indications are that she came to the dinner forgiven and Jesus told her it was her faith that saved her! It was faith in Jesus that caused her heavy-laden heart of sin and guilt **to answer the call** of the meek and lowly One and He saved her. It was faith in Jesus, that caused her to **trade in** her hard and difficult yoke of sin and bondage for Jesus’ easy and light one and He saved her. It was faith in Christ that caused her desire to **begin** learning of Jesus and **put away** her old ways and lovingly He saved her. And because of her faith in Jesus, she went away **knowing** she was yoked with a new Partner, One that loved her and desired her best, the One who saved her. When she knew Jesus was at Simon’s house, filled with eminence gratitude she took her most costly possession to anoint the One who had anointed her with peace! Her sins were forgiven, she knew the weight of sin was gone, she came prepared with perfume, she wept and shed thankful tears of joy, and she impulsively washed, kissed, and anointed His precious feet! Jesus dismissed her with the words, “go in peace.” These words literally mean, “Go enter into peace!” She had been in turmoil, distress, chaos, confusion, and sadness, and now Jesus, the Prince of Peace, invited her by saying, “Enter into my peace!”

“Who is this that forgiveth sins also?” – The Pharisees rightly believed only God could forgive sin. Notice the little word, “also.” This word is associated with Jesus’ miracles. Nicodemus, an honest, fair-minded Pharisee, had admitted that Jesus’ works had revealed He had “come from God.” (John 3:2) But now, Jesus was “also” forgiving sin! When Jesus would forgive sin or talk of forgiving sin, the Pharisees would greatly revolt! (Luke 5:21) They could not and would not believe Jesus was God in the flesh! Even with all the evidence, they would not accept, or even consider Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah! Sounds like a lot of people today!

generous, grateful, forgiven prostitute vs. stingy, prideful, sinful Pharisee – With powerful language and rebuke, Jesus answered Simon's intentions and heart. He contrasted Simon’s lack of courtesy with the devotion and worship of this woman and while doing it implied that Simon had not experienced a true forgiveness of sin. Everything that Simon neglected to do for Christ, she did with greatness! WORSHIP was the effect of her pardon from sin and guilt and Simon had not experienced any forgiveness, Simon never even knew he needed it!

Believers Application:

1. Do we have the attitude of Christ toward sinners, whether they are religious or not? We must check our attitudes toward those in sin. Do our prejudices come through? Are we uncomfortable, refuse to relate, stay in our zone, or have condescending thoughts against those obviously struggling in sin? The unsaved need believers to be like Jesus; accepting, welcoming, and judgment-free. The unbeliever should know we care about them,

just as Jesus loved. Not tolerant of sin but remembering our sinful condition! Whether in our churches or the grocery store, our attitude must be like Jesus; love, compassion, and a willingness to offer ourselves in time and conversation. We can't be disrespectful to other's belief systems, religions, or the lack of any. Christ never stereotyped anyone! Prostitutes, tax collectors, drunker, Pharisees, scribes, chief rulers, politicians. All need the same message, present Jesus, the Savior of the world, whose yoke is easy, and His burden is light! Eph. 1:3-7; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Col. 2:13-14

2. Do we honor Christ our Redeemer with our lives and actions? Are we sincerely grateful for God's saving mercy and love shown to us? With our sins forgiven, do we enjoy the peace given by God? The first part of Volume 4 has been called, Power of Jesus Displayed. We have studied Jesus healing the Centurion's servant from afar, raising from the dead the widow of Nain's son, along with many other miracles done for John the Baptist's disciples. But the greatest miracle anyone will ever see is the conversion of a soul - a life changed, an eternal destination switched from damnation to heaven, God replacing death with life! That is the greatest display of Jesus' power. Have you received forgiveness for your sin? Using Jesus' terms, have you been saved by faith in Christ? Have you come to Him? If so your life should be a demonstration of

1) Thankfulness – Col. 1:12-14; Rom. 7:24-25; 1 Cor. 15:56-57

2) Obedient, holy life – 1 Cor. 15:58; Titus 2:11-14