

PARABLES: Luke 7 – How to be a Big Lover

Have you ever had a party when an uninvited person showed up and everyone froze? AWKWARD

This is one of those moments, but it turns really awkward for the host of the party.

This is one of the shortest parables but the set up and the post parable comments are powerful.

36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, 38 and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

40 And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." 41 "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

44 Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.

47 For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." 49 Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" 50 And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Get the picture: Two key players other than Jesus- a Pharisee and an immoral woman. Both want to be around Jesus, but for different reasons. We'll come back to that.

A well-known rabbi was coming to dine at the home of a Pharisee. The word around town would have been, "Guess who's coming to dinner?" This was a big event for the town and for the host.

By the end of the evening the surprise answer to the "Guess who's coming to dinner?" question is, "A woman with a sinful reputation." SHE SHOWED up uninvited.

The custom, adopted from the Greeks, was for those eating to lie down facing the table, perhaps leaning on one arm, with their feet extended. It would have been the custom for the host to make sure that the guests' feet were washed, as they had been traveling on dirt roads.

What do we know about Pharisees?

Looked like the perfect church member – zealous, obedient, tithers – money and garden herbs
Not necessarily hostile to Jesus. Some were still curious or even drawn to Jesus because of his miracles and teaching.

Focus on externals.

Trust in themselves that they are righteous

View others with contempt – looked down on others . "Would you look at that guy, would you look at her. I could tell you a thing or two about him or her."

Loved the approval of men- He was reading the room and thought the optics were bad for Jesus and for himself.

What do we know about this woman: - a “Sinner” – A reputation as a known immoral person according to the categories identified by the Pharisees.

- Looked down on
- Scorned by society
- No religious standing

She was compelled to demonstrate her love and devotion to Jesus. We don't really know why, but forgiveness would seem to be the great gift she had received.

It would appear that she had already understood the grace and forgiveness of Christ or else she would not have gone to that house with that crowd. It's most likely that she had heard Jesus preach at some point or had heard about His preaching, teaching, and miracles.

In some way she was already overwhelmed with love for Christ.

Her sense of forgiveness outweighed any shame she might have felt. She was so intent on honoring Christ that she ignored the expected 'social graces.'

She showed up to the home of a Pharisee – probably not on the invite list

She washed the feet of Jesus with perfume, purchased perhaps with money from the world's oldest profession.

She let down her hair for him, in front of the other guests and was kissing his feet.

She was in a zone where she had no concern for decorum or for the looks of those in the room. And you can imagine the kind of looks she received and the comments that were made. Imagine the play-by-play going on so that those outside would know what is going on. IT WAS SCANDALOUS.

Grace gives us the spiritual capital we need to admit our sin and even face those who might condemn us.

This woman is a role model of the devotion and the deep impact of repentant faith. Through some sort of engagement with Jesus or his teaching this woman had experienced a sense of forgiveness and newness of life. Why else would she have put herself in that situation?

EX: this is UNIQUE TO Christianity – no other religion has this sort of forgiveness/love/faith dynamic built into its core – Not Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or modern secular variants of progressivism.

She grasped a truth that is hard for all of us...**Our standing before God and others has nothing to do with our merit or demerit, it has to do with who Christ is for us.**

Luke 7 and Matt 11 both tell about the messengers from John the Baptist who went to meet Jesus. In Luke that encounter is described then followed with the story of Simon the Pharisee and this woman. In Matt 11 the story of those sent from John is followed by some words about unrepenting cities and the famous appeal of Jesus **“Come to me all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” [Matt. 11:28-29]**

Perhaps she heard that message and saw that Jesus could be trusted. We don't exactly know, but we do see her response to Jesus in Luke 7. In some way she saw that she was a sinner, and that forgiveness was found in and through Jesus.

I'm reminded of a line in the little novel, **Bo's Café...“What if there was a safe enough place where you could tell the worst about yourself and not be loved or respected less, but more?” Jesus is that place.**

Jesus defends her and honors her in front of Simon; He focuses on her present state of repentance, not on her past; He sees her faith and lets her show her devotion to him.

Having encountered Jesus, her life was new, and she was not afraid or embarrassed for others to know it.

What did each think of Jesus? Why did they want to be around him?

Pharisee – He invited Jesus to dine with him because he thought that he was or might be a prophet of God. But then we see that he changed his mind and looked down on Jesus, v.39.

He really didn't believe that Jesus was the son of God and a Savior. He didn't see his need for a savior – that is the message of the parable.

NOTE WHAT HE DID NOT THINK – “If Jesus were a prophet, he would know that I AM a sinner.”

I doubt that crossed his mind.

He thought of sin in certain categories that didn't apply to him.

Yet he wanted to be around Jesus. Why? He was a “religious celebrity” and the Pharisee wanted to look good.

The WOMAN – She wanted a savior. Not a model, or an example or a guide, but a savior. She went in faith to express love and devotion to Jesus. Imagine what it was like for her to go through the crowd that must have been there. The snide remarks, the looks, the whispers. She was willing to risk any shred of reputation she may have had in order to be saved. She laid it all at the feet of Jesus.

THE ACCUSATION FROM SIMON - “If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.”

“the or a Prophet” ?? There is textual evidence that would favor both views. Kistemaker p. 161

Either way, Simon presumed that a true prophet would ‘know’ what kind of woman this was. Simon judged Jesus for NOT judging the woman. Again, he ignores or is unconcerned that a prophet would also ‘know’ what kind of a man he was.

NOTE: If we were honest, we must admit that the whole scene was a bit shocking or unusual. To some degree we can understand Simon's position, which is exposed as being full of sin.

In his self-righteous state, Simon has ignored all of the basic practices of hospitality. He rudely violated all expected norms of social behavior. Jesus shows Simon's sin by contrasting him to the so called ‘sinful’ woman.

THE PARABLE: v. 41-43

Two men owe a debt: one owes a great amount, 500 D, and is forgiven. The other owes a much smaller amount (50 D) and his debt is forgiven.

A denarius is the daily wage of a laborer

Neither could pay the debt and they are BOTH GRACIOUSLY FORGIVEN.

THE QUESTION TO SIMON #1 v 42 So which of them will love him more?

A no-brainer, right?

It's obvious to us after 2000 years of sermons on this passage, but it seems that Simon didn't get it because Jesus had to connect the dots for him.

Question #2 to Simon– Do you see this woman?

Jesus **URNS** toward her thus he brings her into focus for Simon.

An odd question. OF COURSE HE SEES her.

Jesus was NOT asking a vision question. He was asking a self-awareness question.

Even if Simon ‘saw’ the woman, he didn't really see himself. He didn't SEE how the woman had done all the things Simon should have done.

Jesus saw the woman AND HE SAW SIMON

CONCLUSION:

Who do you identify with? Are you a Simon or a sinner?

DO YOU see yourself as one who doesn't need much forgiveness or as one who needs nothing but forgiveness?

When it comes to relating to Jesus there are those who DIDN'T ‘get it’ – the Pharisees. They should have, they

were the religious leaders, but didn't have a clue v. 49. **The Pharisees didn't understand forgiveness because they didn't see the need for it in their own lives.**

The ONLY way to truly relate to Jesus is to see Him as Savior. Everything is laid at his feet – name, reputation, performance. It is all seen as nothing so that Christ might be everything. Coming to faith in Christ is an affair of the heart; it's not a nonchalant decision of indifference. It's not like changing your 'best friend' from week to week, or trading Pokémon cards, or changing from Rotary to Kiwanas. It is LIFE CHANGING, and this woman knew it. Her faith showed itself through love for Christ.

Some of you may NOT know Christ this morning. You may be like the Pharisee OR like the sinner. Either way you need to come to him repenting of your good works or repenting of your obvious rebellion. For the first time in your life, you need to experience the love and forgiveness that comes through Christ.

It is possible to respect Jesus and even 'serve' him in some way without really knowing and loving him. Love for Christ flows out of knowing Him as our Savior, not as our example or even as our boss.

Most of us are probably believers, but WE need to continue to experience the freshness of the love of God. Our biggest struggle may be that of experiencing the love of God in a fresh way. The things of God CAN become routine, maybe even dull – "ho hum". We assume God's love and forgiveness without really appreciating them.

God'S LOVE WILL SEEM STALE TO US UNLESS WE EXPERIENCE IT IN HIS FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS.

If God's love seems stale to you, if it is "Ho hum, of course God loves me." "I try to be good", then your problem is that you've stopped seeing your sin, your debt. You think you have a .50 cent debt when it is really 5 million dollars.

If you want to be a BIG LOVER, you need an awareness of being A BIG SINNER.

Does that mean "the preacher said I can go out and do some really bad stuff?" Not. It means you just need to see how bad the stuff is that is already there. We need to see the roots of pride and unbelief that are underneath ALL sin – the inner sin of the Pharisee and the notable sin of the "sinful woman."

PAY ATTENTION to what **Jerry Bridges** calls – Respectable Sins: The sins we tolerate: (in ourselves, not in others)

Ungodliness, anxiety, discontentment, unthankfulness, pride, selfishness, lack of self-control, impatience, the weeds of anger, judgmentalism

If you want to be a big lover, then see yourself as a big sinner. Go back to the gospel every day. It is the power to get you into the kingdom of Christ and it is the power that advances the kingdom in your life.

It is only a grasp of the love of God in our hearts that will sustain us during times of trial and suffering. It is a grasp of the love of Christ that will enable us to repent and forgive as He has forgiven us.

As you grow in Christ, he gets more real, but so should your awareness of your sin. That is a good sign. The only way to face it is to take it to the cross. Let the cross grow in your heart –

EX: Remember the moment of awareness from JAWS....."You're gonna need a bigger boat"

"I THINK I NEED A BIGGER CROSS" sin is like JAWS, but Jesus is God. He is bigger and so is his power.

STRETCH ARMSTRONG CROSS-



COME TO THE TABLE - it is a reminder that we need and have a BIG SAVIOR

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