

DO YOU LOVE **MUCH**—OR ONLY A **LITTLE**?

After preaching on “thanksgiving” last Sunday, I totally anticipated going back to the book of Colossians this week. The Lord led otherwise, however, so this morning we are going back to the thought that we looked at last week in the account of the ten lepers. What was the main point that Jesus was making regarding the cleansing of the ten lepers? That He **expected all ten** to be thankful for their cleansing!

What is the **spiritual application** for us? That every blood-bought, born-again child of God should be tremendously grateful that they have been forgiven of their sins—and that they should live a life that shows their gratitude by trying to please God!

This morning, we are going to look at another individual that showed gratitude to Jesus for “cleansing.” This time it is a **woman**—not a man; and only **one**—not ten. Similar to last week, though, it is found in the book of Luke. Please turn to Luke 7, beginning with vs 36. For the sake of time, I am not going to read the entire account right now, but we will be looking at most of the verses as we go through the passage. I do want to point out vs 47, though. Here we see the challenge—and question—that we need to ask ourselves: Do you love **much**—or only **a little**?

First let’s consider, **1. The setting**

Notice what it says in verses 36-39.

The setting is pretty straightforward. Jesus accepts an invitation to have a meal at a Pharisee’s house. We know from verses 40, 43, and 44, that the Pharisee’s name is Simon. While at Simon’s house, a woman—“which was a sinner”—came to the house and washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and some ointment, then dried His feet with her hair! Simon is surprised that Jesus let the woman show this kind of affection toward Him—and doubted that Jesus understood what kind of a woman she was!

I’ll expand more on this as we go through the text but now let’s look at... **2. The sinner**

Who was this unnamed woman? We don’t know for sure because the Bible doesn’t say! There are at least two other similar accounts—one in the home of Simon a leper (Mt 26:6-31; Mk 14:3-9) and the other when Lazarus, Martha, and Mary were present (John 12:1-8). Some commentators suggest that Lazarus, Martha, and Mary were at the house of Simon the leper—meaning Mt 26:6-31; Mk 14:3-9; and John 12:1-8 all refer to the same account.

Although we don’t know her name, we do know a little bit about her... A. Her character

What kind of woman was she? She was a sinner! But aren’t **we all** sinners? Yes—and the same Greek word is used of **the publican** in Luke 18:13 (“God be merciful to me a sinner”) and **all of us** in Romans 5:8 (“...while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”).

But we know from the context that there was more to it than that!

She had a **reputation** as a sinner—and God led Luke to make that a **point of emphasis**.

--In vs 37, she is called a sinner.

--In vs 39—as already pointed out—we see the Pharisee wondering how Jesus could let a woman like this **touch** Him—“for she is a sinner.”

--And Jesus Himself said in vs 47, “Her sins, which **are many**...”

--The context, then, points to her being a **woman of ill-repute!** In fact, some commentators suggest that this ointment—a type of perfume—may have been used in her previous “employment!” In Proverbs 7 there is a description of this kind of woman, and she says in Proverbs 7:17, “I have **perfumed my bed** with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.”

But we don’t just see the character of this woman—we also see... B. Her contrition

She has a **broken and contrite** heart—and God emphasizes that more than her character!

--In vs 37, she brings “an alabaster box of ointment.” The KJV doesn’t give us the best picture here. Don’t think of a **box** with some kind of **paste** in it—think of a **flask or jar** with pourable **perfume** in it! We also see in vs 37 that she brought it because “she knew that Jesus sat at meat at the Pharisee’s house.” In other words, it seems she planned on pouring it on Jesus—or giving it to Him—and that’s why she brought it in the first place!

--Now vs 38. “And stood at His feet behind Him weeping...” This is difficult to visualize—unless we have an understanding on how people “sat” at the table. The end of vs 36 says Jesus “sat down to meat.” Barnes gives an excellent description of what it means in the NT to “sit” at a meal (Biblehub; comments on Mt 23:6). **First**, it is important to realize that the tables were not **as high/tall** as our tables are—and that you **did not sit** on a chair! The tables were **lower to the ground** and three tables were arranged to form a square with the middle—and one end—open. Instead of sitting on a chair, they laid on a couch (or cushion) on their left side with their feet extended **away from** the table and **behind them**. That is the picture we have here.

--This woman—a known “sinner”—stands “behind” Jesus where His feet are and is overcome with emotion. She begins **to weep**, and her tears come so fast—and so plentiful—that she kneels down at Jesus’ feet and begins to wash His feet with her tears—and wipe them with her hair.

--She then **kisses His feet**—repeatedly! How do we know that? Because Jesus Himself says in vs 45, “...but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.”

--And then she anoints His feet with extremely expensive perfume!

But why? Why all the tears? And why wipe His feet with her hair—instead of asking for a towel? And why “waste” the perfume by pouring it on Jesus’ feet?

Jesus Himself gives us the answer! She had **been forgiven much**—and that is why she **loved much**! Nothing was beneath her—nothing was too lowly for her—in her desire to show her gratitude for being forgiven!

We have the setting and the sinner; next let’s look at... **3. Self-righteous Simon**

Look again at what it says in vs 36. A question that I kept coming back to in my mind was this: ‘Why did Simon invite Jesus to his home?’

If you are familiar with the interactions between Jesus and the Pharisees, you know that Jesus often “got after them” for their pride—and they often accused Jesus of breaking the law of Moses! We have a couple of examples of that in Luke 6. Notice what it says in vs 2. We know from vs 1 that the “them” is Jesus and His disciples.

We also see some Pharisees trying to catch Jesus doing some wrong in Luke 6:7. So the Pharisees—as a whole—looked at Jesus as someone to be **corrected**—not followed!

Back to the question I asked just a moment ago: ‘Why did this Pharisee invite Jesus to his home?’ We don’t know because the Bible doesn’t say! So why bring it up?

Because I think it is important to realize that Jesus was willing to **go into a “hostile” environment** where the host may have had a “less-than-pure” motive for inviting Him!

So how do we know this particular Pharisee was self-righteous?

First, because of... A. His treatment of Jesus

How did the Pharisee **treat** Jesus? Certainly **not** as an honored guest! Why do I say that?

Two reasons. **First**, it was a common courtesy to **offer guests water** to wash their feet after they came into the house. **Why?** Because they wore sandals—and traveled primarily by foot—so their feet would get dirty! Foot-washing also helps cool your body down because the blood vessels are close to the surface of your skin in your feet.

So offering water was **a common courtesy** to guests. And—if you really thought highly of your guest—you had a **servant** wash their feet for them—or **you did it** yourself! But Jesus **wasn’t even offered water**! We see that in the middle of vs 44 “...I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet...”

Secondly, the Pharisee did not extend Jesus *the customary greeting* of that day. We “shake hands” — or hug—they **kissed one another** on the cheek! It was also a sign of respect. And Jesus—as both a teacher and one who did miracles—should have been given that sign of respect. Instead—according to vs 45—Jesus reminds Simon “Thou gavest me no kiss.”

The point? Jesus—to this particular Pharisee—was **no one special!** And if you think Jesus isn’t special, you obviously don’t think you **need Him!** And if you don’t think you need the One who offers forgiveness and eternal life, you are **obviously self-righteous!**

We also see the Pharisee’s self-righteousness in... B. His thoughts of Jesus

What did the Pharisee think about Jesus? We know his thoughts because Luke shares them with us in vs 39!

--**First**, he **doubted** Jesus was a prophet. “This man, **if he were** a prophet...” certainly shows his doubt!

--**Second**, Simon—in his mind—knew how prophets should and shouldn’t be! In other words, he was a discerner...a determiner...an expert of what a true prophet should be like! And—in his mind—Jesus didn’t match the description of a true prophet!

That sure sounds like self-righteousness to me!

Next—in verses 40-43—Jesus gives... **4. A story**

Notice what it says in verses 40-43. I’m not going to spend a lot of time on it, but I do want to make sure we see these **four** things.

--**One** was in debt **more than** the other

--**Neither could pay** the debt they owed

--The one they were in debt to **forgave both of them** their debt

--**Love** for the one who had forgiven them came **after** they were forgiven—**not before it!** That is an important point to keep in mind as we look at the rest of the passage.

Lastly—but most importantly—I want us to consider... **5. The Savior**

As I was thinking about the picture we have here of Jesus, I couldn’t help but think of the song, *What a Wonderful Savior!* The chorus is simply this: “*What a wonderful Savior is Jesus, my Jesus! What a wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord!*” That certainly would have been the song of the woman—had she known the words—and should be our song, too!

First, let’s think about... A. The acceptance of the woman by Jesus

How did Jesus accept her? **Just the way she was**, right?

--Jesus **knew her reputation**—and that her sins were many—and yet He accepted her.

--He was **not repulsed** by her—and did not yell for her to get away from Him!

--In fact, He **allowed** what many of us would consider an extraordinary amount of affection!

--Not only did He allow it—Jesus actually **commended her** for it!

--And in verse 48, Jesus plainly states that her sins **had been forgiven**. He is obviously assuring her of her acceptance and forgiveness.

Before we look at **why** Jesus accepted her, I want to stop here for a moment. What is **our attitude** toward sinners? Are we like Jesus? How do we react when a person shouts obscenities at us because we are holding an anti-abortion sign? Could we put our arm around someone who is gay—or trans—and see them the way God does—a sinner needing salvation?

We don’t have to **love what they do**—but we can **love them because** they are made in the **image of God**—and a fellow sinner just like us!

So **why** did Jesus accept her? What was the **basis of His acceptance** and forgiveness? That is really one of the most important—and probably the most misunderstood—lesson that Jesus is teaching us here! And we don’t have to guess or wonder because Jesus Himself tells us in...

B. The announcements about the woman from Jesus

What does Jesus say was **the reason** He accepted her? Jesus made two announcements—two declarations. The first is in verse 47; the second is in verse 50. We are going to start with vs 50 first. **Why?** Because when we compare Scripture with Scripture, a rule of thumb is to use the easier-to-understand verses to help interpret the more difficult ones!

Not only that, but vs 50 gives us **the reason** Jesus forgave her!

1) Announcement #1 is simply this: **Her faith saved her!**

Jesus makes that announcement in vs 50 “Thy **faith** hath saved thee; go in peace.” Does Jesus say, ‘Your expression of love—as shown by you washing My feet with your tears and drying them with your hair—saved thee?’ **No**; that’s not what He says! “Thy **faith** hath saved thee!”

And that is truth taught **throughout the Bible**, isn’t it?

Romans 3:28 “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified—[declared right with God]—**by faith** without the deeds of the law.”

Galatians 2:16 “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but **by the faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified **by the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace are ye saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

But how do we know she had faith—especially considering this is the **first time** it is mentioned?

--First, because Jesus said it—and that is the only proof that we need!

But I believe there are some other indicators as well!

--In vs 36, we see that Jesus is invited by the Pharisee to his home for a meal.

--Is the woman invited? No; she just shows up!

--Why did she show up? Because Jesus was there!

--Did she seek out the owner of the house and ask if she could see Jesus?

--No! She went **directly to Jesus!** Why? Because it seems to me that she had faith that Jesus would accept her! What was that faith **based on?** We don’t know for sure!

--Maybe she had heard Jesus say what is recorded in John 6:37 “him [or her] that cometh to me I will in no way cast out” (John 6:37).

--Or maybe she heard Him say what the Bible says in Luke 5:32 “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

--Or maybe she had heard Jesus say, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Regardless of what she heard or knew about Jesus, she believed this: an ungodly woman like herself—with a less-than-desirable past—would be received by Jesus if she came to Him in humility and repentance and faith!

That **is how** she came **to Jesus**—and that is why she was received **by Jesus!**

But there was a **second announcement** Jesus made about her, and it is this...

2) She loved much because she had been forgiven much—not to earn her forgiveness!

In other words, vs 50 gives us the **reason** she was saved while vs 47 gives us the **result** of her being saved! Notice what it says. Some of you might be thinking, ‘Wait a minute, Pastor! How are you getting that her love for Jesus didn’t save her? It plainly states, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; **for she loved much.**” ‘That sure sounds like she earned her forgiveness to me!’

--But it **can’t mean** that! Why? Because that would contradict other verses—some of which we already looked at!

--It would also contradict verse 50—“Thy faith hath saved thee.”

--Not only that, it would also contradict the parable—the story—that Jesus told in verses 41 and 42!

Why did the debtors love the one who forgave their debt?

Did they love him **to earn forgiveness** of the debt?

No; they loved him **after they had** been forgiven! The order was **forgiveness first**, followed by love as the person senses they have been forgiven.

And that is why this woman demonstrated this humble, sacrificial love to Jesus! She loved much because she believed—she had faith in—the forgiveness she had **already received from Jesus!**

I believe **Alexander MacLaren** sums it up well: “...all true love to God is preceded in the heart by these two things—a sense of sin, and an assurance of pardon. Brethren, there is no love possible—real, deep, genuine, worthy of being called love of God—which does not start with the belief of my own transgression, and with the thankful reception of forgiveness in Christ.” (Biblehub.com; Comments on Luke 7:47).

What about you? Which one of these two people are you like?

--Are you like the woman who had a deep sense of her sins—and a great love for the Savior—because she had been forgiven much?

--Or are you like Simon the Pharisee?

--Simon doubted **who Jesus was**.

--Simon doubted **what Jesus knew**.

--And Simon—instead of rejoicing that a “sinner had come home,” **looked down on Jesus** for His acceptance—and love—for sinners!

Did Simon love Jesus? It certainly **doesn't seem** that way!

--If he did love Jesus, he didn't show it!

--And if he did love Jesus, it was only a little because in his mind, he had only been forgiven a little.

--I tend to think Simon **wasn't saved**—at least at this point! Why would you come to Jesus for forgiveness if you doubt who Jesus **is**—and doubt what Jesus **knows**?

Two last things for you to consider before I close in prayer.

1. Have you been forgiven by God? You cannot express love to Jesus **for forgiveness** if you **haven't been forgiven!** And there is **only one way** to be forgiven—put your faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ for the payment of your sins!

We must come to Him as a humble sinner, realizing we deserve eternal punishment and we have nothing we can offer that will pay what we owe. We must stop trying to save ourselves and in simple faith come to Jesus—the only One who can save. And the wonderful promise of Jesus is this: “He that cometh to me I will in no way cast out!” If you've never done that, I'd encourage you to do that today. You don't need to be in a church to trust Christ as your Savior!

2. If you have been forgiven—if you are a child of God—are you thankful? Does your thankfulness produce a love that is openly expressed—or is it a hidden love? Do you obey Him... and spend time with Him? Have you given yourself to Him as a “living sacrifice”?