

Amazing Grace!

Text: Luke 7: 36-50

The grace of God is amazing. John Newton, the author of perhaps the most famous hymn in the hymnal "Amazing Grace" gave this testimony: "I sinned with a high hand," and he later wrote, "and I made it my study to tempt and seduce others."

Newton lived such a debauched life that after working in the slave trade, he was captured and turned over to Princess Peye of the Sherbro people. She abused and mistreated Newton just as much as she did her other slaves. Newton later recounted this period as the time he was "once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in West Africa." In 1787 Newton wrote *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade* to help William Wilberforce's campaign to end the practice—"a business at which my heart now shudders."

I recall the testimony of my sister-in-law, Derlyn Pope: "When I was a little girl I was playing in the sandbox and the passage from Psalm 23 came to my mind and I decided right then and there that I wanted Jesus to be my Shepherd." So, whether it is a man who lived so wicked a life to be involved in human bondage or a little child in her sandbox, God's grace is amazing!

I would like for us to go to the story of the transformed woman and Simon, the Pharisee. Here we will see one of the greatest demonstrations of amazing grace.

I. INTERRUPTION

Luke 7:36, 37

This is not to be confused with the anointing of Mary of Bethany found in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9 and John 12:1-8. There are some similarities, such as both being anointings. Mary anointed His head, however the sinful woman of Luke (in our story today) anointed Jesus' feet. They were both in the house of Simon. Simon was a very common name. Mark tells us Jesus was in Simon the leper's house; in our story, Luke tells us Jesus was in Simon the Pharisee's house. The story of Mary of Bethany in the other three gospel records took place in Judea in the south. This one in Luke was in Galilee.

A. The Invitation – Luke 7:36a

In the social culture of that day, an influential man would invite someone receiving public acclaim (such as Jesus) to his house.

B. The Intrusion – Luke 7:36b, 37a

After eating, the public would be invited to what we would describe now as a town hall meeting. And then at this meeting in Simon's house, a very bold and unusual interruption takes place. Enter a woman of questionable character.

II. SUPPLICATION

Luke 7:37-39

A. A Precious Gift – Luke 7:37b

The alabaster box was rare. It was made from a kind of marbled stone that was quarried and carved in Egypt. It was then filled with exotic, expensive perfume and then plugged. This form of alabaster box was hung about the neck of a woman of those days. It was globular and round at the base and tapered up to a long neck at the top.

B. A Contrite Heart

Luke 7:38a, b

Rarely will you see such a demonstration of remorse turned into repentance! She took the servant's position, at Jesus' feet. Her tears become her wash water. The Bible says that "...she began to wash His feet with tears..." (Luke 7:38b). Although we have read where sometimes women who grieve will actually capture their tears in a bottle, the wording here designates that she was washing Jesus' feet. The word for washing is *brecho*, which is also translated "rain." This repentant woman was crying so hard that the tears, like rain, were falling upon His feet. Since no basin or towel had been provided for her she began to scrub and finally dry the Lord's feet with her hair. This was a most humbling act. A woman at this time was supposed to keep her hair up at all times. To let her hair down in public was a disgrace. So much so, that a husband was permitted to divorce his wife over this. Immediately my mind goes to Psalm 51:17: "The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

C. An Abandoned Lifestyle

Luke 7:38c, 39

She breaks the neck of her alabaster box. Women of her trade made frequent use of perfume. We see the wicked woman of Proverbs 7:17, seductively says to the simple young man, "I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon." This contrite woman breaks one of the ploys of her trade and gives it all, nothing left over, not sparingly, but wholly over Jesus' soon to be pierced feet. I Corinthians 6:11: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

III. ILLUSTRATION

Luke 7:40-43

A. Two Debtors – Luke 7:41

One man owed his creditor 500 pence (denarii), which was approximately 1½ years' wages. Another man owed the same creditor 50 pence (denarii), which was approximately 2 months' wages.

B. A Clear Pardon – Luke 7:42a

The two men received the same pardon!

C. The Probing Question – Luke 7:42b

Which one will love the most?

D. The Conspicuous Answer – Luke 7:43

By Simon's answer he is now set up for instruction from our Lord.

IV. APPLICATION

Luke 7:44-50

A. Absence of Honor - Luke 7:44-46

It was the custom of the host to see to it that the guests' feet were washed or he would wash them himself. It was also the norm for the host to kiss both the left and right side of the cheek. Simon had already insulted Jesus by the absence of both the feet cleansing and kissing. In prophesy of the required honor of the Son of God, it says in Psalm 2:12, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

B. Extravagant Homage – Luke 7:44-46

What a contrast! This woman is so amazed at the grace of God rendered to her as well as mercy beyond human comprehension, that she wanted all to know of her inmost appreciation for this Savior and now Lord of her life. Not only did she cleanse the dirty feet of our Lord, but she deemed them precious: "...How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15b). Furthermore, she did not just give a kiss of welcome, but she repeatedly kissed and anointed his feet with her costly perfume. The Lord rebukes Simon, the religious man who mocks the saving grace of God bestowed on this formally sinful woman.

C. Absolution of Sin – Luke 7:47-49

1. The incredible riches of God's grace. "...Her sins which were many..." (Luke 7:47b). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7). "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).

2. The unlimited love that is returned. "...for she loved much..." (Luke 7:47c).

3. The question that must be answered. "...Who is this that forgiveth sins..." (Luke 7:49). "Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" Matthew 27:22a.

4. The peace that ensued. "And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).

-Pastor Pope-