

She Loved Much
Luke 7:36-50 (06-16-19)
Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, IN

When someone invites you to dinner, you hope everything goes smoothly. Keep the conversation superficial and light. Talk about baseball or vacation or music or cars or the weather. By all means, don't talk about politics or religion. Your wife may be nudging you under the table if you even start.

Things seldom went smoothly when Jesus came to dinner. Luke records Jesus dining with Pharisees three times. Luke 7 is the first. Next is in Luke 11:37-54, when the Pharisee noted Jesus didn't ceremonially wash His hands. Jesus knew what he was thinking and called him out, "You Pharisees clean the outside, but inside you are full of robbery and wickedness. You foolish ones!" He follows that with a series of "woe to you, Pharisees." Then lawyers piped up, "When you say this, you insult us too!" Jesus' response? "Woe to you, lawyers." You can guess how that dinner ended. Verse 53 says they became very hostile.

The third dinner is in Luke 14 at a leading Pharisee's house. This time Jesus noticed how the invited guests were picking out seats of honor, so He said, "When you are invited to a feast, take the last place." Then He said to the host, "When you invite people, don't invite your friends or rich people. Invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind, people who can't return the favor!"

This morning in Luke 7 we come to His meal with a Pharisee named Simon. Things definitely didn't go as Simon planned. We'll look at the story in four stages, but keep this in mind. Luke's purpose is to contrast two different people: a broken sinner and a smug Pharisee.

THE SINNER WHO INTERRUPTED DINNER

Luke 7:36-38, Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

Why did Simon the Pharisee invite Jesus to dinner? Was he just being friendly? Did he want to get to know this Galilean upstart better? It was customary to invite a visiting teacher or rabbi for lunch. Maybe he was just curious, like a gentleman who attends church and listens with curiosity about what all these other people are excited about, but has no clue about his own need for the gospel. Or did this Pharisee have an agenda to find some evidence to accuse Jesus?

Simon had plenty of room around his table for guests. They may have been eating in an open courtyard. Verse 49 says others were there. Friends and colleagues and even uninvited people would join the dinner to hear what the main guest had to say. The table was in the middle and the guests reclined on low couches with their feet extended out, sort of like spokes on a wheel. They rested on their left elbow with their right arm free.

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.

Dinner had hardly begun when in walks this woman off the street. Verse 37 should say, "Behold!" She is a sinner to be avoided by proper folk. She was a prostitute, immoral, evil. How she got inside Simon's house we don't know, but she heard Jesus was there and she headed straight in with this vial of costly perfume around her neck. This woman's love for Christ shames all of us. Let's follow her.

She comes up to Jesus' feet without a word, and is suddenly overwhelmed with emotion. A sense of her sin and guilt and Christ's love for her opened the fountain of her tears. She begins to weep profusely, tears of sincere and genuine love. Her sobbing is obvious, as we can imagine all conversation stopping

when the sobbing began. Tears ran out of her eyes like a shower of water that fell on Jesus' feet. Luther called them "heart water."

I've seen very few people weep so profusely, but I can remember a big burley man. He came by our former church for a worship service. I went to visit him the following week. He and his wife lived in a nice log home way out in the country. As we began to talk about the gospel, he just sort of exploded with tears of guilt and conviction and desire to come to Christ and be saved.

Here is this woman sitting at Jesus' feet and feeling embarrassed at showering His feet with her tears, so she tries to dry them up with her hair, which at this point is hanging loose. Women in those days did not appear in public with their hair hanging loose; it was considered immodest. What a picture this is. She is so overwhelmed with love for her Savior she actually begins to kiss His feet and keeps kissing them. You may think this is overplayed, but it isn't.

She must have heard Jesus earlier that week crying out to the crowd, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (Matt 11:28) She had never heard anything like that. All she had heard was the condemnation of the Pharisees, the rejection by the religious leaders. The Pharisees' legalism never affected her heart. She knew she wasn't good enough for them. Their teaching made her feel that religion would never find a place in her heart. She could never measure up. Why try.

But Jesus' message of salvation found fertile soil in her heart and sprang to life. She did come to Jesus. She did find forgiveness. She did find acceptance and love from this One who spoke with compassion to women. She'd heard or maybe seen Him heal people and raise people from the dead and she knew He was not like the other religious leaders. His words had melted her heart into faith and hope.

So now she is just swimming in an ocean of grace and mercy and forgiveness that she found in Jesus of Nazareth! She came to express to Him her gratitude and love and devotion by anointing Him with this expensive perfume she wore around her neck in an alabaster vial. When you love Jesus as much as this sinner loved Jesus, nothing is too much to express it. So there she sits...her face all puffy with her sobbing and weeping, kissing Jesus' feet and wiping them with her long hair all tangled. She poured her perfume all over Jesus' feet. She loved much. A sense of all her sins and her guilt rushed over her mind, and her heart is broken knowing this wonderful Redeemer had loved, forgiven, and accepted her.

What a picture of a redeemed sinner. She would have sung gladly, "My sin, O the bliss, of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul." She's a living testimony to the power of Christ. Nothing adorns the gospel of Jesus Christ more than a transformed life. You probably have never experienced the emotions this sinner had, but can you in some way identify with her heart? She's the sinner who interrupted dinner.

A STORY THAT TEACHES FORGIVENESS

Luke 7:39-43, 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."

All this time the Pharisee is watching what to him was a disgusting scene at his guest's feet. "Ha! I have Him now! He couldn't possibly be a prophet or holy man as He claims. If He really were a prophet He wouldn't allow this filthy wretch that everyone knows is a prostitute and home wrecker to make such a scene at His feet. He certainly wouldn't allow her to touch him. He would have chased her away saying, 'Out of my house, sinner!'"

Simon thinks he knows who and what sort of woman this is. What he doesn't know is how blind he is to his own sin before a holy God and that Jesus knows who and what kind of person *he* is. Remember one thing as we look at Simon for a few moments. There's a little Simon the Pharisee camped out in all our self-loving hearts. Unless God strips away our pride and breaks down our self-righteousness, we're all quick to see the dirt on other people's faces but fail to look in the mirror and see our own faces. We're

quick to assure ourselves of our own goodness and don't realize we are no better than this woman. We are even worse than this woman if we fail to be broken in pieces over our sin and Christ's love for us.

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."

So Jesus interrupts Simon's Pharisaical thoughts with this. "I've got something to say to you, Simon." Now when Jesus says that, you know He's spotted some wrong heart thinking. Simon doesn't realize Jesus knew exactly what he was thinking and so replies, "Say it, Teacher!"

Then Jesus tells a story about forgiveness. Two people are in debt, one owing 50 days labor, the other 500 days, but both are in the same situation of being debtors, penniless, and helpless. Both are looking at prison time until their family can find the money to get them out. But the lender graciously and freely, for no reason other than his gracious heart, forgives them both.

"Simon, which of these two would love more?" Notice Simon's answer: "I suppose the one forgiven more." This is all academic to Simon. He is irritated that Jesus even asks him this obvious question. "What's your point, Jesus?" Keep in mind, Simon sees himself as a perfectly okay, righteous religious leader and certainly the equal, if not the superior, to his guest Jesus. He is stuffed with smug self-righteous pride and certainly doesn't see himself as a debtor needing forgiveness. Jesus agrees with his answer, but then everything changes at Simon's table. He is about to receive a message from Jesus he couldn't imagine. What comes next is priceless.

A CONTRAST THAT EXPOSES THE HEART

Luke 7:44-47, 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."

I love the way Luke describes this. There's Jesus reclining at the table with the contrite and humbled sinner woman at his feet. Simon is sitting across from Jesus on the same level. Jesus turns toward the woman and asks Simon, "Do you see this woman?" The fact is that Simon did not see this woman. All he saw was a disgusting, filthy street woman. His own pride and legalism had him completely blinded to mercy and grace and forgiveness and the outpouring of love. "Simon, your thoughts about me not knowing who this woman is are completely wrong. I know exactly who she is and what she has done her entire life. I know all about her many sins. But they are all forgiven."

This is the glory of the gospel. No matter how many or how great and wicked and perverse your sins have been, no matter how far into the gutter of sin a person has gone, God's grace is greater. Where sin abounds, grace superabounds (Romans 5:20). God doesn't forgive us based on anything He sees in us. Not our performance, not some residue of goodness in our hearts, not what we could become. God doesn't forgive us or save us based on our good intentions. Romans 4:5 says that He justifies *the ungodly*. He saves us by free sovereign grace in His Son. We don't clean up ourselves in order to come to Jesus. We come guilty, godless, and dirty in our sins. Christ must clean us up. Nothing in us, including our faith, makes us suitable for forgiveness. All God sees in us is infinite evil deserving of His wrath. God is only pleased with Christ and it is because we are in Christ that God forgives and declares us righteous. That's how this woman has been forgiven.

Now Jesus exposes Simon's cold, loveless heart. "Simon, I entered your house and you gave me none of the gestures of honor due a guest. You didn't offer me water to wash My feet. Simon, what is she doing? She's bathing My feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair! You didn't even give me the

customary kiss; she hasn't stopped kissing My feet! You didn't offer to anoint my head with common olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with her expensive perfume."

What's the conclusion? Simon's heart is hard, cold, unmoved, unaffected by his guest. He doesn't see his need of the One who came into the world to save sinners. Why does this woman love so much? She is aware of her sins. She is aware of how guilty she was until she came to Jesus. She is aware that now her many, many sins have been forgiven by Him. That's why she loves so much. Simon didn't lift a finger to show Jesus even the basic gestures of decency. His sins were not forgiven because he didn't think he needed to be forgiven. How many self-satisfied Simons are in this world? How many Simons sit in churches blind to their own sin and guilt and need of Christ? They may be curious, observing, enjoying all the friendliness, even the music, but they have no heart connection to Christ.

A PROMISE THAT SHOCKS AND ASSURES

Luke 7:48-50, 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."

Do you know how sweet these words were to this woman? In the presence of everyone so everyone hears, Jesus declares, "Your sins have been forgiven." Jesus had already forgiven her when she first came to Him yesterday or last week, whenever it was. But Jesus assures her with His loving words and shocks the others by implying something. The guests immediately began to murmur, "Who is this man? How can He forgive sins? Only God forgives sins." And they are right or course. Jesus wants to shock Simon and his guests with the truth that He is more than a teacher or rabbi. He is, indeed, the Son of God, God in the flesh with the authority to forgive sinners like this woman who had many, many sins.

Then Jesus gives this repentant believer the wonderful promise, "Your faith has saved you." Faith, not works. Faith, not the law. Faith, not her much love for Him. Her love for Him was the response of His forgiving her. As forgiveness, the removal of guilt, and the gift of eternal life found their home in her weary, heavy-laden soul, she burst forth with this much love she displayed at His feet. Imagine as Jesus looked at her and she looked up at Him, her Savior and Lord.

And then He encourages her, "Enter into the peace of God." Walk into the wonderful assurance that your heavenly Father has accepted you. You no longer have to fear His anger and wrath against your sins. Free, full, final forgiveness is yours. From now until eternity future you will be God's child. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will ever snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28)

Two people at dinner: Simon and the woman sinner. Do you see yourself in one of them? Simon has no real love for Jesus because he doesn't see himself needing forgiveness. He doesn't see himself as a sinner. He's curious, but detached. The woman sinner knows she's a sinner and has found the only One who can forgive her sins. She didn't know all about the coming cross and resurrection and all the doctrines of justification by faith alone and election and sanctification, but she has heard Jesus and has trusted in His Words. She knows enough of Jesus to be thoroughly changed by His truth and His grace.

Do you see yourself as Simon, curious but not really needing forgiveness? You're doing okay as you are.

Or do you see yourself in this contrite, humble, forgiven woman with a heart full of love for her Savior? She loved much, because she was forgiven much.