



The Gospel According to Luke

Wk. 34 "Reacting to Forgiveness"

By Pastor Jody May

Luke 7:34-50 ESV

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

³⁶One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. ³⁷And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

⁴¹"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then 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. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

1. Tears, Hair, and Perfume

This story takes place in Galilee, still in the north country, and it follows on the heels of Jesus interpreting the greatness of JB. At the end of that story he compares the Pharisees, which you will see is hosting our dinner party this week, to children that are brats and won't play any of the games put out for them. They neither picked Judaism as a repentant Jew nor followed Jesus into the new kingdom, they wanted to stay as they were. Stubborn brats.



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It is at this point in time that we need to remember that the Pharisees have already made up their mind about Jesus. If you remember in **Luke 6:11** after healing a man on the Sabbath they began to have **secret meeting about how to kill Him**. Keep that in mind this week as we observe the Passion Week, read **Luke 19:29-Luke 24**, it was the anger of the Pharisees that made them work with their **counterparts/enemies**, the Sadducees, to condemn Him to death. Also keep in mind this **does not take your guilt away** for the cross was necessary for everyone's Salvation, **"For the wages of sin are death but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Rom. 6:23). We were born condemned, born into sin, we all have lived in rebellion against God, and it is by Grace alone are we saved. We were all sinners with no hope **but God...**

In review - 2 things that were triggering this murderous intent of the Pharisees: 1st - that they would trump up some charges on **blasphemy**, by trying to gather information and eye witness accounts that Jesus believed He was God. That came from Jesus' belief that He could forgive sins. **2nd** the fact that Jesus could forgive sins, do miracles, and connect the two together **made their position of moral elitism null and void**. It meant that if Jesus, as the Messiah, could take away someone's sins then a Pharisee could no longer guilt you or condemn you, there was no more power over folks, no prestige, no special place in society. Because of all this what you are seeing in the scripture today is not a nice invite to dinner **this was a trap**, to gain evidence.

Here's how this trap is sprung. The Pharisees operate a lot like the FBI. There are a few thousand of them in the country and they have webs of intelligence gathering and information sharing. Whatever one gathered could be shared with the others. Now this guy Simon, he invites Jesus to his house for a dinner party, maybe after a synagogue preaching gig, he took the pastor home for dinner. Dinners with a traveling Rabbi was a big occasion, it would mean the possibility of grubbing off the table for free food and listening to talk between some important folk, **like a Ted Talk or a Comic Con Panel discussion**. Even the poor were allowed in to grab table scraps. You know it made the pharisees look good, this act of generosity, while they mistreated them the rest of the time.

At this party there would be a table in the middle but it is low to the ground and around it elevated mats or low level couches whereby the participants could actually lounge sprawled out at the table. Moms you would have hated it for you got to put your elbows on the table and prop your head up, it was expected of you. **Your feet would be positioned towards the back, they were unclean, they had come in contact with the earth and what you find on it.** So we have the table in the middle, participants around the table, and the crowd mingling and eating around the table.



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It's late afternoon or possibly early evening, so everything is lit by candlelight in this crowded but intimate setting. It is a time of fellowship where the whole town is gathered EXCEPT for a few uninvited people.

Pharisees, among their gossip lines, kept a list of all the local unclean people, the sinners. Luke uses this word to describe what the Pharisees and the religious elite in those days would find most offensive. People that you have met already, like the organized crime guys, Romans, any gentiles in the town, **tax collectors** and the guys that worked for them. Then on the female side those that every town had but only the unclean would visit, **the prostitutes**. It is here we will jump back into our Bibles and see what it says about a certain sinner in our story.

³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that **he** was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,

Behold! It means **SURPRISE!** First off this woman, the sinner, **that is code for a prostitute**, she heard about the dinner at the pharisee's house and so it means that she has to basically sneak in, we don't know how **but to show up** here at best would mean **thrown out with a beating**. She has also come bearing a gift, a bottle of perfume. This description alludes to an expensive bottle of perfumed oil, something that only people with extra money could afford, this was costly for her, a woman that had to sell her body to make money, this should be locked away in a safe place instead she is carrying it so she came with a purpose for it. She came to anoint Jesus, to show Him what she felt about Him to Him and all the people. **This was an act of deep affection, this gift of roughly a years worth of wages, or her savings for when she could no longer work for money when there would be no man to take care of her.** This was her safety net. **This scenario most likely means that she has already encountered Jesus since He has been in town...**

³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

She is behind him in waiting now, looking down at His feet, and she begins to weep, Martin Luther calls this the **Heart Water**, and she can't control it, this type of crying described here is the type of public lamenting. Then as she is looking at his feet it really starts to pour out of her and it's uncontrollable and she sees that His feet are dirty. **Dirty feet at this function!?** His feet should have been washed by the servants when He came over, this is Jesus, *The One Who is to Come!* This Pharisee, on purpose, had snubbed him trying to make Him lesser than the host. **To treat her that**



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way was to be expected but not Him. She lets her tears fall on His feet, she doesn't care anymore if anyone sees, she will use the only water she has. She gives up herself up now, she undoes her hair, so now people if they have not noticed her before see her now. This is the woman that always had her hair down in shame, that always had the look of bedroom intimacy, the prostitute. She bends down at his feet, and she begins to scrub his feet with her hair. Then in complete abandonment to the moment she can't contain her heart anymore, she kisses His feet. ***Kataphileo***, is a very strong word here for kiss, it is the word used in Luke 15:20 when the Father falls on the neck of the prodigal son when he returns home, **to kiss much**. It is in this scene that Jesus doesn't stop her, He doesn't rebuke her, He's not embarrassed for **He knows this is right**, this response to something He's done for her, and it was bringing her joy!

In that moment, Simon the host, has a thought, which is cool because either Luke has gotten this story from a close friend of Simon or Simon converted and is telling Luke the story for this is not spoken out loud.

³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."

It is interesting to note that Simon didn't even give it a second thought whether it was right, he didn't think to Himself that Jesus has been intimate with this woman. This shows the depth of the fear and respect of the Pharisees for Jesus was never accused by them of immorality. That's what made Him so scary to them, **they recognized His Holy Righteousness, and it is exactly that fear mixed with murderous intent that made them a greater sinner than anyone on their list**. At that very moment Jesus looks through his heart and answers his quiet accusation.

2. Debt, Forgiveness, and Love

"Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty."

⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

A Denarii is roughly a day's wage. The comparison would be as if **Rooms to Go** calls you and says, "Hey we saw how much you make on your credit application and we just want to wave what you owe us, enjoy that new 5 piece living room set!" All of us would be like YES! No more 36 payments



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of a no interest \$100 a month loan. Now compare that to the bank calling and telling you that someone paid off your mortgage, along with your taxes and insurance for as long as you live. Now that's something to be excited about! **So which person is happier?**

⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."

In that day and age, to have a debt forgiven was **to absorb the cost of what was given**. We have lost that feeling in our society because everything is purchased with debt, there is no sense of paying off a debt anymore. Jesus is explaining that the debt no longer exists, it can't be claimed by anyone because it had to be absorbed, **so the lender had to eat it from the profits. It cost someone it just didn't cost you.** To add to the Pharisees surprise he adds this **final explanation**.

Simon you gave me nothing, no offer of water for my feet, no cheap oil for my head, no kiss of friendship for my cheek, but **she has recognized what has been done for her**. She gave me her tears of remorse, and cleaned my feet with her hair, defying your standards, and she anointed my feet with the costliest of oils and hasn't stopped kissing my feet. **Yes, Simon you are right the one that has been forgiven much loves much!** I have absorbed her debt and you no longer have anything against her.

⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Simon, write this down in your spy journal, you see in the original language this Greek is written in such a way to tell you and I that **Jesus had already had an encounter** with her before the supper. He had already talked to her, and she was expressing love for Her savior, that's why she came with the perfume to anoint her only authority in her life, to show **He had true security not her money**. *Simon, I forgave her, you and your father the devil have no more power over her, she's free...* **Instead of preserving the way of living by one's work of the law, always to live in debt because of your sin, Jesus took the opportunity with the whole community watching to state He pays the debt owed to the law for our sin.**

This week, let us all remember that Jesus on his path to Calvary, dirties not just His feet but takes the sin of those called by God, He is publicly shamed for the debt we owe, He absorbs the



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cost of our sin, and bears it on a cross. He washes us with life blood of His heart, and with tears of the pain we have caused redeems us from the penalty of our debt, eternal death and separation from God.

Parents it is important this week that you teach your kids that they are **sinners**, they have a rebellious heart, and they share the responsibility of Jesus' death. There is a danger in Christian families because children are more likely to grow up like a Pharisee and believe their behavior is ok, because they have morals.

3. Saved by Faith Alone

"⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "**Your faith has saved you; go in peace.**"

The last part here is to understand the truth that Jesus preaches here, that **the love she gave Him did not save her**, the act of love was the witness of what had happened to her. **Her faith had saved her not her actions of love.** That's important to leave with here today. Yes, you should have a love like this for the Lord but loving the Lord does not save you. **Your faith that He has loved you first has saved you.**

Ephesians 2:8-9 ESV

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Grace, your debt has been absorbed, and Faith - believing the account is closed. This woman believed her account was closed; **do you believe your account is closed today family?**

Do you believe that your sins created an unbridgeable gap between you and God?

Do you believe that it took the blood of Christ to pay for your sins?

Do you believe you are to live your life transformed in front of others to declare this love?

Do you love much because you have been forgiven much?



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Then **"live in the peace"** as Jesus says in v. 49, for you too have been saved by Faith. Reflect on this and look forward to celebrating His resurrection next week.

So, right now as a family together Pastor Bill and I are going to distribute the Lord's Supper to the body. We want you to go back to your seats today and we want us all to take this corporately together today, as we connect this passage today with the last supper, the last time Jesus reclined at a table, to talk of His Gospel, before the act of paying off our debt so we could live free.

COMMUNION

Luke 22:14-23 ESV

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

PRAYER

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father that by grace gave us a gift of faith so that we may be saved.

Go in the name of the Son that absorbed our debt on the cross and is worthy of all praise.

Go in the name and power of the HS that brings us confirmation of faith by our affections for Him.