

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: “Forgiven Much, Love Much” from Luke 7:36-50

July 7, 2019

Today’s Scripture: Luke 7:36–50 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at table. 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, 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. 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.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

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

Series Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: Who do you relate to in this passage? The Pharisee, the prostitute, the onlookers? Jerry Olsen has served as a prison guard and has seen some of the worst of the worst in our society but he has also seen men in prison come to Christ with a vibrancy for their love for Jesus that is unstoppable. Their enthusiasm for the Lord is never-ending. Yet for many of us who grew up in Christian homes it seems we don’t have the same fire in our bellies and the same amount of fervor for the Lord since we never bottomed out in our lives with alcoholism or drug addictions. So if we have been forgiven, in appearance, a lot less than those

serving time in prison, how are we to have the same fervency and passion for Jesus as those who have had a sordid past?

Main point: The more we are aware of our raw-ugly sinful heart the more we will be utterly in love with Jesus for transforming our wickedness into cleansed and cleansing lives of sanctification.

Context:

Exegesis

1. If you want to passionately love Jesus with increasing zeal, focus on the depth of your forgiven sins.
 - The woman was far more aware of her sinfulness than the Pharisee because her sins were publicly known and condemned. Therefore she was all the more moved by Jesus' offer of forgiveness.
 - Somehow through Jesus' teaching (most likely when the paralytic was let down through the roof of Peter's house and Jesus informed him that his sins were forgiven), she had come to believe that he had the power to forgive sins. Only the person who has been sinned against is the one who has the right to forgive. This makes Jesus the primary party who had been offended by this woman's acts of immorality.
 - Although Jesus in his humanity did not know her or experience the hurt caused by her many sins, in his divinity he knew that at the cross her sins against him and the Father and the Spirit would be paid in full.
 - And, since God and Christ and the Spirit exist outside of time, the sins committed against Jesus by this woman could have already been felt in heaven in a very personal way.
 - How had she sinned against Jesus? If she were an adulteress, Jesus could have said to her, I gave you the perfect husband for you and you chose to disregard my gift and attempted to fill the hole in your heart by going after a husband I had given to someone else to cherish and have for the rest of her life. If she were a prostitute, Jesus could say, I gave you your purity as a gift and was willing as Heavenly Husband to be your companion all the days of your life, but you chose to chase many men hoping to fill the hole in your heart that only I can fill. And, you turned the joy of sexual purity into the stench of sexual impurity defiling my body, (since Jesus owned it) again and again. *1 Corinthians 6:15–16 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."* (ESV)

2. To love Jesus passionately, we must realize that we cannot save ourselves.
 - Which of the debtors in this story could say he earned his freedom?
 - One pastor illustrated it this way: Which is better? Drowning in 50 feet of water or 500 feet? Very little. You are going to drown either way.
 - Yet the idiocy of this world's thinking is that the man drowning at 50 feet is better off than the one at 500. They are always comparing. How often have we heard, "well I'm not as bad as. . .?"
 - Christians often deceive themselves by thinking, "If I just improve my life a little more then I will start praying and fellowshiping with Jesus. I will clean up my act and then Jesus will like me better." What foolishness.
 - Let's think about the degree of sinfulness in our own lives that we never admit.
When:
 - We wake up in the morning, do we thank God that he woke us and we didn't die in our sleep? No? How ungrateful can we be?
 - When the sunrise streams through the window did we thank God that we have eyes to see it? No? How ungrateful can we be?
 - When we hopped into the shower did you thank God for the water and a water heater?
 - When you got dressed, did you thank him for the clothes? Did you even thank Him when you first bought the clothes as a one shot thank you?
 - When you snarfed your toast did you thank him for tastebuds?
 - When you kissed your spouse good-bye did you thank God for a partner?
 - When you sped off to work in your modern day chariot, did you thank God for vehicles so you don't have to hoof it six days a week?
 - When you got to work did you thank God for the 10 things that were waiting for you, like a place to work, investors who bought the company, pleasant bosses, fun co-workers, great working environment?
 - No, no, no, no to all of the above? And somehow we think we are better than the rest of the world? Our ungratefulness is so close to theirs, there is hardly a noticeable difference.
 - Now if we even hint to ourselves that we can improve our standing with God by our good works, how in the world are we going to be able to pay for one day's worth of ingratitude as I just described above?
3. And, if we cannot save ourselves then our salvation is all about grace.
 - When the lender forgave the debtors debts in Jesus' story, did he base it on their character or likable personalities? No.
 - Did he say, I will forgive your debt but in the belief you won't do it again? No.

Let's apply this a little differently today. Repeat after me a prayer. Here it is: Heavenly Father, . . . I know you call us saints . . . but remind us that we are still sinners. . . give us a greater sense of our unworthiness. . . and your amazing grace and love for us. . . Make me more like this woman sinner. . . and less like the self-righteous Pharisee. In Jesus name, amen.