

A Lesson in Worship from a Sinful Woman

Luke 7:36-38

April 15, 2018

It is our joy, my joy, to come back to our study in the Gospel of Luke. I am very excited and eager to get into the text this morning. So you want to turn over to Luke chapter 7 and verse 36. I'm gonna begin this morning in just a moment here by reading the text. This week, next week, maybe another week after that, I don't we'll see, but we're gonna see in this passage, which is Luke 7:36-50, we're going to see some lessons in this text on worshiping and loving our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I don't expect you to remember this, but when we were actually last in Luke's Gospel, we looked at verses 31-35, and that illustration that Jesus gave about children in the marketplace. Jesus pointed in that illustration to the unbelief and to the overt hostility of Israel's leadership. And that unbelief that was evident and overt in the leadership would one

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day be exposed throughout the entire nation as they called for Jesus' crucifixion.

Instead of repenting of its sin, instead, instead of turning to Jesus Christ in love and worship, Israel would act like children in the marketplace, determined to be discontent. They'd complain against God's servants. They'd refuse to be satisfied. They'd refuse to follow along, refusing to repent and believe. Israel's leaders, they had already rejected John the Baptist. Israel's leaders were rejecting, even during this time in the text, they were rejecting Jesus as the Christ. And the whole nation, then, would follow their wicked, sinful leadership, unbelieving leaders right off the cliff into final and everlasting judgment.

That section of warning to the crowds, it ended as we noted when we covered that material, ended with a word of hope and encouragement to Christ's true people. Look there at, at Luke 7:35. It says, "Yet wisdom is justified by all of her children." In contrast to everything we've just talked about and this warning that I've delivered to you, "Wisdom is justified by all

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her children." And Luke, now, wants us to meet one of wisdom's children. This woman is set in contrast with the children in the marketplace, and you'll immediately discern the difference between her and all of them.

Look at Luke 7:36 and following. "One of the Pharisees asked him, asked Jesus, to, to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that she was, that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 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 man, 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, the other fifty. And 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.’ And then turning to 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 had 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 the table with them 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.’”

It’s a remarkable and instructive text. It’s a confrontive text. We need to receive that confrontation and enter into this

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section of Scripture with a heart of reflection, a heart willing to self-examine, to think about ourselves and the measure, the degree, the fervor, the passion of our own love for Jesus Christ. I've divided the passage into bite-sized pieces just for my own clarity and I'll share it with you. We've got the scene, the story, the sinner, and the Savior. Jesus sets the scene for us in verses 36-38. He tells a story in verses 39-43. And then Jesus points to the forgiven sinner for instruction, verses 44-47. And finally, we see him address that forgiven sinner as her Savior in verse 48-50.

So the scene, the story, the sinner, and the Savior, and I've mentioned those text divisions just for the sake of outlining. I just need to let you know that we're not going to cover all that this morning. We're only going to be able to get into the first point this morning, just setting the scene. And I think you will find as we do set the scene here, that it's going to be useful as we look forward to communion as a church around the Lord's Table. And also useful to discover the full meaning and import, and impact of the text.

What Luke wants us to see in this account is the true nature, the true character of someone who follows Jesus Christ. Luke doesn't tell us explicitly, he doesn't explicitly tell us here what that character and what that nature is. Jesus has already actually taught about that back on the Sermon on the mount. But instead, Luke is here showing us what the true nature, what the true character of a true disciple looks like and he uses the least likely of people to illustrate.

What we're gonna see here, the true nature of a Christ follower, the true character of a true believer. We see it illustrated in what we might call a beatitude kind of woman. She's someone who is not rich in this life, but one who is very poor. She is someone who knows what is, what it is like to hunger, to long for satisfaction from God. She's one who knows what it is to, to weep, to sorrow over her sin. This is a woman who knows what it is like to be hated by the world, to be spurned and excluded and scorned. She is a beatitude kind of woman. She's a forgiven sinner, who has come to see and to understand and to embrace Jesus Christ. That is who we're going to see and meet in this story.

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This is who Luke wants us to see. This is who the Holy Spirit wants us to see, and this is who Christ himself wants us to see as well, someone, who frankly, in the eyes of the world, and truly, and in the eyes of God is an absolute wretch. This is how her contemporaries judged her and probably for good reason. All her sinful actions and reactions throughout her life, all her bad decisions, all her stupid, frankly stupid, plans, this woman has truly blown it. She has irretrievably messed up her life and she is deserving of the bad reputation that she has.

So why does Luke, why does the Holy Spirit, why does Christ want us to consider this woman? Because in the Lord's eyes, according to the only judgment that really counts, this woman is forgiven. This woman is a true believer. She's become a true worshiper and she's actually, in this text, an exemplary worshiper. Why do we need to see that? Because if Christ can take a woman like this woman and if he can by his power transform her from sinner to saint, then he has the power to do the same thing with your life, as well.

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As Corie ten Boom put it so well, "There is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still." So complete is the transformation of this woman that she becomes to us in this text, an example on how to worship. She's an example to all generations of Christians on how to worship. We're going to learn a few things from her example this morning about what it really means to worship Jesus Christ. She goes from the notorious to the glorious and that is what God's grace accomplishes in all of us sinners.

As I said, we're only going to look at how Luke has set the scene for us in verses 36-38. The way he has set the scene is by introducing us to a true worshiper. I've got three points for you. They're not listed in your bulletin this week, so you're gonna need to pay even closer attention and do a little writing. Pull out your bulletins. And in setting the scene, Luke entered us, introduces us to, first point, first point, an ungracious host and a hostile situation, an ungracious host, and a hostile situation.

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As Jesus sits down to eat with, frankly, an ungracious host, as he enters into a hostile situation, you might see on the one hand that this points to his confidence and his courage to enter into a situation like this. But it especially points to the indiscriminate way that Jesus loved all kinds of sinners. He knowingly entered into hostile company. And he endured shabby treatment that he might teach all these people about love.

Look at verse 36. It says, "One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table." You might say, "Well, that doesn't seem very hostile. Kind of innocuous." And as Luke relayed the story, the true intentions of the Pharisee who invited Jesus to dinner, they are somewhat hidden from us in this introductory verse. But as we read the entire text, in verses 44-46, we learn later this man didn't provide even the most basic, the customary culturally appropriate expressions of courtesy or politeness.

No water to wash his feet. It's important in a dusty area where you're wearing sandals, open-toed shoes and dust and dirt and filth gets in there. No water to wash his feet. No greeting

of friendship, no anointing oil. And the absence of those things, for any First Century reader and especially First Century Middle Eastern reader, is absolute shock. How could you do that to a guest? It's a shocking oversight and it is a clear and obvious insult. Jesus, on walking through the door, he knew where he stood with this man. He knew the nature of this dinner invitation.

Even apart from reading further in the text, we see Luke is actually signaling to us the hostile situation by identifying the host as a Pharisee here twice. Twice in verse 36, but then again in verse 37, "the house of the Pharisee." So three times. Pharisee, Pharisee, Pharisee. The man has a name, which we do learn when Jesus addresses him in verse 40, but Luke wants to highlight the man's Jewish religious party affiliation. He's to be identified with the Pharisees.

When do we last hear about those guys? Well, that's back in verse 30. They're the ones who, quote, "rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by John the Baptist." They're the ones who, like children in the

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marketplace, are determined to be discontented with the purpose of God, to reject the ministry of God, to reject the true word of God, no matter who brings it, no matter what form or style it comes in.

Because they reject God, they, therefore reject John the Baptist and they are filled with hatred and loathing for Jesus Christ and his teaching, as well. This guy invites Jesus over to his home for a meal. And Jesus knows exactly what he's gonna face. We're not told exactly where this happened. Many commentators believe that the Pharisee's house was located in Capernaum. The last location mentioned in the text is Nain. Nain is the place where Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead, a tiny little village, insignificant, about the same size as Nazareth, where Jesus was raised.

That's probably not the place where any notorious woman would hide out. She's probably going to live in a much larger population. Jesus had probably then moved on from Nain. And by the time the disciples of John the Baptist came to him and visited him with their question, so we're talking about all of

Luke 7:18-35, that whole section probably took place somewhere other than Nain. Jesus had moved on. By the time we get to verse 36, this could very well yet be another location. So in the absence of contrary evidence, Capernaum it is, okay? No argument there.

Pharisee invited Jesus over to his home for a meal. That's common. Visiting rabbis, especially very popular rabbis, especially when they came to a city, it was an occasion for prominent people in the community to invite that teacher to their home for a meal. And also to engage with his public teaching, but to engage with his teaching in a more intimate setting. So by hosting a visiting rabbi, the host had an opportunity to put his, his own hospitality and wealth on display. He also had an occasion to get his own questions answered, to interact with a well-educated guest and even engage in a bit of intellectual sparring.

In this case, the Pharisee doesn't even have those purposes ultimately in mind. He has a less noble purpose in his head, revealed by his thoughts in verse 39. "If this man were a

prophet," but he's not, "then he would've known." That expression, that verbal expression is called a second-class conditional sentence in the Greek. That is to say, that that Pharisee begins with a negative assumption, namely, that Jesus is a prophet. He says, No, he's not a prophet. That's what he's thinking. He doesn't believe Jesus is a prophet.

And so he's invited Jesus over to his house to look for evidence of that fact. And as we see at the very first opportunity, he thinks that he finds what his unbelief is looking for: Evidence that this man is not a prophet. So it's a hostile situation. Jesus is walking into an ambush, and he knows it.

We might count his accepting the invitation and sitting down to eat with this Pharisee as a mark of his courage. But when we stop and think about it, it's hard to imagine Jesus having any concern whatsoever about the trap that's been set for him by, let's face it, a creature. A sinful creature, at that. As the Lord of the universe, Jesus, his preincarnate state created Simon. He created the wood for the table that was built

and set in front of them. He created the food upon the table. I don't think Jesus is intimidated at all. He's not concerned about a little trap spun by one of his creatures to try to entrap the Lord of the universe in some kind of a contradiction.

What motivates Jesus is his indiscriminate love. He reclines at Simon's table. Not here to pretend friendship and fellowship. He reclines to demonstrate his love and his grace, even to this unloving and ungracious host, even in the midst of this hostile group of people who've come to kind of watch the action. They want to see the fight. They want to see the exchange, which brings us to a second point for this morning.

We're going to see more about our Lord's love for Simon the Pharisee next time, but for now, we need to see the providential interruption of Simon's plans. So again, setting the scene, Luke introduces us to, second point, an uninvited guest with a notorious reputation, an uninvited guest with a notorious reputation. Notice verse 37. It begins, in my Bible anyway, it begins, "And behold." Some translations leave out that word behold, but they shouldn't do that because that word is

important here. Luke wants us, he wants to signal to us, and he wants us to enter into the scene and he wants us to see how the sudden arrival of this woman is surprising, is shocking. Frankly, she's unwanted. That's what we're to see.

Look at what it says there. "Behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and stood behind him," and let's stop there. This woman hasn't been invited but she comes anyway. How did that happen? Homes in the ancient Near East were far more open than they are in our day. And at this time in the First Century, far more open than they are in the west. Hospitality was more generous, very broad, very high priority in the mind of a Middle Eastern, Near East person.

In fact, many travelers even today from the Middle East or from the Far East, when they come to America, they find Americans to be comparatively rude and impolite and inhospitable. We understand, and especially if you do travel abroad and you see the way people eagerly bring people in their

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homes and give them of their best. We don't do that. In America, we close our doors. We have fences and walls and keep people out.

In Jesus' day, though, homes are more open. Dinners were enjoyed in community with other people. Hosts were hospitable. They were accommodating even to strangers. Larger homes like this one that the Pharisee owned had an opened courtyard area. It was kind of shaped like a "U" with rooms and private places on the side, but then in the middle, more of a courtyard setting. And then that allowed people entrance into the courtyard area and even access to some of the common spaces. Private bedroom, bathing rooms, all those things were obviously considered off limits. But common spaces like dining areas were much more open.

You might imagine kind of a veranda kind of a setting, maybe a covered porch, not walled in, which is important in the Middle East because it allows cool air, cool evening air to pass through and provides in the, in the absence of modern air conditioning, it provides a comfortable place to recline to eat,

to relax and enjoy a long conversation. Meals there were not hurried. There's not fast food to accommodate rushed people like us. Mealtimes there are slower, allowing for slowing paced conversation. And all of that facilitated relationship and friendship. And probably, frankly, better digestion, too, be able to get the food down.

But in the middle of the dining area, it was very large, low table, low to the ground, food at the middle and at the center of the table and then placed settings around the table. And up against the table on all of its sides were low cushions like a kind of a turned around couch. Not that you would sit on, but that you would recline on. And so, they reclined at the table. They leaned on their left sides, resting on comfortable couch cushions. Their head was closed to the food. Their right hand was free for eating, legs and feet of their bodies of the guests fanned outward from the table, kind away from the food, sort of behind the guests to the right of them.

That setting, an unwallled space, not only created a cool and comfortable environment, but the lack of walls meant others

could look in on the gathering, could even approach the dining party and that wasn't really a bad thing because it allowed servants to serve the food and care for the guests from any direction. It also allowed servants of the invited guest to approach their masters, to make requests, to pass information.

Yes, there was a risk, maybe, that some bold beggar might also draw near to the table, which sometimes happened, but it wasn't common. There may not have been physical walls to keep unsavory riffraff away, but there were social walls. And those social walls were sometimes more impenetrable than a physical wall. Cultural stigma of being poor, of begging, these people were pushed to the outsides. They were ostracized. They were disdained.

So it was really only the bold and the really, really poor, those with no pride left to preserve who might show up and beg. And they were easily kept away with a gratuitous handout from servants of the house. No need for the host or any of the guests to bother with any of the riffraff. So the risk of disreputable people showing up was at a minimum. Well, until this occasion.

Here's a woman who's coming in and she ignored social expectations. She has breached etiquette here and she has come to the dinner party as an uninvited guest. And worse than that, not only was she uninvited, she came into this setting, into the scene carrying with her a notoriously bad reputation. Coming to this party, at this Pharisee's house without an invitation certainly isn't going to improve her public image. It would just reinforce the poor opinion people already had about her. Look at her, shameful, audacious. Did you see what she did?

The text says there in verse 37, literal translation here, "And behold, a woman, which was in the city a sinner," that's the literal rendering. That doesn't mean to say that she only sinned in the city, but it was quite saintly in the country. That's not what it means. We can't be dogmatic here. She could've been known as a sinner for any number of sins. It could have been fraud, theft, trafficking in illegal goods, unpaid parking tickets, whatever it was. But the way that Luke has written this here, the way he has put this, it appears to be a delicate way of portraying the nature of her sin without being explicit about it.

This woman, as far as we can tell, has been engaging in the oldest profession, an illegal profession, degrading way to make a living. Luke mutes the emphasis on her sin, the nature of her sin, to avoid painting an entirely wrong picture of what's about to happen. Because she's about to be portrayed here in a moment, as engaging in what may be misinterpreted by prurient minds. But Luke does not want us getting any impression whatsoever that all, any of her actions could be interpreted in any other way but as decent and wholesome in nature. There's nothing indecent about her and what she does in this text.

In fact you'll note that even when Simon mutters to himself, he's not expressing shock over what she does, as if she's doing anything immodest or inappropriate here. He expresses unbelief that Jesus would accept her acts of worship while supposedly not knowing what kind of a woman she really is, namely that she is a notorious sinner.

So in setting the scene, Luke wants us to understand what kind of woman she is. He doesn't want us to see her as doing

anything sinful in this scene. She's coming here with pure intentions, which is, you know, admittedly, probably a new thing for her. But pure motives, nonetheless. She comes to the Pharisee's house, as it says in verse 37, "Because she knew Jesus would be there. She knew Jesus would be there." If this is located in Capernaum, which is likely, then this woman has not only heard about Jesus, she has heard Jesus. And what I mean by that is that she has really heard him.

She heard him say, or at least heard the report of him saying in Luke 6:20, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." Her profession wasn't making her rich, financially, socially or in any other way. It wasn't making her rich. She knows she's poor, not just in her bank account. She knows she's poor in spirit and she longs for true riches from God, immeasurable bounty of God's kingdom.

This sinful woman heard Jesus say, Luke 6:21, "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied." No matter how she got into her illicit profession, no matter what started her into a sinful lifestyle, she'd long since discovered how

utterly empty it was, how utterly, totally dissatisfying it was. All she could feel now was this gnawing emptiness of her soul, a spiritual hunger for righteousness, for holiness, which she knew she didn't have.

This wretched woman heard the Savior say, Luke 6:22, "Blessed are you who weep now for you shall laugh." It's been a long time since a smile had formed on her face, that is, one that wasn't forced, faked, put on for the sake of a paying customer. Her life had become so evidently immersed in sin and in all its accompanying sadnesses that sorrow and weeping was really the reality of her world.

And then this, she heard Jesus say, Luke 6:23, "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, but for this sake, on account of the Son of Man." Oh she had been hated and excluded and reviled and spurned as evil for a long, long time. That's nothing new for her. She'd heard the whispers. She's heard the sneers, the titter of laughter as she walked by. She saw the way

other woman looked at her with disdain. She also noticed how the men looked at her too.

But the social exclusion of this woman, what she'd experienced, it was all her own doing. She was the cause of her own stigma. She was to blame. Yes, you might say, Oh, well a culture that has this, this institution of prostitution, that's the problem. It's an institutional issue. No, no, she bears personal responsibility for her decisions within the institutional issues. She's the cause of her own stigma. She's to blame and she knows it.

She was considered unclean. Why? Because she was unclean. But now, to hear that the Son of Man himself would call her to identify with him, to be shunned and excluded and hated, no longer for her own sake, but now for his name's sake. No longer because of her sin, but because of his name. This is something entirely new. This sinful woman's heart had been opened to Jesus Christ and to his blessed gospel. She'd been listening. She'd been watching. She'd been learning and finally, for the first time in her life, she has found someone who's able to look

beyond her public image. He's able to see her sinfulness, but he's also able to see through her sinfulness. Wonder of wonders, he is willing to love her anyway.

Not only that, but he has the power and the will to save her soul, to rescue her from the degrading imprisonment to sin. After all, as she'd known, he was willing and able to deliver a demon possessed man. The greatest power of the spiritual realm had to yield and bow to the power of Jesus Christ. He had the power to make a paralytic walk, power to restore a withered limb, even to raise the dead. No problem with his power.

Not only that, but Jesus, he didn't keep a distance from unclean people, like lepers. He touched them. He didn't keep a distance from disreputable people like tax collectors and sinners. He saved and then he ate with them. He didn't worry about his own ritual purity. He didn't worry about protecting his own reputation. This is something new. This sinful woman had come to know Jesus as we know him. As we so often sing, "Jesus, what a friend for sinners. Jesus, lover of my soul. Friends may

fail me, foes assail me, but he, my Savior, makes me whole.
Halleluiah, what a Savior! Halleluiah, what a Friend!"

So this woman of the city who was a sinner. When she learned that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she came. Oh, she came. Why did she come? What was her motive? Luke shows us her intentions at the end of verse 37 and beginning of verse 38. It says that she "brought an alabaster flask of ointment and stood behind him at his feet." So an alabaster flask, alabaster is a fine grain, usually a translucent or a very snow-white form of gypsum used often for ornaments or for jewelry or in this case, the alabaster was carved into a flask, hallowed out, turned into a tiny vial to carry contained perfumed oil.

It was common in that day for woman to wear an alabaster vial of perfumed oil around their necks. The viscous oil was used as a bit of a lotion for soothing and treating dry skin in the environment in the climate there. Then mixed with this pungent perfume, it also masked any unpleasant smells. Shower, showering was not a daily luxury in those days, so a woman's

alabaster vial of perfumed ointment helped maintain feminine dignity.

As I've been in the Middle East, I've seen that too. I've seen that same kind of oil, that same kind of pungent perfume not only sold in the marketplace but used by women over there. That's how most women used their alabaster vials. For this woman, her alabaster vial was necessary, in plying her trade. And now, what had been a means of facilitating her impure vocation, this perfume became a means now of honoring and worshiping the one who had delivered her from her impurity.

He washed her from her uncleanness. He made her a new creation. No spot. No stain. No wrinkle. No blemish. Pure spotless as that alabaster vial. Having been delivered by what she had learned from Jesus Christ, she's bringing her alabaster vial. She's employing it in an entirely brand-new way, for worship. What else did she have to bring but a broken, sinful, and a stained life? An unclean heart with bad motives. A shameful life of horrible relationships. An impure, defiled mind

that haunted her with all the memories of all the vile things she'd done.

So having nothing of her person worth bringing to Jesus, she brings what she thinks is the only gift she can bring, this alabaster flask of ointment. She came intending to put it to honorable use for the very first time in her life. And, she's so intent on coming to him, she's decided to push past all social barriers. She has decided to break through the invisible, but very firm walls at the Pharisee's house so that she might worship Jesus as her Savior. She will not be dissuaded. She will not be deterred.

This brings us to a third point. Number three, an undaunted sinner and her humble veneration, an undaunted sinner and her humble veneration. Again, verse 37 says that she brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and then this, verse 38, "And standing behind him as 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."

The woman came to offer simple, sincere and to her, very meaningful worship to Christ. But she couldn't get through it. She is overcome with emotion. She ends up breaking down, weeping in front of her Savior, not to mention all the skeptical hostility of the Pharisee and all the rest of his invited guests. She's in public. It had to be a difficult hurdle for her to overcome, to approach those people, to draw near to that table, knowing who she is and knowing that they know who she is and what kind of woman she's been.

In one sense, we can imagine this must have taken a tremendous amount of courage for her to breach this kind of social etiquette and push through all those social barriers with her stigmatized self and offer this act of worship to Christ. I mean, she's thinking to herself, Who am I? Who do I think I am? This is the nature of the true believer, isn't it? Ignoring barriers of propriety at times, abandoning social rules of etiquette and good sense. Like David, sometimes, dancing in the loincloth and being despised by his wife for it.

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True believers humbling ourselves to do what worship demands at that moment. This, after all, is her opportunity because she knows he's there. Maybe not a lot of discourse in public life, but she knows where he is now and, I'm going. So no amount of ridicule, no degree of concern over the fact that her arrival is going to result in even more gossip. Nothing is going to keep her from doing what her heart simply must do, namely this, to thank and to praise Jesus for saving her soul. She owes him her all. The least she can do, which is all she can do, is to bow before him and anoint him in worship and sincere praise and heartfelt gratitude.

So she shows up here. She approaches the dining party, alabaster flask in hand. She's standing at Jesus' feet and before she can anoint him in gratitude, tears start pouring from her eyes. She can't contain her emotion. What are these tears? Tears of joy for finally standing in his presence? Is she crying because she's suddenly self-aware, because she's feeling ashamed as these guests all burn holes in her with their scornful stares, stares of disapproval and disdain? Maybe that's why crying.

Perhaps she's crying because she's remembering all that she's been forgiven for. And there's an admixture here of sorrow and joy, of sadness and great happiness. That's what I think. That's why I think she's crying. She's the true believer. She's worshiping Jesus as one who sorrows and weeps, Luke 7, or Luke 6:21. She's here confronted with the reality of his holiness right in front of her embodied. In front of her is Jesus Christ and so she's overcome. Who wouldn't be?

At the same time, she's a woman who senses profoundly the joy and the freedom of forgiven sin. She's shedding tears of, of gladness as she has finally been redeemed. So this combination of sorrow and joy, heavy hearted sadness of what she knows she is and has been, and also profound gladness knowing what she's been rescued from. Mixture of feeling results in this outpouring of passion, along with this veritable uncontrollable avalanche of tears. It's a waterwall that just pours from her tear ducts, falling all over Jesus' feet. Oh, no. He's all now of a sudden wet, his feet.

You'll notice in that verse, one verse, verse 38, three times Jesus' feet are mentioned. Three times. Not his head, not his face, not his body reclined at the table. It's *tous pódas autou*. Three times: His feet, His feet, His feet. She's standing at his feet, and then she's wetting his feet with tears and wiping them off, and then she's kissing his feet and anointing them. What's the deal with Jesus' feet? Why the fixation on his feet? It's repeated emphasis.

Before I answer that, notice in the text that Jesus here, he does not pull his feet away from the woman. He never says, There, there now. Don't, don't carry on like that. It's, it's okay. I'm, I'm just your humble, gentle Savior at your service. I mean, don't make much about me. All this emotion causing her to weep uncontrollably, soaking his feet with her tears and then she's wiping them off, his feet, with her hair. There is emphasis in the text here. It's not just her hair but notice it's "the hair of her head." I mean common decency would scream out, Jesus, don't let her do that! It's her hair. It's this woman's dignity.

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The Apostle Paul acknowledges in 1 Corinthians 11:15, what we all know to be true, that the woman's long hair is her glory. Her long hair is given to her by God as a, a covering, you might say a, a crown of glory on a woman's head is her hair. I've found women are particularly, their fairly particular about their hair, aren't they, at least the woman I'm personally acquainted with. Don't know how long it takes you to get ready in the morning. It takes me about, I don't know, ten minutes, fifteen if I'm really wanting to look good.

I don't think it's the same way with women. It seems to me that women generally like to spend a lot of time, it's just been my observation, but a lot of time caring for their hair, washing their hair, brushing their hair, doing stuff with their hair. I like it, I'm mean I'm not complaining. But putting it up in tresses, adding little ornaments, flowers, ah what do you call those things? Tiaras, whatever. They put those things in their hair.

None of that here. This woman has let down her hair and she's done that in public, which wasn't done in that day. And

she uses her hair here as a common towel. Worse than that, she's used the hair of her head, which is her crowning glory, and she's used it in place of the dirtiest rag that the lowest slaves used to dry their masters' washed feet. She uses her glorious hair like a filthy rag. That's just one of the symbols of female tenderness we see in this text, which is taken out of its delicate, tender, untouchableness, it's put to common slave-like utility in the service of the Lord's feet.

There's almost nothing as sympathy invoking, evoking, as a woman's tears, right? I know every man in the room, when we see a woman cry, we want to rush to protect. We want to rush to fix the problem. We want to ruh, the woman's tears are powerful. And yet these precious tears are used in a most common of ways, to wash the dust and the dirt and the muck from Jesus' unwashed feet. Her hair becomes the towel that dries them.

And then before she anoints his feet with that perfumed ointment, she uses another of her most tender and sensitive parts. She uses her lips to kiss his feet. And the imperfect tense of the verb there tells us that she's kissing his feet

repeatedly, over and over and over and over again. And get this, again, Jesus does not stop her. He lets her continue. He lets her continue in front of all those people. This humility must have seemed to them like humiliation. And even the hardest heart among them who might have had a sense to say, Yeah, let her, let her be humiliated. That's what she deserves.

But after this has gone on a while, even the hardest heart had to feel sympathy for this woman, bowing in obeisance to this man who, as Simon had judged anyway, is nothing more than a mere man. Get up, woman. Have some respect. Have some self-respect. He's just a man. Get this, he's probably even a false teacher.

Look, when we stop to consider whose feet she is washing with her tears, whose feet she's drying with her hair, and kissing with her lips, we come to recognize that she is using the most tender parts of her body in this way employing her hair, which is her glory, to appropriately show her gratitude and to serve this act of praise and worship. This is the highest form of worship that any of us could ever, ever, ever offer to the Lord.

Have you ever stopped to consider how the thrones of monarchs are lifted up above the people? It's to give a spatial impression of royal distinction, that there is a difference between this monarch on the throne and you down below the throne. They, high and lifted up, and us, lowly and humble before them. And from our low position, when we lift our eyes up to see royalty above us, you know what the first thing we see is? The monarch's feet.

It's certainly true of Jesus, the one of whom the, John the Baptist, cousin to Jesus in the flesh, the great prophetic forerunner in the redemptive plan of God to announce the Messiah, and of Jesus, John said, "The strap of his sandals of his feet I am not worthy to untie." I can't even touch, not just his feet, I can't touch the strap of the sandals that are on his feet. Yet here's this woman least in the kingdom of God. She's washing, she's drying, she's kissing his feet. She, who is least in the kingdom of God, is greater than John the Baptist, and Jesus is pleased to receive her worship.

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Why shouldn't he? He is the Almighty God. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is the Messiah, prophesied of old. He is the one of whom it is written, Genesis 49:10, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his," what? "His feet until tribute comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." God has put, Psalm 8:6, "All things under his feet crowing him with glory and honor."

That's why we see over and over in the gospels people falling at Jesus' feet, worshiping him and he does not lift them up and drive them away. He accepts their worship. Jairus, the synagogue ruler ran to Jesus, Mark 5:22, fell down at his feet. The Syrophoenician woman, Mark 7:25, Matthew 15, she pleaded with Jesus over her little girl, and she fell down at his feet. When great crowds came before Jesus seeking healing for the lame, blind, crippled, mute, Matthew 15:30, they put them all at Jesus' feet seeking the favor of the king.

On the morning of the resurrection when the women ran to tell the disciples about the empty tomb, it says in Matthew

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28:9, "Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him." The Apostle John, who once reclined with Jesus as his beloved friend, who laid his own head on Jesus' breast while at a table just like this one. After the resurrection, ascension of Jesus into heaven, when he saw Jesus again in Revelation 1:15, it's the feet of Jesus that catch his attention. They're noted in the text this way, "His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace." It's a symbol of his ability to judge and to stomp on his enemies as the king.

By contrast, when Cornelius fell down at Peter's feet in Acts 10:25 and worshiped him, Peter lifted him up and said, "Stand up; I too am a man." Or when John fell down at the angel's feet to worship him in Revelation 19:10, the angel rebuked him, "You must not do that. I'm a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God."

Listen, falling down at the feet of Jesus Christ in worship, that is exactly what we are designed by God to do. It

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is the natural response to the Lord of glory to worship him by falling down at his feet. He died to bring us to God, to make us worshipers. So being completely forgiven in his amazing grace, he can now receive our humble worship. That's what's so over-the-top exemplary about this precious woman. The fact that she has enough good sense, or perhaps we should say she has the instinctive sensitivity to offer up her most delicate aspects of her feminine tenderness of her beauty, of her glory.

She uses her tears and her hair and her lips no longer for sin, but now as instruments of righteousness to express heartfelt devotion and sincere worship to Jesus Christ. With her tears, she washes the Lord's feet. With the hair of her head, she dries the Lord's feet. She uses her lips to kiss repeatedly, affectionately. Kiss, it's an intensive verb in the Greek. It's not just *phileo*, which can mean, to love like a friendship love, or to kiss, give a greeting. This is *kataphileo*, to kiss fervently, tenderly, affectionately.

When she anointed the feet of Jesus with this costly perfumed ointment, she did not come to worship without

sacrifice. She didn't come to worship without cost, without fervor. This woman, she's all in. If you can find me a better example of how to worship Jesus Christ than what this woman offered, you're gonna have to show it to me and prove it to me. This woman has set a precedent. It's one of the most sincere, most tender, most affectionate demonstrative acts of worship in the entire New Testament. And so much so that we find Mary, the sister of Lazarus, the sister of Martha, we find her repeating the same act.

Mary, her act recorded in Matthew 26:7 or Mark 14:3 or John 12:3, her act of doing this to Jesus' feet, it's preceded by this woman here doing it first. This woman, who's redeemed by God, this woman, who's forgiven by Jesus Christ and I think it's precious. I think it's beautiful that Mary would later show solidarity with this unnamed woman, this notoriously, formerly sinful woman. Mary counts this woman as a sister in redemption. Both of them, unworthy sinners saved by his magnanimous grace.

What about you? What about me? Would we identify with this woman, bowing humbly at the feet of Jesus Christ? We should. Or

would we prefer to sit around the more educated respectable people of the table, judging, casting aspersions, looking down on the sinners? If we've been forgiven, we know this woman's heart. We should bow and do likewise. The true worshiper, it's not the one with all the knowledge. It's not the one with all the answers. The true worshiper is not the most zealous, the most put together, the one who gives the most. It's not the one who does the most.

All those external, superficial standards are what the world uses to designate someone as a true and sincere and educated and successful, whatever, fill in the blank. Even in the church, those are marks that set apart people to say, That's a true believer. But while it's true that there is an increase of holiness and maturity, of dignity and grace, of knowledge and understanding in God as true worshipers, the true worshiper, just boiling it down to its essence, the true worshiper in God's estimation is the one who stoops low to the ground to honor his beloved son.

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The true worshiper is the one who uses, to borrow the line from Oswald Chambers, my utmost for his highest. All our members is instruments of righteousness, everything about us that would, would, would be to our own glory and our own purpose, all of it redounding to his glory, his purpose. A true believer, the true worshiper, never going to fit in, really, with the popular crowd, those who are known for their righteousness, those who are successful by external measures. True worshiper will never be brother or sister to the Pharisee. Instead, they'll be brother, she'll be sister to this sinful woman, poor, hungry, weeping and rejected on account of the Son of Man.

Like us, this woman is one who's been forgiven much, which means she loves much, which means she worships and honors Christ in an exemplary way. So that's how Luke set's the scene with true worship. Next time, we're going to see Simon's objection to all this and the story that Jesus tells in response. Will you join me now in a word of prayer? We should follow this woman's example, bowing low at the feet of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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Our Father, when we see this woman, we really want to fall from our seats onto our knees, laying low on the floor because we're not worthy to untie the sandals from the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, we, who are the least in the kingdom of God, you've caused us to draw near to Jesus, to worship at his feet, we take our place behind this dear woman. The great Apostle Paul counted himself to be the chief of sinners and he wondered at your mercy and grace. And Father it was that profound sense of gratitude that fueled his love for Christ that motivated his service unto Christ for your glory to offer you a life of worship. May we like Paul, may we like this woman, Father, go and do likewise. For your glory in Christ's name, we pray, Amen.