

Jesus Loves the Pharisees Too

Luke 7:39-43

I'd like to invite you to turn in your Bibles to Luke 7:36. In our continuing study of Luke's Gospel, and as you're turning there, I'm just going to remind you briefly of what we covered last week. I don't want to re-preach the sermon but do want to just kind of warm you up a bit, give you a little bit of a reminder. Jesus has here been invited to dinner by a Pharisee, one of those Pharisees, those are the deeply religious, socially respectable men of the time in Jerusalem who, as Luke 7:30 tells us, Don't be fooled by what you see on the surface, they rejected the purpose of God for themselves.

So while they looked good on the outside and while they were respectable and erudite and educated and studied, they were also set against the purpose of God for themselves. Jesus, though, accepted this invitation to eat at this man's house. They all reclined at the table there to eat. And as they did, there appeared, as the text says, "Behold, there appeared there

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a notoriously sinful woman.” She showed up and she was known in the city as a sinner. What’s interesting about this woman, though, is that something had affected her. Something had changed her. She was not the same woman that they had known. That became evident by her behavior that day.

The woman, having discovered that Jesus would be dining at the Pharisee’s house that day, she came to worship Jesus Christ. She came with an alabaster flask of ointment in her hand, and she came there to worship him, to anoint his feet with that perfumed ointment. As she entered into that house and came and approached that dinner table, the low table where they would all lie around the table, their feet extended away from the table, relaxing, there around the table to converse, to eat, to share fellowship. Here comes this woman.

She entered into the company of Pharisees. They were a scowling, critical spirited people. All they could see when she approached is unclean. It’s all they could see is her sin. There she comes in boldness. She carried out this kind act of humble worship, ignoring the scorn. Looking past all of that, she drops

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to the feet of Jesus Christ, the one who forgave her of all of her sins.

With that in mind, let's read the passage starting in Luke 7:36. "One of the Pharisees asked him 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 he was reclining at the 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 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 money lender 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.’ 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 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 the 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.’”

That is such a remarkable passage. This is the only place in Scripture it is recorded. And I’m so grateful for its inclusion in the canon, aren’t you?

I mentioned last week that this passage divides well into four sections: the scene, the story, the sinner, and the Savior. Luke set the scene for us in verses 36-38. That's what we looked at last, last week and we can see that the scene was set with worship, with a true worshiper. In our section today, we're gonna see the other side of that, someone who is decidedly not a worshiper. To that person, verse 39-43, Jesus tells a story, a short parable, really, to expose unbelief. Jesus draws out the implication of the story, then after that, by pointing to a forgiven sinner there in verses 44-47. And then finally, we see Jesus address that forgiven sinner. He speaks tenderly to her as her Savior in verse 48-50.

So four points: the scene, the story, the sinner, and the Savior. We covered the scene last week and today we're going to look at the story. As I mentioned Luke sets the scene for us and that's when we first meet a Pharisee. And the Pharisee invited Jesus. Jesus entered into the Pharisee's house. He reclined at the table there for the meal. Meals, as we mentioned last time, were occasions for dialogue and so we kind of enter into this narrative expecting a conversation to ensue. We expect and

anticipate an interaction between Jesus and his host, or maybe the guests that are there.

Just as the scene is set, in the middle of our anticipation of that, a woman shows up and she interrupts the narrative, and she really steals the show. Woman came to worship. And as she comes to worship and perform this simple act of humble worship, she can't contain her emotion. She's undone. She's just got a simple plan to bow down, worship him in love and gratitude. She's so grateful for his teaching. She wants to anoint his feet with oil, rubbing the oil in. And the plan goes slightly awry as she just drops to her knees and she's shedding buckets of tears all over his feet.

As we find out in the narrative, his feet have not been washed and so the mud and the tears mix in and she's looking down and she's like, Oh, now I've made a mess. So she tries to wipe up the tear-soaked feet with, she's looking around for a towel. No towel. Okay, no problem. She takes down her hair, which in that day was not socially acceptable. She takes down her hair, lets it down. She wipes his feet. She starts kissing

his feet. The tense of the verb there indicates she is kissing over and over. And she's finally able to do what she came to do, pulls herself together, pulls out that alabaster flask, anoints his feet with that perfumed ointment.

As we noted last time, hers is a beautiful, it's an exemplary picture of Christian worship. She has put the most tender and delicate aspects of her femininity into the service of worshiping Jesus Christ, her tears, the hair of her head, her lips. Thus, she sets an example of what loving gratitude toward Christ looks like. This woman is overwhelmed by God's grace. Her heart is full of love and joy and thankfulness and all she wants to do is bow at the feet of Jesus Christ to offer worship and praise and gratitude. What else has she to give but that?

And frankly, as we've been going through the narrative, this woman is like a breath of fresh air. For every true believer, we recognize this woman is a sister. She's like a cool breeze coming through the, across this hostile dinner table. Because finally, here, someone is giving Jesus his due praise. Amid this growing tension in Luke's Gospel surrounding Jesus and

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his ministry, here's someone recognizing him for who he is, someone who's worshipping him as his glory deserves. And it's a joyful relief for all of us who read the text with believing eyes and believing hearts.

Now, we pointed this out last time, as well. We noted here at this point that Jesus did not pull his feet away. It's interesting that he is pleased actually to allow this sinner, this forgiven sinner to worship at his feet. Only one person in the world, only one person throughout all of history, or who will ever be in the future, only one person in the world for whom that kind of worship is appropriate and it's Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. Only he.

And one day, everyone, every woman and every man, old and young alike, king and slave and everyone in between, one day "at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." One day, we'll all have the same view that that woman had looking at his feet above us.

Now for this Pharisee, the host, for his table full of guests and for all those who had rejected the purpose of God for themselves, who did not receive Jesus as the Christ, this little interruption had to be a pretty unsettling experience for them. Some may have smirked at the kind of followers that Jesus attracted. Yeah, look at her. That's all he can get, that kind of person. Some may have scorned. Some may have been, frankly, offended to see how this rabbi, this teacher, accepted this kind of behavior. Teacher, get a hold of your student! Get her out of here!

But we as believing readers, as those who would eagerly line up behind this woman to follow her example in bowing at the feet of Jesus Christ, what seems strange to us in this narrative is that Jesus' first interaction is not with this woman. He doesn't talk to our sister, a fellow redeemed sinner, this former sinner turned saint. His first interaction is with the Pharisee. And he turns and tells that dismissive, rude, ungracious man a story and he teaches him about love.

The woman is clearly a sympathetic character here, not the Pharisee. The Pharisee has been rather insulting to our Savior, as we read. But the woman has honored him, bowing at his feet, washing, and anointing his feet. She's got it right. Shouldn't Jesus turn directly to her and away from the Pharisee? But he doesn't do that. Jesus first addresses the Pharisee, this hard-hearted, proud-minded sinner who seems to be this woman's polar opposite in so many ways. He's a man, she's a woman. He's wealthy, she's likely rather poor. He's got the respect and admiration of the whole community, but she's scorned and laughed at.

Why doesn't Jesus get up from this table, walk out of the Pharisee's home, turn his back to those people, leave the arrogant to themselves and take this woman with him to gather exclusively with his disciples in protest against the evil social status quo that props up arrogant men like that? So what are we seeing here? What are we learning from Jesus this morning?

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Folks, in this text, Jesus is setting an example for us of what it means to love our enemies. We wouldn't do that. We'd want to see the Pharisee get his due. Jesus doesn't do that. This Pharisee is purely an unsympathetic figure. He treated, he's treated our Lord and Savior in such an insulting manner. He's critical-minded, critical-spirited, censorious in his judgments. And what does Jesus do? He practices what he preached and loves this man. Luke 6:27, he taught us, "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."

Not everyone can hear that word. Probably every single one of us in here has had a critical spirit toward somebody else. We've had a censorious judgment. We've looked down upon people. We shouldn't always identify with the sinful woman and say, Yeah, that's the way I am, humble all the time. No, no we're not. A lot of times in social settings, we're rather like the Pharisee. We want to be in the accepted crowd. We're man-pleasers. We fear men. We want their respect. We want to be viewed as dignified and uplifted in so, in society. We really need to put ourselves in this text where he is and thank God that Jesus humbles himself to that kind of sinner, as well.

Not everyone can hear this word: Love your enemies. It's only those who have ears to hear who are able to hear and understand. It's only those with a heart to believe, with a desire to obey. Only they will look to God and find spiritual power within them by the Holy Spirit to do what is really humanly impossible. This kind of love, we don't have it. It's not in us. In this text with this hostile Pharisee, Jesus is going to show us how to love our enemies. He has loved his enemies. What about us? How will we live coming out of this text?

Let's get into our outline a little bit this morning here. First point for you to jot down in your notes, if you want to put a title, I realize there's not title in the bulletin. If you want to put a title, just call it this: Jesus Loves the Pharisee, too. Jesus Loves the Pharisee, too. T-O-O, not T-O, like you know an infinitive verb. Or not T-W-O like the number. But T-O-O, as in also. He loves the Pharisee, too. Point number one, the sinful thoughts of a hostile Pharisee, the sinful thoughts of a hostile Pharisee.

After the woman enters and, frankly, makes a scene in verses 36-38, the narrative then draws our attention to the reaction of the Pharisee. Here's what he was thinking about, about what just happened in front of him. "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.'"

Now, notice here that the Pharisee's pondering isn't about the woman. He's got her all figured out. She is neatly pigeonholed and tucked away in the unclean category. She's a sinner. No more thought necessary. Don't need to ponder anything. As a non-entity to him, her behavior at his dinner party, while slightly embarrassing, he can get over it. It's ultimately a nonissue. She'll be shooed away by the servants eventually. This guy's moving on.

Instead, the Pharisee's focus and his thinking is on Jesus. Jesus is the object of his perplexity. Jesus is the one that he intended to invite there and discredit in the first place. And now, crystallizing in his unbelieving mind, he lands on the

evidence that he came looking for in the first place, Aha! Exactly as I suspected, Jesus is no prophet. Now, before we parse his thinking, we just need to notice how Luke has given us some clues here in the text about what we're going to see in this thinking. Luke is setting us up here by how he introduces the thought life of this man to discern the Pharisee's heart, to see the blackness of his heart, to judge his thinking even before we hear the concluding judgment that he's made about Jesus.

Notice, first that Luke has reminded us that the Pharisee invited Jesus. We already knew that, right? I mean from the opening verse, verse 36, we already knew he invited him, so why this reminder just two verses later? We noted last week the Pharisees had rejected the purpose of God for themselves, Luke 7:30. So we need to carry forward this bit of information into this scene, that the one who invited him is not here offering friendship. This man is hostile to Jesus. He doubted Jesus from the start and he's merely looking for evidence to support that predetermined conclusion. So Jesus has stepped into an intellectual religious ambush. The Pharisee intends to prove in

the presence of all his dinner guests, he intends to prove that this Jesus is no prophet at all.

Second, and look again in verse 39 where Luke tells us, "Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this." Saw what? What did he see? The Pharisee witnessed what everyone else did, that an infamous woman has come to worship Jesus. She came to them with the sole purpose of humbling herself, bowing at his feet and anointing him with oil. The outpouring of emotion that preceded the outpouring of perfumed ointment, that really only strengthens the remarkable nature of what has happened to this woman. And he saw this.

Okay, so yeah, duh, why is that important? Because we need to see that the Pharisee's conclusion has completely ignored this important piece of evidence. The Pharisee has totally dismissed as unimportant, as irrelevant the inexplicable and dramatic turn around by a woman that he knew, a woman that everyone knew, was a sinful woman. Not one thought about her change of heart. Not one mention of her humble and reverent and worshipful behavior, which is nothing less than a radical

transformation. Doesn't this seem just a bit odd that all this Pharisee wants to consider is the kind of evidence that might prove Jesus is a fake?

So he's ignored the obvious. And he's assumed what he's wanting to prove. This Pharisee is hostile to Jesus. He's invited him to dinner to put him to the test. He's witnessed a dramatic transformation. But he seems blind to it. He's ignored its significance. Third thing we find out here, just to bring us into his thought life, as Luke tells us in verse 39, this conclusion that we're reading about is something that, quote, "he said to himself." That is to say, these words were not spoken. They were not audible. He didn't speak these things out loud. What we're reading here are the thoughts of his mind.

Okay, why is that important? What does that tell us? Well, besides the obvious fact that all of our thoughts are known to God, as this man's thoughts are known to God, and his thoughts are put on the pages of Scripture, we're glad that the canon's closed, aren't we? But besides that obvious fact, think about what it means that he's thinking one thing and he's not talking

according to that. He's not treating Jesus that way. This man is not acting in a straightforward manner with Jesus Christ. He's not honest and forthright. This man is duplicitous. He speaks with a forked tongue. He upholds Jesus. He invites him, pretending friendship and fellowship, but he withholds his true thoughts, his true intentions. He gives Jesus the false impression of friendship, of agreement, of favor. All the while, he wants to roast him.

So Luke wants us to consider what we're about to hear from the Pharisee's mind, his judgment. He wants us to consider it in light of all that. This man has an axe to grind. He's only interested in reinforcing his own judgment with evidence that he intended to find at that dinner. And now with this unexpected and uninvited guest who came in weeping at Jesus' feet, now he finds an opportunity to capitalize on that intrusion, to find some reason to reject Jesus and that's just what he does. "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."

I mentioned last time how that sentence has been constructed here as a second-class conditional sentence. You're like, Hey, wow, what's that? A conditional sentence, you go back to grammar that we never learned, go back to that and it's an, If-then, statement. Okay, here's a simple one, If it's raining outside, then the street will be wet. If-then. Okay. So in this case, "If this man were a prophet, then he would know." Okay? Very simply put. That's a conditional sentence. It's an If-then, expression.

Now with a second-class, there are four of those conditional kinds of conditional sentences in the Greek. A second-class conditional sentence in the Greek, the, if, part of the statement, it'd be like, If it's raining outside, or "If this man were a prophet," that part, that is something that the speaker assumes to be false. So it's a contrary-to-the-fact assertion. So, If it was raining outside, but I'm assuming that's not happening for whatever reason, then the street would be wet. Or here in this case, "If this man were a prophet," but he's not. That's the idea.

Again, this Pharisee has already determined Jesus is not a prophet. That's his starting assumption. So it's like this, "If this man were a prophet," but he's most certainly not a prophet, "he would know that this woman is a sinner. He doesn't know what kind of woman is touching him," which now proves what I've already assumed, namely, "he's not a prophet." What kind of proof does he think he's found? Why does the Pharisee assume that Jesus does not know who and what sort of woman this is that she's a sinner? Here is his irrefutable proof, just one piece of evidence, the woman is touching Jesus and he's allowing it.

Verb here is in the present tense. It portrays, as he thinks that sentence in his mind, the woman is touching Jesus. It's a present tense. It portrays the action going on in front of him as ongoing. In fact, if you keep that in your mind through the next few verses from this point all the way down to verse 48. While the Pharisee is thinking these thoughts, while Jesus tells him a parable, the woman is carrying on in the background. She keeps on kissing on feet. She continues rubbing perfumed ointment into his feet.

What could be for him continuous ongoing evidence of her remarkable transformation, the Pharisee turns into irrefutable proof that Jesus is not a prophet. Because in his judgment, if Jesus was a prophet, which would obviously mean he'd know who and what sort of woman this is, that she's a sinner, so if he was a prophet, then he would not allow the woman to touch him. It's a foregone conclusion in his mind, prophets don't let sinful women touch them.

What the big deal about that? What the big deal about her touching him? Why no physical contact with this woman? Because someone who is so notoriously sinful, someone who's known by everyone as a sinner throughout the entire city, she's an unclean woman. Pharisees, they were fastidious about clean and unclean. They were very careful about maintaining ritual purity, ceremonial cleanness, and a safe distance from all that would defile them. In fact, the majority of Pharisaical teaching had to do with rules upon rules upon rules upon ordinances and laws and strictures and everything else that helped others maintain the kind of ritual purity that they saw as fitting.

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Ever since the days of Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah, as God restored Israel back into the land, the Pharisees, they developed as a party of separatists. In fact, the origin of the name Pharisee comes from the Hebrew verb *parash*, which means, to separate or to go out. So the Pharisees formed with an interest in purity before God. They wanted to be holy. They wanted to be set apart.

It started out well. But their interest in holiness and purity, their interest in remaining distinct and separate from the unclean people of the land, like all those Samaritans and Gentiles, who were antagonistic to the people of God. They did try to prevent the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple. But all their efforts and interests in purity and holiness turned into an attempt to maintain holiness by law keeping, an external holiness, an appearance of holiness only.

Paul tells us in Romans 10:2-3 that the Jews and the Pharisees are the quintessential example of this tendency that the Jews "had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. They were ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to

establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." That describes this Pharisee perfectly.

Pharisees went to a lot of trouble to make sure that they were not unclean, especially when they sat down to eat a meal. They went through quite a process to ensure ritual cleanness and purity before eating.

Over in Mark 7, the Pharisees, they saw Jesus' disciples eating with hands that were defiled. What does that mean? They were doing yardwork or something or playing around in sewer or whatever before they came to dinner? No, that's not what that means. They had hands that were undefiled, that is unwashed. We don't mean like they didn't wash up for supper. It meant they didn't go through the purification ritual for their hands.

Mark explains, writing in Mark 7:3 and following, "For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, not just, not just with water, but properly is the word, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions they observe, such as the washing of cups

and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.” It sounds exhausting. Those ceremonial washings observed fastidiously, regularly ongoing had happened before this meal, as well, which makes verse 44 even more interesting. No water offered for Jesus’ feet.

So when this sinful woman entered, when she started touching Jesus’ feet, immediately the Pharisees honed in on that. Notes that violation of purity. He spots the defilement. He’s got a radar, just points right to it. After all, here’s a woman who’s frequented the marketplace in the interests of her illicit profession. No telling where this woman has been recently but its certain she’s been in the marketplace, probable she’s been in the company of unclean Gentiles, and very likely, she’s been up to no good at all, involved in yet another sin. This woman is unclean to the core. Simon doesn’t want her to get any nearer. The very presence of this notoriously sinful woman means the dinner table is at risk of defilement by an impure, ritually unclean person.

Now before we move to a second point, let's stop and see if we can note the flaws in the Pharisee's thinking. What are the errors in his reasoning, which have led him to such a false and censorious judgment about Jesus Christ? Again, back to the clues that Luke gave us when introducing the Pharisee's thoughts. First, the Pharisee's conclusion, it's based on prejudicial thinking. He is biased against Jesus. He's hostile to Jesus from the start. That's how his heart is oriented and so he's determined to find something wrong. He starts with his conclusion and then he goes looking for proof. His thinking is not neutral. It's blinded by prejudice. And just, beloved, I just stepping out from the text, every unbeliever you find, the heart is prejudice against God. The heart is prejudice against righteousness. The thinking is not neutral. It's morally set against God. That's what the Bible tells us.

What else do we see here? Second, very important to notice that because of his prejudicial thinking, the Pharisee has demonstrated two very significant errors in judgment. On the one hand, he assumes this, he assumes that Jesus doesn't know who and what kind of woman has been touching him. And on the other hand, the Pharisee thinks that he does know what kind of woman she is, that she's a sinner. As we pointed out, though,

Pharisee's just witnessed here something utterly remarkable, that this woman, known to all as an arrogant, obdurate, wayward sinner.

She's now humbling bowing at Jesus' feet. She's reverent, she's shedding tears. She's sincere. She's using the hair of her head as a common rag to wipe up his dirty feet and dry them. She sacrifices her expensive perfume. Wait a minute. Isn't she going to need that perfume for a job later on? No. She gives it here. What's happened to her? That's called contrary evidence. That is evidence that his conclusions about the woman might need to be reconsidered. Does this Pharisees really know better than Jesus? Does he know who and what sort of woman has been touching Jesus? Or is Jesus maybe the better judge of that?

Third thing we noted is that the Pharisee was speaking to himself, that is he's not speaking out loud. Notice what comes next in the text in verse 40. "Jesus answering said to him." Did the Pharisee ask a question? I don't see it. But Jesus has a habit of answering questions like that. He knows what we think. He answers thoughts in our hearts. At this point, we can see how

the Pharisee's judgment here becomes a testimony against him and a testimony rather in favor of Jesus. It's actually flipped on its head. The Pharisee said, "If this man were a prophet, then he would have known who and what sort of," man, "woman this is who's touching him, for she's a sinner."

And against this censorious judgment, we can now see and affirm the truth about Jesus that, yes, this man is indeed a prophet, more than that. He proves to be more than a prophet. He's the all-knowing God who can read minds. Therefore, Jesus knows exactly who this woman is. And he knows who the Pharisee is, too. Jesus knows exactly what sort of woman she is. Ah, but he also knows exactly the sort of man that Simon is, the Pharisee is, as well, this man who invited him to dinner. Jesus knows full well that the woman who is touching him is a forgiven saint, while the Pharisee with whom he eats is a defiled sinner.

The omniscience of the Lord Jesus Christ brings us into a second point now. Number two, the loving strategy of an omniscient Lord, the loving strategy of an omniscient Lord. We saw first the sinful thoughts of a hostile Pharisee and in

reaction to that, we see the loving strategy of an omniscient Lord. Luke presents Jesus to us as one who possess not just prophetic knowledge, but divine knowledge. Jesus is not just able to discern who this woman is, what kind of woman she is. Jesus possesses divine knowledge; he knows exactly what the Pharisee is thinking. He has the ability to read this man's mind.

And let me be explicit here. Jesus knows this man's mind and knowing what he knows, seeing what he sees in this man's dark thoughts, instead of getting up from the table and walking out of the house, he chooses instead to lovingly and patiently teach him. So what does Jesus know? What does his divine omniscience see and discern in this man's mind? Well, it's not good. In fact we can take a note of a few things readily apparent. Many things actually to note in what Luke recorded.

But just, let's just hone-in on the major category of the Pharisee's error. Here's the error, in the face of an incredibly courageous act of worship on the part of the woman, Simon, I mean he doesn't have to figure it all out. He doesn't have to

say, Oh, I know why she's doing this, because she's a transformed, redeemed sinner. But at the very least, Simon fails to discern anything of spiritual significance in what he's just witnesses. He doesn't see anything remarkable spiritually speaking.

He has, first of all, failed to understand anything spiritual going on with a worshiping woman. He's like a blind beast here. He is totally oblivious to spiritual realities. He ought to have been asking, What, what happened to her? I know this woman, what kind of woman she's been. Everybody knows what kind of woman this woman's been. This is something new. This is something remarkable. What explains this? It's so obvious something has happened to her. He simply looks past her behavior, looks right through her, right over her, around her. Perhaps he discounts all this as curious and strange, but he just has no sense at all to discern that a spiritual transformation has taken place in her.

Not only that, but secondly, he's failed to discern the majestic glory of Jesus in front of him. Not just that he has

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insulted Jesus as we read, going to read in the text, verse 44 and following. It's not just that he's insulted Jesus with his own lack of hospitality, his lack of grace. More immediately, he hasn't stopped to reflect at all on the nature of this woman's worship and what it means. He hasn't thought at all about the fact that Jesus hasn't pushed her away. He hasn't pulled his feet back. He didn't get up and say, No, no don't do that. He accepted it.

He asked no questions here about Jesus. He quickly rushes to a hostile judgment about him. What you need to see here, and we can just take and extrapolate from Simon the Pharisee here, to pretty much every unbeliever we know, this Pharisee is dead as a post. He just doesn't get it at all. He is blind. He is deaf. He is hard-hearted. Why? Because he is spiritually dead.

Paul wrote about such people in Corinth. 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 says that, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for their folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they're spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things though he

himself is judged by no one." You've got a natural man and a spiritual man. A natural person, in the flesh person, carnal person, and a spiritual person, a regenerate person. Unbeliever and believer.

The Pharisee is a natural man. He's unregenerate. He is not born again. He is dead to spiritual things. He doesn't accept spiritual things because they don't make any sense to him. He's got no faculties, spiritually speaking, to process anything that he's seen. He's simply unable to discern anything spiritual that's happening here in front of him and that's why Paul tells us that the essence of Christian ministry is for us who are ministering in the body of Christ to pursue spiritual ministry with spiritual people.

The previous verse, 1 Corinthians 2:13, Paul wrote, "We," he's talking about himself and the other apostles. "We impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, we're interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual." The language there is interesting because it's talking about joining or weaving something together. You're

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joining in spiritual things, spiritual truths and you're weaving them into, working them into spiritual people because only spiritual people can embrace and understand spiritual truth. The natural man doesn't accept them. We're not worried in the church, we're not worried in the world, when natural people turn away because we expect that. We realize it requires the Spirit of God to work regeneration in the heart in order for that person to be able to respond to the truth.

So when natural people turn away, that's par for the course. Of course they're going to reject the truth, reject us. Of course, they're going to hate what we have to say because they don't get it. There's no faculty there. They're still dead in trespasses and sins.

Well, that's this man, this Pharisee. Jesus reads the man's mind. He recognizes the man is spiritually dead, he's, therefore, hostile. And rather, here, then get up, excuse himself from the table, Jesus decides to minister to him anyway. Look at verse 40. "Jesus answering said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.'" May notice that this is the first

time that Luke records the man's name. It seems that Luke has waited until this moment in the story to emphasize Jesus' knowledge of Simon by naming him. When Jesus uses the man's name, it highlights the fact that Jesus has an intimate knowledge of this man, not to mention the fact that he just read his mind. He has omniscient knowledge. He has knowledge not just of Simon, but also of the worshiping woman. But especially knowing sinful Simon, knowing his sinful mind, he says, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

Just a brief point I wanted to insert. It's, it's important to help us see clearly how Jesus loves even his enemies. He loves even those who don't love him. He loves even those who treat him poorly, even those who treat him with utter contempt. He loves them. This is how he loves those who harbor sinful hidden judgments against him. This is how he loves those who conspire against him. "Simon, I have something to say to you."

Think back to yourself, your own life before Christ. Put your own name in that blank. So-and-so, now redeemed sinner, I have something to say to you. Aren't you thankful that he looked

past your hard-heartedness, past your judgments, past your sin, past your criticisms, past your rejection and said, "I have something to say to you," to you for your benefit, for your sake?

In what follows, Jesus makes no defense about his own knowledge. He doesn't say, Hold on there, Simon. Just read your thoughts. That's pretty good for someone who's a non-prophet, right? Just read your, your thinking. He doesn't even say anything like that. He's under, he's really under no compulsion to justify himself in the face of Simon's sinful thinking and conclusion. And as a matter of fact, it's interesting that Jesus doesn't even mention what Simon was thinking. He doesn't even bring it up. He doesn't reveal what he knows in his divine perception. He simply takes what he knows and now he uses it, not to make Simon feel it, he uses it to love Simon. He uses it to hopefully bring conviction to Simon's proud and sinful heart. "Simon, I have something to say to you." This is for you, Simon.

Let's consider our third point in which Jesus gives Simon here a parable. Third point is the simple story of a gracious

Savior. We've seen his strategy, now we're going to see the simple story of a gracious Savior. Rather than confronting Simon pointblank, Jesus takes a more indirect route. This is a confrontation, to be sure, but it's a loving confrontation. The story serves a purpose of strengthening the indictment of Simon's thinking, but it is for the purpose of bringing him to repentance. The story here is told for the purpose of exposing Simon, yes, but also loving the man.

It's a short parable. Like most of Jesus' parable, this one yeah, it starts with familiar things they understand, but it kind of has a surprising twist to it, something that's unexpected. Look at verses 40-43. "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.'"

And just quickly, a denarius is a day's wage for a soldier or a day laborer. The higher debt here is about two years' worth of wages. Lower debt, about two months' worth of wages. Not paying back debts that are owed could and often did land a

debtor in debtor's prison or could result in someone being enslaved until that full payment was made. So that's just the predicament that Jesus named here.

"A certain moneylender has two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Folks, I hope you see how clearly Jesus' story portrays the Gospel. There's a moneylender and there are two debtors. Whom does the moneylender represent? God, right? God is the one who owes no man but graciously gives to all. The Most High, Luke 6:35, "is kind to the ungrateful and the evil every single day." More than that, he forgives the transgressor who cannot undue his transgression. He forgives.

So who do the two debtors represent? Now before you say that the debtors represent Simon and the sinful woman, consider what it says in verse 42, "When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both." I wish that the ESV translators would not have translated that verb, *charizomai* as cancelled, as if Jesus were talking here about merely an accounting issue and not a

theological issue. The verb *charizomai* has at its root the word *charis*, which is the Greek word, grace. King James translates the phrase, "He frankly forgave them both." The NAS translates it, "He graciously forgave them both." Forgiveness is the idea.

Cancellation of debt, sure, but forgiveness because grace is the root idea here. The theological concept of unmerited favor. That's grace. That's what Jesus wants to convey to Simon. Neither of these debtors could pay and the moneylender forgave. He graciously forgave both of these debtors their debts. The five hundred denarii, two years' wages, gone. The fifty denarii, two months' wages, gone. The favor they each received was unmerited. They had nothing with which to repay him. So the creditor, he swallowed their debts. He ate the costs. He took the hit. He suffered the loss.

Okay, so I'll ask the question again. Since the moneylender is a picture of God, do the debtors in the story represent Simon and the sinful woman? Let's assume for the sake of the illustration here that the answer is yes, that Simon and the sinful woman represent the two debtors in Jesus' story. Then I

have another question for you. Which debtor represents Simon? And which debtor represents the sinful woman? Is it obvious that the sinful woman is the five hundred denarii debtor and that Simon is the fifty denarii debtor? Or is it the other way around?

We tend to judge matters like Simon did, don't we, by outward observance? It's all we can do. We're limited, we're human. We've learned that in 1 Samuel 16:7, "For the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." It's not an indictment of our vision. We're just limited creatures. We can't see beyond what's externally observable, right? It's not an indictment, though, it's just a fact. It's also a caution, though, as well, isn't it?

We're all debtors whether we've sinned much or whether we've sinned heinously, whether we've sinned little and mildly, whatever it is, we've sinned. We've transgressed. James said, James 2:11, that "He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' that's the same one who said, 'Do not commit murder.'" Okay, so if you

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do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you become a transgressor of the law." And before you say, I'm good to go, then. I haven't done adultery or murder. There's no bodies buried and there's no women coming calling. Before you think that, consider what Jesus said to say, You know what, any lustful, errant thought in your mind is tantamount to adultery. Any anger in your heart that's unrighteous is tantamount to murder.

Now where do you stand? We all stand condemned. We're law breakers. We're transgressors. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," right? We don't measure the weight of our sins; we don't calculate the gravity of our sins based on the nature of sin alone. We don't, we don't base the gravity of our sins on the consequences or the repercussions of the sins that we commit. Although, we do that all the time. It's just a little sin. It's just a minor thing. It doesn't hurt anybody. Only God knows the true nature of our sins. Only God can spot and see and trace the full consequences of our sins. The full measure of our sins is something that only an omniscient and just judge can see and decide.

But the gravity of our sins is most fundamentally understood not in view of the crime itself, not in view of the repercussions or effects of that crime. Biblically, we measure the gravity of sin in light of the one against whom we have sinned. I'll often use this analogy when I share the Gospel with people, try to help them understand the reason that every transgression against a holy God carries the stiffest penalty possible, that is, damnation in eternal hell. People balk at that, but I tell them, Look, I lean right into it and I say, Of course, why wouldn't it? When you consider the holiness and the greatness of the one against you, whom you sin.

They often don't get it, so I give them this illustration. I say, Hey, you might get angry at me for a sermon I preach and then you punch me after the service. That's bad and I would prefer that you just write me an impassioned letter, or something like that. But if you do punch me, probably nothing would happen. I'd just give thanks that I was punched for the sake of the Gospel, right. Or maybe if you broke my jaw, I might ask for a little help with the medical bills.

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But let's say you keep punching me, keep pummeling me and perhaps some kind Christian in our church calls the cops. They see what's happening. Our pastor's getting the life beat out of him. I wonder if he wants help. Maybe call the cops. So they call the cops. Cops come, pull you off of me. Thank you. Love the law enforcement, don't you? Love them. Cops come. You don't like their firm and authoritative manner either. So you punch a cop. Now you've crossed the line, right? You're going to jail for sure.

They haul you off. Days later you are escorted into the courtroom and as you're walking toward the courtroom being escorted by the police, you happen to see Greeley's Mayor, I believe is Tom Norton, right? And you break away and you go punch him. That's going to carry even a bit stiffer penalty, right? What's the difference between us, me, the cop, the mayor? We're all men. We're all covered by the same flesh. We're all bleed the same blood. The difference between us is not our flesh and blood. We're all equal before God.

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The difference between us is our status. It's our level of authority. From private citizen, to sworn peace officer, to mayor. There is a gradation of rank. There is a gradation of symbolic importance. We get that. That's why any sin against a holy God is high treason. And the penalty for committing any sin against God is you're going away for a long, long time.

So for Simon the Pharisee, for this sinful woman or for you and me, any one of our sins is enough to condemn us to hell for all of eternity. We've committed more than one. We've committed many sins, many sins against God. So who's to say who's the greater sinner? Only God. We might tend to think the woman is the greater sinner because her sins contributed to the defilement of men, the ruination of marriage, the destruction of family, so and so on, so many people hurt by her sin.

Or maybe we look at it from another perspective. We might think about Simon as the greater sinner here because he's culturally acceptable. His culturally acceptable propriety provided to him with a degree of credibility and that gave him a platform to propagate false teaching. How may does that ruin?

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He's a preacher of peace when there is no peace. He gives false assurance to those who are actually under divine condemnation. We tend to look at all these preaching, preacher scandals, right? Priest scandals and all the rest. And we think about these Prosperity Gospel preachers and Roman Catholic priests who commit sins and once they do that, we're shocked and horrified, as we should be, all the while forgetting that their lifelong teaching has been condemning people to hell. Why aren't we upset about that?

In whatever way we might try to compare and contrast the sins of Simon and the sinful woman, we do know this for sure, on this occasion, at this dinner, on this particular day, it's Simon who is the greater sinner and the woman is the greater saint. After all, it was she, not Simon, who ignored the fear of man and who humbled herself. It was she, not Simon, who recognized Jesus for who he was and bowed to the floor in worship. It was she, not Simon, who used the members of her body as instruments of righteousness. It was she, not Simon, who gave her perfumed ointment, a gift in proportion to her wealth, that was quite sacrificial and far greater in proportion to the food that Simon gave from his own bounty that sat on the table.

So setting aside the past for the sake of argument, it's clear that Simon, not this woman, he is the greater sinner on this day. But let's go back to that question I asked. Since the moneylender is a picture of God, do the debtors here in the story represent Simon and the sinful woman and the answer to that question is actually, no. Simon is not one of the two debtors in the parable. The purpose of this parable is to get Simon to reflect on the nature of love, to teach him how love motivates the kind of worship that he's seeing in this redeemed woman, to convict him that since he does not possess that love, he is therefore not forgiven.

Notice the question Jesus asked at the end of the story, end of verse 42, "Now which of them will love him more?" Love is present with both debtors, right? Love is present in both debtors who are forgiven. They have nothing to repay, both forgiven. They both love. The question here is not the presence of love. Love is present, but the question here has to do with the degree of love. Degree. By asking Simon to discern the difference between the two responses of love, Jesus has just established a very important principle in his ministry here.

You know what the principle is? It's vital. You need to keep this in mind. It's an indispensable, spiritual principle that those who are forgiven will always respond to the one who forgave them in love. Those who are forgiven will always respond to the God, their forgiver, in love. No love, no forgiveness. Now we can ask all kinds of questions about the measure of love, the degree of love, the kind of reaction or response that's elicited from those who do love, the varying expressions of love because we're all different. But love or no love, that's the question.

You know how we can actually grow in our expressions of love and worship to Christ as Christians, as those forgiven, those whose debts have been wiped away? Study God's Word. Learn here in the Bible what it says about the nature of sin. And then step away and go and look in the mirror. The more you understand your sin, the more you will grow in your appreciation for divine grace. The more you will love your merciful Saviour, the less you see your sin. The more you think you're okay, the more you think there are others around you who are worse, the less you see your sin, the less appreciation you'll have for your forgiveness.

The more arrogant you'll be. The more like Simon, actually. The less you'll love.

Simon ventured an answer to Jesus' question. You can tell he's kind of tentative about it. It would appear here that he answered a bit reluctantly, almost, almost sensing that a trap is about to close on him. "Jesus asked, 'Which of them will love him more.' And Simon answered, I 'the one,' I, "I suppose,'" Am I standing on, on a noose or am I about to be get ensnared here? "The one I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.'" And Jesus then did spring a trap. "You judged correctly." You judged correctly.

Nothing wrong with Simon's judgment, right? Nothing wrong with his reasoning ability. Nothing misfiring in his logic, nothing wrong with processing, all the wires are connected. So what's wrong with Simon? No love. No love means no forgiveness. And no forgiveness means he, as he sits there among his guests, as he sits there in the presence of Jesus the Messiah in the presence of this bowing, humble, weeping female saint, Simon is

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the one who remains utterly unclean, vile, wretched and remains under God's wrath.

Simon's problem is that he's dead in his trespasses and sins and he's heading for hell and at this point, he doesn't see it. He doesn't recognize it. He doesn't understand it. Well that's where Jesus, with a gracious heart of divine compassion, Jesus, who loves his enemies, Jesus who loves the Pharisee, too, by telling them the truth. He's about to blow the lid off Simon's problem, show him exactly what's wrong. That's what we'll see next time as Jesus applies the story that he told to Simon. He applies it to him; he exposes clearly the lack of love and his need for salvation. Such a gracious, gracious Savior to love sinners of all kinds. We, in this room, are representative of that fact, are we not?

Let's pray, give thanks to him for saving us. Our God and our Father, we thank you that you are our Father by your grace, by the kindness you have showed to us in Jesus Christ. We stand amazed in your presence to see that our sins, which are many, have been forgiven because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

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You've taken all of our sins, along with this dear woman, you've taken our sins and you've placed them on your beloved Son.

Instead of punishing us, you've punished him.

You poured out all your fury against sin, all your anger, all your wrath, duly deserved, you punished him, which is what your justice required. And because each and every one of our sins has been dealt with, you then turned and covered us with his perfect righteousness. He who fulfilled all of your law, did all of your will perfectly, now being united to him, we stand before you in the same state, completely pure of sin, but also completely standing in fulfillment of righteousness. The one who said, "It is finished," he's fulfilled it all for us. And we're so grateful because we, our sins are many before you.

Oh, Father, I pray that you would help us to love. That you'd help us to love everyone, even our enemies in the way that Jesus loved, by telling them the truth, by pleading to them to turn to you, the gracious God, and the Savior whom you have sent, Jesus Christ. He is your beloved Son in whom you are well pleased and all of us who are forgiven, are united to him and we

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stand before you now with no condemnation. Thank you for your kindness to us in Christ. It's in his name we pray, Amen.