

An alabaster box

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 7 from verse 36.

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meet. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meet in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors.

The one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. Whom he had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them would love him most?

[1 : 36] Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman, I entered into thine house, Thou gavest me no water for my feet, But she hath washed my feet with her tears, And wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Thou gavest me no kiss, But this woman, since the time I came in, Hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil, though it is not anoint, But this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven. For she loved much, But to him little is forgiven, The same loveth little.

And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meet with him Began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace. Amen. May God bless to us the reading of his word, And to his name be the honour and the praise.

[2 : 56] Let us now sing in Psalm number 32. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned, All the transgression he hath done, Whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his sin, And in whose spirit there is no guile, Nor fraud is found therein. Psalm 32, we shall sing verses 1 to 5.

O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned, All the transgression he hath done. O blessed is the man to whom is freely pardoned, All the transgression he hath done, All the transgression he hath done, All the transgression he hath done, All the transgression he hath done, All the transgression he hath done, All the transgression he hath done, O blessed haer put the transgression he hath done, And in whose sin there is no cry, nor all is under him.

When I did refrain my speech, how silent was my time.

My hope, that was the only cause, I've heard of it all.

[5 : 08] For God, all evil day and night, thy hand with heavy pride.

So that my voice still turned in, in summer's strung and high.

I fled upon the land to thee, my sin had all ended.

And my voice turned in iniquity, I have not found the end.

I will confess unto the Lord, my trespasses shall I.

[6 : 30] And all my sins are free, it is for him iniquity.

Let us turn for a few minutes to the passage that we read together in Luke chapter 7. Let us read together again the two verses 37 and 38.

Luke chapter 7 and verse 37. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment.

Particularly the word that we have in verse 37. A woman in the city, which was a sinner.

I want us to look at this very lovely and very moving scene that we have here before us.

[8 : 06] With perhaps a particular eye towards these words, a woman in the city, which was a sinner. It is one of the more amazing things about this story.

The way that Jesus so freely accepts all that this woman does for him.

A woman in the city that was a sinner. Now a woman representsive is in the city that is not a ■■■ leakage in the church.

A womannights in the city that is a person. Everything that is maybe... the gonna make a chorus. An uninformed by an ollut for the kids. Well, I've got one of the late 18 states, you were ■■■ I Mi H■■■■■■■ iya, but it is both of whom I said told her. We don't know the identity of this woman at all. There is really no ground at all for believing that she was Mary Magdalene. There is no ground in the scripture for that.

We know that she had led a life of sin and from the way that she is introduced one would certainly be justified in thinking that she was a woman of loose morals.

[9 : 38] She was known in the city as a woman which was a sinner. Other than that really we don't know anything about her. We don't know her name. We don't know anything.

But here she is on the pages of scripture. Here she is making her affections for Jesus Christ. Making them known and showing them and pouring out what was in her own heart.

Now we don't need to go into the possible background of this woman. But the one thing that we can safely say I think is that this was not her first encounter with Jesus Christ.

I think we can pretty safely say that she came into this house as a saved sinner. She was still labelled as a woman in the city who was a sinner.

And the stigma of that still attached to her. And the stigma of that still attached to her. One can sense the atmosphere in the house. And the attitude that the people in the house would have towards her would be based on what she was. She was known as a notorious sinner.

[11 : 10] And yet there must have been a great day in her experience. A day when she had a life changing confrontation with Jesus Christ.

Because it is very clear that she comes into this house as someone who loved Jesus Christ. Whose heart was full of love for him. And who had so much love and affection burning in her heart. That it needed to find an outlet. It needed to be expressed. There was a day, we are sure, when this woman's sins were washed away.

A day when she was cleansed. A day when she was forgiven. All her sins. The whole mountain of them. Past, present and future.

[12 : 26] When they were all swept away. By being united with Jesus Christ. By being joined to him. She became a true believer.

And from that moment. Her sins, although they were many. And they were perhaps mountainous. And they were perhaps particularly black or scarlet, if you like.

And yet there was that moment when the whole lot was moved off her. And on to Jesus Christ. One glorious instant. Nothing more than an instant. When the whole lot was transferred from him onto her.

It is also very clear. That she had that assurance that he had done this part. That she was utterly certain that her sins were forgiven.

[13 : 40] Now we don't know anything about that first meeting. But I think we have to assume that there was such a meeting. When he would have met with her.

When he would have talked to her about her sin. And when he would have explained to her how her sins could be removed.

But from that moment. Her destiny was completely changed. Up to that moment. She was heading for a lost eternity.

She was heading for eternal torment. And perhaps she knew it. But the fear of that. Certainly didn't seem to make a difference to her.

But from the moment she met Jesus Christ. From the moment he forgave her and cleansed her from all her sin. Her destiny from that moment was utterly different.

[14:42] She was from that moment heading for glory. Not a glory which had been reduced because she was such a great sinner.

Not a glory which was to be in some way attenuated because she was so bad. In fact it is perhaps the other way round.

That because she had been forgiven so much. Because Jesus Christ had done so much for her. She had such a greater appreciation of what he had done. She had so much praise in her heart. She was so alive in the spirit.

Because she knew that a great mountain of sin had been removed from her. That it was gone. Gone. Gone. Her destiny was heaven.

[15:50] Her destiny was to see the glory. And to share the glory of Jesus Christ.

She was now one of those to whom he himself looked forward. Looking forward to that moment. When as he said in his own prayer.

That he would show them his glory. He was full of thankfulness. It poured out of every pore in her body.

Thankfulness. Because of what Jesus Christ had done for her. And you know this woman is such a rebuke to us.

She is such a rebuke to me. Why do I not love the way this woman loved? Why do I have not this fire in my heart which she had?

[16:56] Is it because I don't have a sufficient appreciation of my sin? Surely it must be. It is not because my sin was any less than her.

But she had been given this great gift. This great blessing. Of being given an appreciation.

A realization of the Lord. The weight of sin. Which Jesus Christ had removed from her. Let us look at a few things about this sin.

First thing we see here. Is that this woman wept. She came into this house.

And well we can say that she had a plan. That if she was going to be allowed entry. I am sure there was that uncertainty. First of all would these Pharisees.

[18:00] Would Simon the Pharisee. Would he allow her to come into his house. Especially when Jesus Christ was there. It would be that question.

Hopefully that she would get entry. She had with her this box of ointment. And she was planning to simply go in.

I am sure. And just anoint him. Perhaps anoint his head. And then just leave. Having done it. But you know. Things.

Didn't go according to plan. I don't think. I don't think. The tears. Were in this woman's plan. At all. Planned tears. I know yes. We can plan out tears. You know. And very often. We have to assess.

[19:02] How much tears mean. Tears of course. Are most precious. When they are completely unplanned.

When they are spontaneous. This woman didn't say to herself. Well I am going to go in there. And I am going to do. All this. And this. And this. And I am going to weep. I am going to wipe his feet.

With my hair. That wouldn't be in the plan at all. But. She came in. With her own simple plan. But things. Just went. Completely different.

Her entry of course. Would have raised. Some eyebrows. In that house. A woman. In the city. That was a sinner.

A woman. A woman. A woman. Coming into this. Self-righteous company. Of Pharisees. Coming in. And. Heading straight for.

[20:03] The Lord. Jesus Christ. Now. It says. About her. That she. Stood behind him. She stood at his feet.

Behind him. Weeping. And. In order to understand that. We have to remember that. In. In. These. Situations. In the east. They. They wouldn't have chairs.

As we have them. But they just. Reclined at table. Leaning on one. Elbow. With their. Their feet. Out. Behind. The one that was. Sitting. Next.

To them. Reclining at table. And obviously. What she did. Was. She came. And she stood. Just at his feet. And.

Suddenly. I suppose. As happens to us all. Her emotions. Completely. Overcame her. It all just. Bubbled up. From inside her. And she found herself.

[20 : 58] Just standing there. Unable to do. What she intended to do. And all she can do. Is stand there. And weep.

She was weeping. Tears. Of. Thankfulness. Tears. Which. Had behind them.

The thought. Of what. Jesus Christ. Had done for us. They were. Spontaneous tears. They were real tears.

And they were. Because of these things. Very. Precious. Tears. Here we have her. Standing. At his feet. With the tears.

Coming. From. Her eyes. And I think that we can. We can perhaps. Reconstruct. A little of what happened here. That she would have stood. Just. Above his feet.

[21 : 56] Her feet. His feet would be. Just. Right in front of her. She stood. And her tears. Of course. Would fall. On. His feet.

Now. You can imagine. The others in the house. Saying to themselves. At this point. Well. This is really.

We shouldn't. We shouldn't have allowed. This woman. In here at all. This woman. She is. She is such a sinner. And here she is.

With her tears. Falling on the feet. They might have thought. Contaminating. The feet.

Of the one who was. Their special guest. The Lord Jesus Christ. Now. I suppose. That.

[22 : 56] It would have been difficult. For her. To see those tears. Falling on Jesus's feet. But we have no doubt. At all. That. Those around her. Including. The host. Simon himself.

Would have been very quick. To point out. Look what you're doing woman. What's this? Your tears are falling. On. On her guests. Feet.

Then. Almost. I suppose. Instinctively. Or reflexively. She kneels down. She has nothing to wipe them with.

In this city. Which was a sin of me. Here she is. In this Pharisee's house.

Surrounded with all these. Self-righteous Pharisees. Here she is. At the feet of the. Honored guest. What a guest.

[23 : 52] The Lord Jesus Christ. Wiping her feet. With the hairs. Of her head. Well.

You can imagine. The reaction. We shouldn't have let her in at all. This is just. Too bad. This. This whole situation.

Is getting out of hand. She kissed his feet. What's the second thing she does? Verse 45. There we. We read. That. She. She. Kissed. Jesus says. That she hath. She hath washed my feet. With a. She gave me. But this woman.

Since the time I came in. Hath not ceased. To kiss my feet. It wasn't just one kiss. It was. A repeated. Kissing.

[24 : 48] She did not stop. But continued. To kiss them. And the situation. As far as these. Those who are watching it. This situation was getting washed and washed.

All the time. I wonder if you. You notice one amazing thing. About this whole situation. In a way this is. This is one of the things that.

Really enriches the story. It makes it just. So beautiful. And so encouraging. When her tears. Began to fall.

On his feet. He didn't draw his feet away. When she began.

When she dropped down. And began to. Wipe. His feet. With the hairs of her head. He didn't draw his feet away. I think that is so moving.

[25 : 54] That he. Accepted. This from us. That he. Allowed this. To go on. Don't you think that's amazing.

Not only amazing. But don't you think it's encouraging. Does it not encourage. You and I. To express.

Our thankfulness. Our. Forgiveness. Our.

Cleansing. To express. To him. The debt. That we owe. Of course. We have a.

Clear. Indication. Here. That he. Accepts it. A woman. In a city. That was a sinner.

[26 : 58] And here she is. With this. Inestimable. Privilege. Of having. Her. Over.

Church. If you like. Of. Having her. Approaches. Having. Her. Affections.

Her. Expressions. Of love. Even in their. Clumsiness. Accepted. By. Jesus Christ. Of course. She would be saying to herself. What a mess. I made of all this. She would be saying to herself. Why is it. That he is not.

Withdrawing himself. Why is he letting me do this. Why is he allowing me this indulgence.

[27 : 55] Oh how encouraging. That he accepted. And received.

And took to. The affections. The affections. The affections. And the expressions of affections. Of this woman. A woman in this city.

That was. A sinner. You and I would have called her by. Something quite different. I'm sure. And yet. Here she is.

Being received. And. Being accepted. In all her expressions.

With all their clumsiness. With all. Their untidiness. With all their sort of. Unrespectableness.

[28 : 53] This was not a case of. As we say sometimes. Things being done.

Decently. And in order. That had gone out the window. It was far. Far beyond that. That it was to me.

Far. Far more beautiful. Than. As we say. Things done. Decently. And. In order. Sometimes.

We have to just. Surrender. Our defenses. Sometimes. We have to take away the shield.

That is on our heart. Sometimes. We need to. Open the doors. And let all that is in. Pour out.

However clumsy.

[29 : 49] However messy. However. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. To some. That might be.

Because. If we. Are.

Sinners. If. We are. Sinners. With. The hope. That. Jesus Christ. Has. Taken it all.

Away from us. Then. Surely. In our hearts. There must be. A reservoir. There must be.

Damned up. Feelings. Which. Need. To have an egress. Which. Need. To. Flow out. Sometimes. Even if.

They make a mess. Master the deer. He allowed it. To. Then. Something.

[30 : 46] Happens. Strange. Thing. Happens. Up to this point. The attention. Of.

These people. Were. So much. On. The woman. So much. On. This. In. Through. Death. Into.

This company. The attention. Certainly. Seems. To. Shift. To. Jesus. Christ. Himself.

The attention. Of. The people. The Pharisees. Which. Had. Bidden. In. The Pharisees. Which. Had. Bidden. Verse. 39. When. They.

When he. Saw it. Speak. Within. Himself. Began. To have. Doubts. About. This man. Saying. If this man. Were a prophet.

[31 : 44] Of course. He was. Far more than a prophet. If this man. Were a prophet. He would have known. Who and what. Manor of woman. This is. That.

Toucheth him. For. She is a sinner. So was he a sinner. But he didn't have that great blessing.

Of knowing that he was a sinner. He was a sinner. It's sore. To know that you're a sinner.

And it's. Very very sore. And harrow. To get even a glimpse. Into just. What kind of sinner you are.

And. But it's a great blessing. It's a great blessing. This woman was blessed. With that.

[32 : 48] Simon. Had no idea. Of it. Because. All he saw. Was this defiled woman. And he himself.

So clean. By compulsion. And he says. This man. I've got some doubts. About this man. You know. If he was.

If he was a spiritual man. If he was real. In his religion. Then. He would.

He would know. What kind of woman this was. And. She was touching him. And. He just couldn't get over this. That.

She was touching him. And that. He was allowing it. Because. She was. A sinner. They have great questions. About.

[33 : 45] This man. Jesus Christ. I cannot understand. That most. Fundamental. Thing. About him. That he is the.

Friend of sinners. That he is the one. Who sat down. With publicans. And sinners.

That he is the one. Who cried. From the very cross. Itself. Father. Forgive them. For they know not. What they do.

He is the one. Who loved sinners. And. Having loved. His own. And. He loved them. Unto the end.

Simon had no understanding. Of that. Because. He did not have that. What we might call. The first blessing. And that is.

[34 : 45] To know. That you are a sinner. And for me. To know. That I. Am a sinner. Of. These kisses. They speak so much.

Don't they. They say. So much. About. The revelation. That this woman had. What a tremendous. Experience she had had. What a. What a tremendous. Vision. She had been given. Of her own sin. And of that sin.

Being. Removed. It had to find. Expression. Here it is. These kisses. They speak.

Of. The one. Who had taken it all. Away. For her. Now. Something else.

[35 : 41] Perhaps. Might strike us here. Up at these feet. And I'm quite sure that. Well. I don't know. But. I.

I. I. I. Can't think that this woman. Would have had much. Knowledge. Of what the scripture contained. Maybe she did. I don't know. But. I don't know that she would have. Any idea of. The prophecies. In. In. Like. Psalm 22. Would speak about. They pierced. My hands. And. Feet. You see. The. The. The significance. Of that. Here she was. Kissing these feet. And yet. These feet.

Were to be pierced. For her. Her sins. Had only been. Taken away. On the basis. That these feet.

[36 : 38] Were going to be pierced. She kissed them. Oh. If she only knew. What was going to happen to them. What would she have said.

Would she have said. Perhaps. Words like Peter. Who said. Oh no. No. Oh no. Be it far from me. That that should happen. And yet.

That's the way. It had to be. There is no other. Way that sin. Can be removed. Except. By the work of the cross. Then of course.

Jesus senses. The. The questions. That were. Arising in the. Minds of Simon. And his friends. And. Jesus then. Addresses Simon. We see. We read. This parable. Which. He. Says. And you read it all. We don't really need to go over it.

[37 : 37] Basically. This. Parable is. Bringing us to. To this. This point. This realization. That.

The greater the debt. The greater the love. The greater the debt. That has been removed. The greater.

The love. Turn to the woman. And as he turns to her. He says to Simon. Seest thou this woman. And he goes on. I entered into thy house.

You didn't do this. She did this. You didn't do this for me. She did it for me. She did more than that. You didn't do this. She did that. And even more. So it goes on.

Who gaveth me no kiss. This woman. Since the time. I came in. Hath not ceased. To kiss. To kiss my feet.

[38 : 34] And so on. Wherefore. I say. Wherefore. I say. That her sins. Which are many. Are forgiven.

For she loved much. But. To whom little is forgiven. The same. Loveth little. She anointed his feet. With the ointment.

Do you think that was the plan? I don't think so. I think the plan would have been to. To anoint his head. Or to break the box over his head. But of course.

This whole plan was all. Out of joint by this time. This woman. Wouldn't. Wouldn't even. Wouldn't even know what to do next. We see that she.

Anointed his feet. With the ointment. And again. That is the acceptance. Takes it all. He doesn't recoil. From the sinner's touch.

[39 : 35] He doesn't recoil. From the sinner's. Untidy. Expressions. Of affection. And love. All for.

A realization. A realization. Of what. Sinners. We are. For a realization. Of.

The multitude. Of our sins. And for a realization. Of. The awfulness. Of the individual. Of the individual. Sins.

Do we think of ourselves. As. Little sinners. Well if we are. All we are. Is. If we do. Then all we are. Is just. Little pharsis.

Just like. Simon. The great. Danger. With us today. Is. A lack. Of our realization.

[40 : 34] Of our sin. A lack. Of our conviction. Of. Of. The sin. That. Jesus Christ. Has taken from us.

That is. The blessing we seek. And surely. Surely. At the beginning of. A communion. Cease. Surely that is the first thing. That we should be seeking.

The first thing. That we should be praying for. That. We would have again. Perhaps. A fresh. Or a renewed vision. Of our sin. In order that we might. From that point. Appreciate. What Jesus Christ. Has done for us.

In order that our hearts. Would be filled. With love. For him. What is. His response.

[41 : 32] To us. This is another very encouraging thing. Not only. Does. He. Accept. Our expressions. Of.

Love and affection. Even although they might be messy and untidy. Not only that. But. He responds to them. What a response. This is.

He said unto her. Verse 48. Thy sins. Are. Forgiven. Is there any.

Greater. Thing. You desire. You come into this communion. Perhaps. Seeking a blessing. I hope you are.

And I hope you're. Filled with. With. Expectation. I hope so. That your prayers are. Filled with. Expectation.

[42 : 32] And I wonder. If you have. This in your prayer. That. God would. Show us. All. Our sin.

I'm sure you know the story of. The servant girl. Who. Was. Working in this. House. House. And. There was this minister. Who used to be.

A guest. Back and forth. This house. And. First time. He met her. He. Got into conversation. With her. And. He realized. That she had no.

No. Understanding. Of. Scripture. Of. Of. Of. Of. Of. The Christian life. At all. And. He says to her. I want you.

To pray this prayer. Until. I come back again. And he. He gave. He gave her this prayer. Lord. Show me. Myself.

[43 : 28] Some months went by. And. He came back to the house. And. He asked about the servant girl. And. Oh. They said. I'm.

We're afraid. She's not very well at all. She is just going around. In sorrow. And in tears. Day after day. And he says.

Well. Can I speak to her? So. She came. And. He asked her. What was wrong? Well. She says. I prayed the prayer. That you asked me to pray.

And God answered my prayer. God showed me myself. And I just cannot stop weeping. Because of my sin. Because of what I am.

While the minister says to her. I'm going to give you. Another prayer. And I want you to pray that prayer. Until I come back again. The prayer was. Lord.

[44 : 24] Show me. Thyself. So he went away. And the next time he came back. He asked for the servant girl. And they said. Oh.

She is. Utterly. Utterly. Different. She goes around the house. Singing. All day. She is just as usual. She was. Completely changed.

So he asked to speak to her. And he asked her. About herself. And she told him. Well. She says. I prayed the prayer. And the Lord God showed me himself.

He showed me his glory. He showed me his mercy. In Jesus Christ. He showed me all of it. And she says. I just cannot stop. But sing.

And sing. Words of praise. To him. Let us pray. Have mercy upon us.

[45 : 28] Oh God. Bring us again. To the cross. Remind us again.

Oh Lord. That. Our great Savior. Is described. As the lamb slain.

Help us to again appreciate Lord. The suffering of the cross. The endurance.

And the way that it speaks. Of our own sin. Help us to realize that. There was just no other way.

Will the Lord bless us richly. In these days. With. A true. Humiliation before thee.

[46 : 28] With that true brokenness. Oh. Give us the heart. Of the woman. In the city.

Who was a sinner. Give us her outpourings. And oh Lord. Give us her blessing. And her privilege.

And if it be thy will. Oh Lord. Will thou grant to us. The token. That was granted. To her. Thy sins.

Forgiven. Bless us now. And keep us. And all we ask. Is for the glory. And for the honor. Of our Lord. And Savior. Jesus Christ.

Amen.