

Christ and the sinful woman 1

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] Turn by with me to the chapter we read in Luke's Gospel chapter 7 in that passage about Jesus in the house of the Pharisees. And probably as the theme of that whole passage we find the words in verse 47.

For I say unto thee, for sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. So, in a sense, if we had the time and the inclination, this would be the kind of passage that we all would read every day to remind us of the essence of the Gospel. Because in this passage that we have in this chapter, we really have in a glorious form the essence of what the Gospel is and what the Gospel is not about.

And it is powerful in its very reading because we find here Christ laying down exactly what the Gospel is. And I would like to look at this section over the next two weeks tonight and, God willing, next Wednesday.

And I'm convinced I would never be able to preach two more important or vital sermons than sermons on this chapter. Because it really does deal with the essence of the faith.

[1 : 23] And I hope that over these two weeks we will consider what is being said here and apply it to our own hearts and conscience. First, I would like to really just go through this story because it's a tremendous story in and of itself.

A tremendous factual account of Jesus dealing with people. And then next week look more at the principles and the lessons that are left in it for us. And I hope if you is able to, you'll manage to put it onto one tape because it really is just one sermon.

But I would never keep you for another in one week. And we pray and hope that the Holy Spirit will open up the passage to us. And if we look at this passage we see really that, thankfully there are three characters, which breaks up nicely, there's the Pharisee, there's the prostitute, and there's the prophet, Jesus Christ.

And I would like to look at these three characters and what happens to them in the story. Because we look first at the Pharisee because he was the man who thinks he has the truth. The prostitute was the woman when she possessed the truth.

And the prophet was Jesus Christ and he is the truth. The Pharisee is the man here in our story who thinks he has the truth. And he has invited Jesus to his home to have a meal.

[2 : 44] And he wants to meet with Jesus. And he was a religious man. He was a religious leader of his day. A Pharisee. And we know a lot about the Pharisees. We've read about them a lot and we've heard things preached about them.

He was a religious leader. And he knew all about religious things and all about the Bible. The Old Testament, especially the Pentateuch, the early books of the Bible. And as he invited Jesus to his home, he even called him Master.

We're told that and we have thought that he answered him and said that he was Master. So he had some kind of respect for Jesus. He knew all about what Jesus had done and what Jesus was claiming to be.

He was claiming to be a prophet. And it was as if he was inviting him into his home to check out whether Jesus was really a prophet or not. He knew all about theology. He knew all about ethics. He knew all about worship.

He knew all about the law. He was a tremendously religious man. But as the story unfolds, we realize that he didn't know about himself. He didn't really know about himself. And he didn't know about the message that Christ is bringing.

[3 : 47] The love of Christ. He didn't understand what that message was about. And as Jesus came into his home and as the events unfolded, he stood in judgment over what was happening.

He deigned to stand in judgment on Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Because he believed he had the answers. He was a legal man who believed, spiritually a legal man, the law of God, not the law of the land. And he believed he had the answers.

He believed he knew the way of salvation. And so he was confident enough of himself to stand in judgment on God. And as we see, as we go through the passage, he becomes a subject of a very gentle and a massive rebuke from Jesus Christ.

And he stands as somebody that is a warning to us in our own Christian lives, in our own walk, in our own understanding.

Because we need to be aware of falling into the same traps that he fell into. Beware of thinking too highly of ourselves. He really thought very highly of himself. And that he could judge Jesus Christ.

[4 : 54] And that he had all the answers from the Bible. And that he knew what was happening spiritually. We need to be aware of that. And we need to be aware of judging like fools.

Because he was judging like a fool. He didn't take into account the whole story. He didn't find out about the woman. He didn't find out more about Jesus Christ. And he made a judgment like a fool.

And Proverbs has a lot to say about fools. So the fantasy in this story unfolds as somebody who receives a rebuke from Jesus Christ. And whose false motives are opened up by Jesus Christ.

And then we come to the second person in the story. And that is really the prostitute. And I may be very unfair in calling her that. She's called a sinner here.

And it's traditionally taken that she was a harlot. Or she was a woman of ill repute. And it probably is the case. Although we're given no direct evidence. She was known as a sinner publicly in the area.

[5 : 53] And it's very probable that that is what she did. But a Pharisee and prophet. And a prophet she puts in very nicely together as well. I hope that's not wrong to do. But this was a woman who in this story possessed the truth.

As against a Pharisee who thought he had the truth. Now we don't know who she is. We don't know her name. Her name's not given. A lot of people believe she was Mary Magdalene. But Mary Magdalene was the woman from whom seven devils were exorcised.

And it doesn't seem to be really in a sense fitting in with that character here. But anyway. Whoever she was. We're not given her name. But yet her character. And what she did for Jesus Christ is recorded in the most glorious way.

Because she came into the house. And she came beside Jesus. Now for us it seems very, very strange that in a house where a man had been invited for a meal with others. That people from off the street could come into it.

But it's a very different culture for hours. And it was a very different situation. Because a meal of someone important like this was almost a public event. And certainly it would be held in a kind of open court.

[7 : 02] Partly because of the heat I'm sure. And partly because it was just a habit to do that. And quite often people from outside would come in and would maybe sit around the edges of the wall.

And sometimes even converse with the guests. The only parallel I can think of is maybe an open air cafe. Where people could come in around a table where people were eating.

But it's not quite the same. But that is what happened in Palestine. And like the Passover meal it would be a low table. And the guests would be reclining out the way from the table.

Christ would have been lying on his left elbow. So his right hand was free to take the food from the table. And he would recline out the way. And it would almost be like if it was around his table it would be like a big star would be formed.

With all the people who were at the table reclining with their feet out the way. And that is what enables this story to happen. Because the woman came. She wasn't invited. And it was very difficult we can imagine for her to come.

[8 : 03] And yet she came here. And she came in behind Christ. And she had easy access to his feet. And that is how in a sense it happens. It's difficult to imagine in our own cultural set up.

And there's another stated presumption in this story. In other words there's something that isn't told to us. That must have happened beforehand. Because this woman wasn't still a prostitute. She wasn't still somebody who was a woman of ill repute.

Or a sinner in the way that's not explained. We presume that by this time she had already met Jesus once before. Maybe not personally speaking. But she had heard him preach.

And she had been touched by his preaching. And she had been converted under his preaching. And had been changed. And she was very keen to meet Jesus Christ again. She longed to meet with him again.

Because he had changed her life. And it must have taken great courage for her to go and meet with Jesus. She heard he was at this Pharisee's house. But for her with her background to enter the house of a Pharisee.

[9 : 08] It was a tremendously difficult thing to do. And she would have been risking a great amount of mockery. And derision. And even expulsion from the room. Because of who she was.

But nonetheless she was very keen to meet with Jesus Christ. And as she was there. We can presume maybe she was watching. As Jesus had come in and sat down.

And I would imagine she was horrified. By Simon's lack of courtesy. For Jesus Christ. And so she draws near Jesus Christ. I'm going to explain that in a minute.

And as she draws near to Jesus Christ. She is overwhelmed by him. And begins weeping. Oh I'm so close to this man. Who she knew was God's son.

Who had saved her and given her peace in her soul. That she began weeping uncontrollably. In his presence. She could sense her divinity.

[10 : 05] And these tears she was crying. Were tears. I'm sure both of repentance. For her past life. And for her past behaviour. But also tears of gratitude.

For what she knew Jesus Christ had done for her. And with these tears. She begins to wash his feet. Something Simon had failed to do.

She then unclayed her hair. Now that was a horrific thing for a woman to do in these days. It was something that wasn't done in public. Their hair to be unclayed. To be let loose.

And it would have maybe created a stir. Or even horror in the room. She was known as a loose woman. And that is maybe what she'd been practicing in the past. But now. Her loose hair.

Is being used for a glorious purpose. To grind. The feet of the saviour. That had been wet with her tears. And then she's taken along an expensive. Jar of oil.

[11 : 02] Of ointment. And she anoints his feet with that ointment. Because. Simon. Hadn't even anointed Christ's head. As was customary. Even with cheap olive oil.

And the things she had failed to do. As a courtesy. As a manner of respect. To any guest who came into this. She did. Through herself.

Through her offering. Through her tears. And through what she did. And as we can see in verse 39. That Simon. Horrified this man. Simon the Pharisee. Horrified by what this woman is doing.

And he says. Within himself. He thinks. Jesus Christ was a prophet. And he would know who this woman was. That she was a sinner. And he's horrified.

By what she does. But interestingly. She is totally accepted by Christ. For what she does. Both in her practice. And in the principle behind what she does.

[12 : 02] And we learn that whatever else is involved in the gospel message. Whatever we regard as precious in the gospel message. What is made clear from this passage. Is it is intensely personal.

The gospel message. And it's focused. And it's focused. And it's focused. It's always. And it's always and must be self-sacrificial love. The love of Christ. Poured out to sinners. And the essence of the gospel.

Is always unconventional. And we see these things. From Jesus. Pure and absolute acceptance. Of what she was doing. In the midst of this meal.

At the Pharisee's house. And it's amazing to consider. The difference between the two characters here. Simon the Pharisee. And this unnamed woman. Who Christ rejects.

And who Christ accepts. And we need to ask ourselves. In the light of this. The two examples of people that we are given. Who are we more like? In our Christianity.

[13 : 01] And as we look at ourselves. And examine ourselves. In the mirror of scripture. As we look at the two characters. Who are we more like? And you must go home.

As I must go home. And ask that question. Who am I most like? And in following on from that. Who then? Does Christ accept me? Or does he reject me?

Because we see. That there's the Pharisee. In the story. And there's the prostitute. But there's also the prophet. Jesus Christ. And I call him the prophet here. Because that is. What Simon thought he was.

Simon asked him to his house. Because he'd heard a lot of things about Jesus Christ being a prophet. And we see that Jesus Christ. He reveals himself. As the truth himself. And it's a glorious revelation.

Of Jesus Christ. And if we didn't do any sort of. Analysis of the passage. Or anything else. We have this glorious. Example of what Jesus is like. What a saviour. What a glorious saviour.

[13:59] Sweet. And yet awesome. Challenging. And fresh. And as we look at Jesus Christ here. I feel. Tremendously stale. Alongside him.

Ordinary. Dull. Boring. Conventional. And dull. In my Christian life. As I look alongside Jesus Christ. And see. His freshness here. We see many things.

About Jesus Christ here. That we'll go briefly through. First is the fact. That he accepted the invitation. To the Pharisees house. At all. That he went to Simon's house. It's amazing that he went. Because you knew Simon's motives weren't genuine. How many of us would accept an invitation for a meal. When we knew that the people were inviting us. Only for the wrong reasons. Not for the right reasons. But to trip us up.

And to find out mistakes in our lives. And to make a fool of us. If that were possible. But yet Jesus accepted the invitation to eat. And he accepted it also.

[14:57] Despite the doubts of John. John the Baptist. Because in the book before. We didn't read it. We know that some messengers had come from John.

To ask Jesus. Are you the Christ? Are we going to look for somebody else? Because they'd heard that he was whining. And dining. And doing these things. And they maybe doubted whether he was the saviour.

Because of these things that were happening. And yet. Jesus giving them a good reply. As to who he was in hiking. He still went ahead. And went to this meal.

Even though John might have doubted. Whether it was a wise thing to do. And also he went against. The false claims of the generation. The people around about them. They told him verse 34. That it was the distances of opinion. Between who John the Baptist was. And who Christ was. They said John the Baptist. Came neither eating bread or drinking wine. And you say he's got a devil.

[15:54] And then the son of man has come. He's eating and drinking. And you say behold a gluttonous man. And a wine-bibber. A drinker. A friend of publicans and sinners. And he knew these people were making these accusations against him.

Jesus Christ the son of God. They were calling him a glutton. And a drunkard. And despite these claims. Despite the fact that he was being misrepresented. He was willing to allow that misrepresentation to happen.

By going to the house again. If somebody made false claims against us. No doubt we would pull back. And say well I better not give them any reason to gossip or talk. But Jesus was willing to be misrepresented.

He was willing to be wronged. He was willing to be called a drunkard. And a glutton. And a friend of sinners and publicans. Because he had their good at heart.

He had pure motives with them. And he was willing at all times in his life. To be in the world but not of the world. To associate with sinners in order to save them. And he would sit and eat with Pharisees and Republicans.

[16:59] And with prostitutes and with drunkards. If it meant reaching them for the gospel. He was willing to be associated. Even to the point of accepting a grudging invitation.

I wonder if Jesus Christ was here today and had done the same. What we would think of him. Would we hold up self-righteous hands in horror. And ask whether he was doing the right thing. Would we have made the same kind of judgments as they do. It's easy for us to condemn the Pharisees. It's easy for us to condemn the people. And say how could they not save Jesus Christ. But Jesus doesn't look any different.

He was a man in every point. As we are yet without sin. And they didn't accept his claims. And I wonder would we have accepted his claims. Are we quick to make judgments upon people who are Christians.

Who do things maybe that we don't accept ourselves. But who do things claiming to do them with a genuine concern for people's souls. We need to consider that in our own lives.

[17:59] But throughout this meal he reveals himself. And he reveals himself as more than just a prophet. See Simon wanted to find out if he was even a prophet. But Jesus shows himself to be

more than a prophet.

Because in verse 41. After knowing what Simon had thought in his mind. Jesus tells him about this parable of two creditors. One who owed a lot.

And one who owed a little. And the very fact that he was telling that parable. Revealed that he knew Simon's thoughts. Because he was answering them publicly.

What Simon had thought in his head. Jesus was answering. He said Simon. I've got something to tell you. Because he realised what he was thinking. So he was a prophet. Because he was a discerner of people's minds. And he also knew about the woman.

Because he talks about someone who had a lot to be forgiven. And someone who had a little to be forgiven. He knew about the woman who was washing his feet. He knew about her past. He knew that the day he preached she'd been converted. He knew that life had come into her.

[18 : 59] Because it had come from him. He knew that he had lost some of his love. Because it had gone into her soul. He knew all about this woman. He knew the number of hairs that were on her head. That had dried his feet.

Because he was the son of God. He knew the secret thoughts of Simon. And he knew the kind of woman who she is. Who she was. And as the story unfolds. He was willing to claim that he had forgiven her sins.

That's who's no prophet. Jesus Christ is no mere man that we're dealing with. Jesus Christ is the son of God. Who knows this evening as we come into his house. Our thought patterns. Knows what we're thinking about the word.

What we're thinking about the sermon. What we're thinking about the message. What we think about God's word as it's revealed. Knows our grumbles. Knows our complaints. Knows our backbiting. Knows our bad feelings.

That we have in our souls. That maybe nobody else thinks that we have. That we can't be shown from our face. Can't be shown from how good we look. But Christ Jesus knows. And he knows these things in our lives.

[20 : 00] And he knows the pattern of what's happening here. The difficulties we face. The future that lies unfolding. The uncertainty of it. He knows all these things in our congregation.

And he knows them in your own hearts. And in your own lives as well. He knows who's affected by the sound of the word. He knows who's been converted under the preaching. You see he's got a pattern.

It's an all seeing pattern. And this woman wasn't a stranger to Jesus. He knew her from before the foundation of the world. And here she is at his feet. And he reveals through her the great gospel of forgiveness.

Because she has been forgiven by him. Now look sometimes when you read this story. As if she's forgiven. And as if she's saved. Because she washed his feet.

In other words somehow she earned it because she washed his feet. She loved him a lot. So Jesus thought well I'll save her because she loves me a lot. And she's washed my feet. But that's not the case. It just sounds like that. We read it. But we know from the Bible.

[20 : 58] And from Jesus' own teaching. That it is God's work to save. And we know that previously God must have opened her heart. And God had given her faith. And God had given her forgiveness.

And as forgiveness entered into her heart. And as her sins were taken away. Her heart was filled with the love of God. The love belonging to God. God's own love. It wasn't just her own.

It was a supernatural thing. You see when we're forgiven a lot of sin. We're emptied of it. And our hearts become empty of sin and badness. And in their place God puts his own love.

And because she had a lot of sin to be forgiven. There was a lot of love in there. And she recognised and knew that. This was a supernatural work of grace. That brought her to the place that she was.

And Christ reveals through her this great link between an awareness of great sin. And between the reality of being forgiven through repentance leading to a deep love.

[21 : 58] In other words what I'm trying to say and I hope but I'll say next week more. Is that it was her awareness of her great sin having been forgiven. That led her to loving a great deal. And it was a spiritual love that came from God.

It wasn't necessarily that she was a greater sinner than the Pharisee. It might have been the case that she was. But not necessarily. Rather it's the fact that she was aware of the amount of sin that had been forgiven.

And pleasantly. That made her aware of the great love of Christ that would do such a thing for her. But I wonder if we recognise that we are sinners.

That we recognise how much sin we've been forgiven. And is our recognition of our sin a reflection of how deep or how shallow our love is for Christ.

There's an absolute and categorical connection between our love for Christ. And between the awareness of how much we've been forgiven. He who has forgiven little loves little.

[23 : 04] Doesn't mean that he only had a little bit of sin to be forgiven. But it means he didn't see his need to be forgiven. And he didn't ask for forgiveness. And as a result he didn't love very much at all.

And we need to look in our lives and see whether we love Christ Jesus a lot. Because we're on our knees asking for forgiveness a lot. And we recognise the depth of our sin a lot.

Or do we sell the mass for forgiveness? Do we really not have much repentance in our souls at all? And if so there'll be little room for God.

And for God's love. Because we're so filled with our own sin. And so filled with our own unforgiveness. That there's no room for Christ. If we don't empty ourselves of self and sin.

Then there's no room for Christ to come in and fill us with his love. So people who don't love much don't ask for repentance much. Don't sin much. Because they're self-righteous. And that is a parallel that we want to look at more next week.

[24 : 04] Because he revealed there the glorious gospel of forgiveness. And how his forgiveness works. And lastly he exposes the folly of Simon the Pharisee.

And it's very interesting when he does so. That he actually gives him some kind of credit for answering him rightly in verse 43. Simon answered. And he answered very grudgingly. It has to be said.

Well I suppose he said that he to whom he forgave most. And Jesus says rightly unto him. That thou hast rightly judged. But he exposes really the folly of Simon in the parable.

And in what he says in our text. Really that he to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little. And you know in the previous verses. Verse 44 forward.

That he really opens up Simon. Simon must have wanted to fall into the grit. He must have wanted a hole to be opened up for him. Because Jesus so generally says. Simon I came into your house. And he didn't even do me the courtesy of giving me water for my feet.

[25 : 07] Now that was a common courtesy. Like putting out your hand and shaking your hand here in Scotland. And he didn't even do that. He said. He didn't give me a kiss.

And that was just a brotherly kiss. Of welcome which happened in that country. He didn't do that. Didn't even give him oil in his head. Simon you gave me none of these things. Because he didn't love me very much.

And there's a little perceived need of being forgiveness in your life. Of being forgiven in your life. And yet this woman that you despise so much. She made up for all the mistakes that you did.

All the mistakes that you did. And poor Simon. Didn't receive that glorious forgiveness. And that glorious peace. And that glorious assurance of having faith.

In the last verse. And he said to the woman. Thy faith is safety. Go in peace. And her sins have been forgiven. Verse 48. Simon didn't receive any of them. And poor Simon was the one.

[26 : 04] Who. It wasn't the fact that he wasn't a sinner. Just because he was a Pharisee. Rather. It was. Not that he was not a sinner. But rather. It was just that he didn't see a sin. And so he didn't see his need for a saviour.

He saw the law alright. He saw the legal point of things alright. But he didn't see his sin. Personal sin. And his need of a saviour. And it's only as we enter into Christ Jesus more.

Do we see our blackness more. See it wasn't really so much. That she was a greater sinner.

Although publicly I suppose she was. And there are more heinous sinners than others.

But as she went into Christ. She saw her blackness. But Simon never went into Christ. And into his light. So he wasn't aware of his own darkness. And he didn't become aware of his own need for forgiveness.

And so he didn't have that glorious love of Christ flowing through him. Verse 40. Christ says. Simon I have somewhat to say unto thee.

[27 : 08] I wonder if Christ has the same message for ourselves. That he has something to tell us. Through this message. Because we can have our gospel all wrong.

And here is the essence of the gospel. Laid out in this passage. About repentance. And about forgiveness. And about love. And about the attitude and response we have to Jesus Christ. Which I hope we'll look at more next week. God willing. Amen. We'll bow our heads. Gracious God. We ask for your blessing. And ask for your help.

And we ask above all for your forgiveness. Because. We doubt Lord that. Any of us here have the ability to. Claim that we do love enough.

And Lord. That we recognize that. Because. We doubt whether we recognize. How much we've been forgiven. And Lord it will be our lifelong task.

[28 : 09] To try and recognize. Exactly how black we are. And exactly how loving. And how unconditional your love is towards us. And how astonishing it is.

That you would pluck us out of the mighty clay. And set our feet on a rock. We're ashamed Lord.

That we go about in our lives. With poor. Poverty stricken prayer.

And casual requests for repentance. That we fail to. Have the power. Powerful emotional.

Awareness of our sins.

That causes us to. Fall on our knees. And cry. And yet we ask. For the Holy Spirit. To make us so aware of our sin.

That you would bring us more and more into Christ. And into his glorious light. That we would be made aware. Not that we would sin more. But rather we would be made aware of the sins. That we don't even recognize as such just now.

[29 : 09] So open our hearts. And may your Holy Spirit. Teach us from these. Fluttering words. And make us wise. And Lord. If you have something to tell us tonight.

Then may we listen. And may we hear. And may we respond by grace. For Jesus sake. Amen.