

An unnamed worshipper

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev John Morrison

[0 : 00] Let us turn now to the portion of the chapter we have read, chapter 7 of the Gospel according to Luke, and I would like you to draw your attention to verses 37, 38, and 50.

We could just read them again, and behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus had had met in the Pharisees' house, brought in a lavast a box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping.

He began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. And the last verse, when he said to the woman, Thy faith has saved thee. Go in peace.

Now, Christ, of course, was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and his sorrows extended throughout the whole of his state of humiliation.

Yet, friends, we must realize that his sorrows were not of equal intensity throughout the entire state of his humiliation.

[1 : 07] After all, he didn't, as it were, sweat great drops of blood each time he prayed. He wasn't forsaken repeatedly by his disciples.

And he was conscious of the Father's presence, except for that crucial moment, which we associate with the cry of dereliction from the cross, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

And although then he was the man of sorrows, during that entire state, yet we see that his sorrows were intensifying the closer he came to Calvary.

And yet we also see throughout his earthly ministry that it was punctuated with moments of joy. Moments of joy there in communion with the Father, of course, primarily.

Moments of joy in the presence of his own disciples. Moments of joy when he would dare restore sight to the blind, the power of speech to the deaf, when he would heal the sick and give the power back to the limbs of those who were lame and so forth.

[2 : 16] And just consider the joy that would bring to those who had been healed, and the joy that would bring to their homes. The Bible doesn't tell us everything. It doesn't, friends.

John himself tells us that if books had been written on everything that Christ had done, that the world itself couldn't contain a amount of books that would have been written. And so it would have brought joy to these people.

And just consider the joy it brought a legion there, a notcast there from society, rejected by the people. And yet when the Lord touched them, he was restored to his right mind.

He was closed. And sitting there at Jesus' feet, and this is what saving grace does. It enhances our lives, spiritually, socially, so forth.

And that must have given him endless satisfaction seeing the blessings that he conferred on these people, and the fruit those blessings would bring forth. And then, of course, there were also the, well, what I would call the unexpected things.

[3 : 21] I have in mind in particular the faith of the centurion, which was highly commended by the Lord himself. I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

One wouldn't have expected from the centurion, would you? You would have expected that caliber of faith from the religious people. They were the ones who should have received Jesus.

Yet they were the very ones who verbally assaulted him. They were the very ones who had him crucified. No, they weren't the ones who conferred honor on him. And there was a centurion.

And Jesus commended him for his faith. And then, of course, there was also the persistent quality of the Syro-Fenician woman's faith.

Oh, woman, great is thy faith. You wouldn't have expected that from that woman yet. Jesus highly commended her as well. And then you had the implicit trust of the nobleman.

[4 : 21] So I would call these unexpected events. They came from what you would say, unexpected quarters. And how that conferred honor upon the Lord.

And these experiences must have been like oasis in the wilderness to him. And then, of course, we've got to take into consideration his true humanity. He needed that.

After all, in the garden, the Father sent an angel to strengthen him. We are not told how the angel strengthened him. What matters is that he was in need of strengthening at that time.

And God sent the appropriate help to him. The same applies to you and to me. We are all naked and exposed before God. And he knows precisely what we are in need of.

And he knows when to send help. What degree of help is necessary. If only we would just leave ourselves there upon his care. Casting all our cares upon him.

[5 : 23] Knowing that he cared for us. Now, tonight I'd like to look at three points in connection. Not just with these, but taking everything down there from others.

In that count from 36 down to the end of the chapter. With particular emphasis on the verses that I've selected. And first of all, we have here an unnamed worshipper.

She's not identified for us in this particular gospel. And secondly, let us see the public expression of her love. And thirdly, we shall consider Christ's public confirmation regarding her.

Her sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. First of all, then, let us look at this unnamed worshipper. I'm quite sure if most of the believers here have discovered how inscrutable providence can be.

The psalmist speaks of providence there as being given the wine of astonishment to drink. And providence can be inscrutable. After all, God causes the same sun to shine upon the atheist's field as he does on the believer's field.

[6 : 39] And he sends the same rain to bowl. He can provide there the atheistic fisherman with fish the same as he provides the believing fisherman with fish. Why?

Because he is good unto all men. Good unto all men is the Lord. He opens his hand wide and he satisfies everything that lives. And what an example he sets before us there primarily on generosity. He is good unto all. And secondly, we are reminded there that we should love those who hate us. Do good to those who spitefully use us.

He has set this great example before us. He is good unto all men. Even those who blaspheme his name. There is nobody this side of eternity void of the common grace of God.

To be void of the common grace of God is just equivalent to being a demon. Everybody is made a partaker of the common grace of God. And the common grace of God can be so powerful in its influences in the experience of some people.

[7 : 47] It will be very difficult to distinguish them from believers. And we as a people and as a denomination owe a lot to even the common grace of God. But it is not enough to save us.

So we have that example. And God can at times deal with his enemies as if he loves them more than his old people. Even the psalmist discovered this.

That the wicked there flourished like a green bay tree. He was mystified by the providence of God. Whilst that is so friends.

Yet God never forsakes his own. And neither does he withhold good from those who trust him. And so it is necessary a time for God to hide his face and so forth.

But the point that I was just emphasising is how inscrutable the province of God is. And the point I'm moving towards is this. When we look at scripture.

[8 : 49] We find quite a number of noble characters. And they are not identified at all. They are left unnamed. And yet you find other characters.

Who are certainly not of the same calibre. And they are named. Yet God has withheld. He has withheld the name of the centurion. He has withheld the name of the Syrophenician woman. He has withheld the name of the nobleman.

And in this gospel. He has withheld the name of this particular woman. But then there is nothing new under the sun. You get people there.

And if they do the least thing. In the name of the Lord. Or for his cause. It's hail from the rooftops. You can get other people. And they can be addicted to serving Christ.

And do so quietly and unobtrusively all their days. And nobody knows about it. They are not doing it to be acknowledged. They are not doing it to be given publicity.

[9 : 52] That is not why they are doing it. But the fact is this happens. The God of Providence allows that to happen. He has got his own ways of rewarding. Those who are faithful to him.

And here then we have this woman. She remains her name. Yes I know that expositors have tried to identify her. And we do have a clue here.

First of all Luke reminds us that she was a sinner. And then secondly we find the Pharisee. Also calling her a sinner. And for you and for me to call someone a sinner in our day.

What we just mean is that the person is unregenerate. He or she is unconverted. That's basically what we have in mind. But to call a woman a sinner in those days was just another way of saying she is a hollow.

And she was a woman therefore obviously with a bad reputation. And one maybe could argue that is why Luke has left her anonymous. It wasn't worth his while.

[10 : 58] I think everybody knew who she was. On the other hand we have the overruling authority of the Holy Spirit leaving her unnamed here. Some have identified her as Mary of Magdala.

And it could be argued very strongly that what was done here was consonant with other deeds that are attributed to Mary of Magdala elsewhere in the Gospel. Mary wasn't intimidated by the fear of man.

She was not sorted in the list from the course of her duties to show how devoted she was to her master. And this woman was not intimidated by the Pharisees.

She wasn't intimidated by anyone. She set her heart on doing what was done. And nobody is going to stop her. We admire the calibre of this woman's faithfulness and love.

And we need more of that friends in the day we are living in. Now it was relatively easy out east according to some expository to have access to the guest's features.

[12 : 06] I mean you could enter the courtyard unchallenged, uninvited. And as you know yourselves the custom was to recline at the tables. And hence the access to the feet was unobstructed.

Now we find that Simon here had strong misgivings about the Saviour. And he thought very meanly of this woman. He thought if Christ was indeed a prophet, then he didn't have much discernment.

He didn't appreciate what kind of woman was at his feet. You know there are two of six things which a rabbi wouldn't do when he reclined at a meal. And that was to speak to a common woman.

To sit and eat with a common woman and even to address a common woman. And here we find Jesus doing both. And not only did this woman touch him, she clung to him.

I think it was Augustine who said that Jesus heard Simon thinking. He heard him thinking. And by the rebuke he administered to him, he reminded him that he was indeed a prophet.

[13 : 15] And that he knew who this woman was. And he also knew what the thoughts of the Pharisee were. Well, let us leave then the unnamed worshiper there for the time being.

Let us now move on and consider the public expression of her love. Now from the passage before us here, it appears that her intention when she left her home that day was to anoint Jesus' feet.

Not to wash his feet with tears. That wasn't her intention. Otherwise, she wouldn't have brought his precious ointment with her. Her intention was to anoint his feet.

And yet when the opportunity was there, she was overcome. She couldn't contain herself. And the tears emitted from her full heart, they were spontaneous. They were undermeditated.

She just couldn't control them. You see, friends, it's when we are brought into the presence of Christ, we realize how far we have fallen.

[14 : 21] And it melts our hearts. When David committed his dastardly deeds, maybe only the most discerning would have detected any visible signs he was in a backslidden state.

But the moment the prophet was sent to him, with a message from God himself, and that message pierced to his inmost soul, the heart was softened.

The heart was melted. The heart was broken, wasn't it? And isn't it true concerning you and me, when we backslide, the heart becomes hardened. We become judgmental, censorious.

We point the finger at other people. We feel to smite in our own breath. We cry, Lord, be merciful to me, this is not. But the moment the Lord touches the heart, it melts.

Do you know something of those heart-melting experiences? They are sweet, aren't they? We could do with more of them.

[15 : 27] There were some people, there are, or I mean, there could be an irreparable past, though not an unpardonable one.

You know that too, the recklessness of the life we live in our unconverted days, we can do things that grace is not going to reverse.

If you, for example, through the stupidity of your life, lose a limb, grace is not going to give you a new limb. If you lose an eye, of both eyes, grace is not going to restore to you these eyes.

If you've destroyed your marriage, and your wife, or your husband has remarried, and he's happy remarried, that's gone, gone forever. If you have lost an important position, you have lost maybe the confidence of the employer, but rather, you're not going to get back into that position.

So in that sense, and a lot more could be added to it, there can be an irreparable past in many things, but not, friends, an unpargnable one.

[16:42] Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as snow. Isn't that tremendous? No sin is so great that if you repent it of, that it cannot be pardoned.

No sin. There is no sinner in this world so great, whose life is so abominable, that if he or she repents of sin, their sins will be forgiven.

And I've got the warrant of worship of the world itself for that. There's only one sin, as you know, blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Assuming then, that this woman was a harlot, and she wouldn't even need to be a harlot, to have had, in many ways, an irreparable past, but assuming that she was a harlot, you can appreciate what I have said.

And yet, here was a woman who was part, no unregenerate Prussian would have done what this woman had done. Here was a woman whose heart was full of the love of Christ.

[17:56] The love of Christ. So when she came into Christ's presence, she wept courteously. What were the tears? Were the tears of shame?

Or, was she weeping there in view of the goodness of the Lord? Or how we had not mixed here of her own shame and the goodness of the Lord?

Or maybe it could be argued, you have. On the other hand, I'm inclined to believe that since she set it primarily to anoint his feet as an expression of love and gratitude, that it was the goodness of Christ that caused her to weep.

Now friends, what has gone wrong with us as a people? You never see people weeping under the gospel, never it is. Never. And if somebody weeps nowadays, do you know what they say?

Oh, he's highly emotional. I think we could do with being highly emotional to stir us up. Have we become so sophisticated as a people that worship has become just an intellectual exercise?

[19:07] Remember that when the Lord converts a sinner, the whole man is converted. And grace affects the intellect, the emotions, and the will.

And a worship that is void of emotion is called. And a worship that is all emotion is not that profitable either. there has to be the balance.

Why is the emotion absent from our worship? There is something wrong, friends. Something wrong. You seldom see anyone weeping under the preaching of the word.

Are we ashamed to weep? Are we? This woman wasn't ashamed to weep. She wasn't ashamed to weep.

And then, of course, there was a very sharp rebuke here for the Pharisee. I know when the Lord rebukes us, he does it properly.

[20:11] And it hurts. And it stinks. And he rebuked the Pharisee in public before every other guest present there. And he said, Simon, I entered your house.

I wasn't given a kiss. They kissed each other on the hand. That was the way the common people addressed each other. Superior from the cheek. You gave me no kiss. This woman that you treat so contemptibly, this woman hasn't stopped kissing my feet since she entered your house.

And then, of course, he came very harshly as well in that he didn't wash his feet. It was customary to remove the sandals. The feet were, of course, full of dust and all probability with the heat and everything, the feet would be swollen and so on.

And it was so refreshing to wash the feet. He says, I entered your house. You never bothered to wash my feet. And he says, this woman has washed my feet with her tears, dried them with the hair of her head.

I wonder, was there ever a more noble washing of feet other than the master himself washing his disciples' feet? Like, Geiger the Great said that whenever he considered this event, he was more

disposed to weep over it than preach upon it.

[21 : 45] But then, this woman's love was such that she wanted to show how extravagant it was. She didn't just leave it at that, weeping, washing his feet and drying with her hair.

No, no, she went a step further. She anointed his feet with ointment. Now, you know yourself that the anointing was confined to kings, priests, and prophets.

And the anointing normally was on the head. It was a mark of the blessing of God and maybe in many ways the blessing of the spirit.

And it was also a mark of being set aside for that very honourous duty. And yet, here we have this woman anointing the feet of the saviour.

This was extravagance, wasn't it? This was a luxury. But you see, no sacrifice is too great for love.

[22 : 46] And may I also put this pertinent question to you. is it not true that there is something radically wrong with a professing believer who has little love for the cause of Christ?

I cannot understand people who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ and they miss services, not just occasionally, but on an habitual basis.

what's wrong? There are some people under that are seen in a prayer meeting. What mystifies me? What mystifies me?

And if we love the Lord, surely we shouldn't grudge using our talents in his service, giving of our time, and surely it should also open our passions.

It should be. I can't understand a tight-fisted Christian. It's a contradiction thing. I can't understand it. if we love the Lord, we should love his people, we should love his ordinances, we should love his day, we should love his commandments, we should love to give, we should love to be supportive of his cause in every way, we should love to spread the good news.

[24 : 13] And this woman, by this one deed, demonstrated the greatness of her love. love. Now, as you know yourselves, serving the Lord is twofold.

There is a private service, the service that we of course render to him in the privacy of our own heart and in the privacy of our own homes. And there is also the service which is of a public nature. And we of course wouldn't want anyone to know of our private prayers, would we? And when we're there and we're engaged in prayer with God in privacy, we will confess to the Lord and request things which we would never dare to do in public.

It's not true. we make our heart known to him, not that we add to God's knowledge of us, because God's knowledge cannot be added to.

And God knows all things from beginning to end, and he knew that from all eternity, and nothing can be added to that knowledge. It's perfect, it's complete. But our duty as servants and our duty as beneficiaries, our duty as his people is to make our hearts known to him.

[25 : 44] And not only is it a duty, it's a compelling duty. We want to express our feelings. We want to make our requests known. We want to plead with them.

And there are many things that we would not say in public, which we will say in private. That's the way God would want it. And then there are many other duties which are concealed from the public eye, and God wouldn't want anyone to know of them.

But we give to the cause, we wouldn't want anyone to know that. Or whatever good you do to people, you wouldn't want that known. It would take the pleasure out of doing it, wouldn't it?

So that confers honour on God. But then there is the public side as well. And what if everyone were to remain a seeker, disciple, where would the church be?

Yet there are seeker disciples in our congregations, and they go on for years and years and years and years, and the work of grace is there, everybody can see it.

[26 : 49] They still want to get a step in the sight of the Lord. What are they waiting for? They are being disobedient to the command of Christ. This do in remembrance of me.

when we there in public profess allegiance to him, we are conferring honour upon his name. And tomorrow, friends, that will be our duty.

Those of us here who know Christ savingly, if we can say from the heart that we do love him, in spite of all our failings and shortcomings, that we do love him, then our duty is to testify there before the world that we are his people, that his love is shed abroad in our hearts, and that we there partake of the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

And remember this also, by staying away from the table, we are cutting ourselves off from a means of grace. And in cutting yourself off from a means of grace, you are cutting yourself off from a

means of spiritual nourishment to your soul.

And that is bound to impede growth. So it's our duty to be there. And here then was this woman, and she performed this wonderful deed, and the fragrance of it is with us to this day.

[28 : 16] You know, how the fragrance of Christ should adorn our life. It doesn't matter where we go. I was working in the garden one day, and I was transferring soil from one area to another.

Now I can assure you, a good soil in O'Hara is as rare as gold. So I was transferring and my spade went through a bottle of perfume. It just went through it. And it must have been very expensive perfume.

How long it had been in the ground? I don't know. Decades. But the aroma was just powerful. And this is what I noticed.

Soon, of course, with the spade going through it, the spade had the aroma in it. And then when I started putting the soil in the barrow, the barrow had it, and the soil had it.

And then when I transferred the soil to the other part, the other part of the garden had it. And I had it going there and coming back. It was worth me all the time. And even when I went there the following day, I could still get it.

[29 : 14] I know this was the lesson it taught me, that our lives should be like that. Wherever we go and whatever we do, that people should see the love of Christ in our life.

we should leave that fragrance behind us. And that is what this woman has done. Wherever the gospel is preached, the fragrance of this ointment is still experienced by people.

And finally, friends, let us look at Christ's public confirmation of this woman's faith. We see, first of all, that he addressed Simon to this parable.

And the parable was straightforward and simple. The parable, of course, spoke of a creditor and debtor. And then he puts the question to Simon, which a child could have answered.

Which of these debtors would love the creditor most? Well, the answer was obvious. He to whom? He who adored him most would obviously love him most.

[30 : 19] Absolutely. a careless reader in reading that parable would conclude that the more profligate a life you lived prior to your conversion, that that is going to determine the amount of love you will have for the Savior.

And if that were to be the interpretation, what about those people who have lived exemplary lives all their days? and the line of demarcation between their unregenerate days and their regenerate days is so slim it's difficult for themselves to know exactly when the change came about.

The change is there. This is just as clear as it is in the life of someone who lived a reckless life. No, that is not what it means. What it does mean is this, that he or she who sees self as having been forgiven much, that is the pressure of love much.

And if we don't see ourselves as having been forgiven much, our love will be a foreign way. How many believers here tonight see themselves and herself as having been forgiven much?

Because that's going to determine how much you will love the Savior. So to love the Savior more is not a case of sinning more, but seeing how much we owe the Savior.

[31 : 53] You see, friends, the moment we digress from the path of obedience, we lose sight of how much we owe the Savior, the heart that comes hardened.

And the closer we are to the Savior, the heart-minted experience, the more we're aware of what we owe the Savior. Savior. And so, the reason why we should be found continually at his footstool, because there we have a solitary reminder of what he has done for us and how much we owe to him.

So, friends, in public, Jesus confirmed before all these people, this woman was a parking person. And that was a sharp rebuke to Simon and two others who were present there.

And Jesus made abundantly clear, it's not her tears that have saved her, and it's not the anointing of my feet that has saved her. These things have not saved her.

But what has saved her is her faith. Her faith is of her saving essence. And that is true concerning you and me.

[33 : 12] We are justified by faith. Yet, faith that is a law is suspect. it must be. The faith that's of our saving essence cannot, must not be alone.

It never can be alone. The faith that saves must have fruits. That's why James is so emphatic on good works.

It must have fruits. And where there are no good works, if dead. We're deceiving ourselves. We are deceiving ourselves.

And here we see the good works of this woman. This was how she was expressing that she was indeed one who was saved.

The heart was full of love. How full is our heart this evening? How full. do we rejoice in the things of God?

[34 : 21] Do we rejoice in the knowledge that we are Christ's? And that nothing can separate us from the love of God. For I'm persuaded, said the apostle, that neither height nor depth nor things present or things to come can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ.

Jesus, our Lord. Nothing can do it. Nothing. Death can't do it. Nothing whatsoever can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

And remember this, that's the note I want to end on. Your warrant for going to the table is saving faith. Saving faith. And without saving faith, no one, however exemptory and circumspect his or her life is every, no one has a right to go to that table.

We must be able to discern the Lord's body. And nobody is able to discern the Lord's body who hasn't passed from darkness to light, who hasn't discovered, that the Saviour is precious, and in whose heart the ways of God do not exist.

Such a person has no right for them. So I'll leave these words with you, and I'll trust that God bless the Lord. Most gracious God, we praise and thank thee for thy kindness and love, and that we were together here this evening around thy precious words.

[35 : 47] Send us on our way rejoicing, though we do not deserve the least of thy measures.

Nevertheless, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, who not only purchased the salvation of his people, but also purchased the blessings which are to our spiritual good, both temporal and spiritual ones.

And we pray that thou would lead and direct us throughout life's journey, and hide thy face from our sins, for thy no-name's sake. Amen.