

Amazing Grace

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 Neil Shaw

[0 : 00] 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, and 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 tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment, and so on.

Now the narrative before us is one that is known, I believe, to most if not indeed all authors. And yet, this part of God's word, or this occasion, is often confounded with other occasions mentioned in the Bible.

This woman, indeed, is often confounded with others. She's often confounded with Mary Magdalene, or many of Magdala, out of whom seven devils were cast.

And yet there is no connection whatsoever between the two women, other than that they both were wonderfully saved and blessed of the Lord.

This isn't Mary Magdalene at all, of whom we read here. Neither is it Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, as very many people seem to believe.

[1 : 38] Mary of Bethany did, of course, anoint Christ. And there is a likeness between the two narratives in Scripture, the one relating to Mary, the sister of Martha, and this woman.

Because both of them anointed the Lord with ointment, or with perfume, which is better. And the name of Simon is connected with both of these.

And again, both wiped our Lord's feet with their hair. But, Mary of Bethany's anointing took place just a few days before our Lord's crucifixion.

You will remember, he said, indeed, that she was doing this with a view to his burial. The occasion before us here, on the other hand, took place months, quite some time, that is, before his death. Indeed, he ministered to the people after this occasion. And he performed wonderful miracles of healing and so on.

[2 : 57] Again, Mary of Bethany anointed our Lord in the house of Simon the letter. This anointing before us is in the house of a man named Simon, yes, but it is Simon the Pharisee's house on this occasion, not Simon the letter.

Mary of Bethany anointed his head. This woman anoints his seat. So, this woman here is a totally different woman to either a Mary Magdalene or Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha.

She is another person altogether. The Mary, Mary of Bethany was a mature Christian when she performed this wonderful act of love upon her Master and Lord.

This woman here is obviously a new convert, a penitent sinner coming to worship the Lord Jesus Christ who is indeed her Master and her Lord.

Let us then notice this woman's actions. Let us notice her love, her devotion, her service.

[4 : 33] and indeed learn from her what is true of all who truly love the Lord Jesus Christ. Noticing, first of all, the object of God's grace here.

Was it? Well, we read that she was a sinner and we read behold or lo, 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.

Behold a sinner a woman this is an expression of astonishment that a woman would come would come into the house of the Pharisee where the Pharisees were gathered a group of men around the Lord at a table.

Behold surprise a woman comes in but not just any ordinary woman but a woman who is a sinner who is a great sinner who has sinned against God and against society it would seem.

Now there are those who go to the extreme of saying that this woman was a street woman as we would say today but the word here used to describe this woman need mean no more than that this woman had at some time gone astray and that her fall had become publicly known and so damaged her own reputation forever after.

[6 : 26] We dare not go further than that although some great divines have some great preachers have but we have no authority whatsoever to suggest that this woman was anything more than one who had made a mistake at one time and was known in that place as a sinner.

She had that tagged to her undoubtedly she had committed some sin. She was not morally pure in other words. She was known as a sinner.

Now that's all the word of God says of her. And we believe that the word of God here tells us this much about her in order that we may see the miracle of God's grace the marvel of God's love towards such a woman.

A woman who is a sinner. A woman who is unworthy. A woman who is a cast off in the eyes of society. How often we see this in our Lord's dealings with men.

The lepers for example they were castaways also. This woman was in another sense a castaway. Behold a woman comes in but a woman who is a sinner in the eyes of the people and in particular in the eyes of the Pharisees and the religious leaders of the day.

[7 : 56] Yet this very woman is the object of divine grace. Surely here we see sovereign grace.

We might ask on what grounds was she elected? We find no grounds in herself. Where there is nothing in this woman but that which is unworthy. That which is unclean.

That which is unseemly. That which is unacceptable to man. Far less God. And oh my friends isn't it good today to know that it is such people that our Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save.

As we thought last Sabbath morning upon the truth of God which tells us that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. for we are all sinners.

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All are unworthy to be looked upon in mercy. Just as this woman was unworthy.

[9 : 02] But you see what we've noticed here is that here is a woman who was ordained unto eternal life and so she was blessed of Christ who is the friend of publicans and sinners.

Isn't it good to know that this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them? Were Christ not in the company that day this woman would have been ushered out of the place immediately.

They would not have her sit with them at all because she was a sinner. But our Lord is sitting at meat here. Our Lord is in the midst here.

Does he cast her out? Does he say that she has no right to be there? Does he say oh no you are a sinner therefore you cannot sit with such as us? Oh no he doesn't.

He commends her. And he accepts and receives her. And he knows her. for what she is.

[10 : 08] For what she truly is. The Pharisees know her for what they think she is. Because the Pharisees Simon in his heart thought things about this woman.

But he could see her only with the eyes of a Pharisee. Our Lord who is God omniscient saw what she was in truth.

Whatever she was a sinner yes but she was a penitent sinner. She was one who knew herself as a sinner and had come to believe in him as her saviour and loved him as her saviour and so served him as her saviour and so he received her as a sinner.

Took her to himself and loved her. Oh my friend have we tasted of this grace of God ourselves have we entered into this wonderful experience of loving the Lord because he first loved us as Paul puts it not that we loved God but that he first loved us and this woman saw the love of Christ to her and so she came to him.

Oh isn't it wonderful to know what God says that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy will have compassion on whom he will have compassion and isn't it wonderful to know also my friends that where sin abounded grace did much more abound.

[11 : 43] Here is a woman who is a sinner and she comes in to the house of Simon the Pharisee she comes in not because it was such a house but because the Lord was there and she must be with him and so she comes in and she worships him she serves him.

But let us notice secondly the fruits of grace manifested in this woman. Now we believe with most commentators indeed that this woman must have heard the Lord preach.

She had heard him preach his word had come home to her with conviction. She was a poor soul cast out by society unwanted particularly in the religious sphere. she was a woman who was a sinner in the city. No we will not have anything to do with her. This woman had heard this man speak as none no man had ever spoken in her hearing compassion. And she had detected in his preaching or in his speaking what? Compassion mercy love for such as her.

[13 : 24] And we believe that she trusted in him and received him gladly because her need was great as a sinner.

What authority do we have to believe this? Because you will notice what our Lord says himself concerning her. He said to the woman thy faith hath saved thee go in peace. You are saved. Go in peace. Your faith has done this. She believed in him as Lord and Savior. That is the very thing that these religious men and women, men in particular, that is the Pharisees and the Jewish women, the Jewish nation as a whole refused to see in him. They say no, he is not Messiah. No, he is not the Savior. No, he is not the one that was to come. But they said behold a gluttonous man and a wine bibber.

[14 : 30] He cannot be a good man. And we will notice this man Simon himself said of her, even on this occasion as he ate meat with him, he said he cannot be a good man.

If he was a good man he would know what kind of a woman this is that touches him. He cannot be a prophet. He cannot even see what I see. I am better than him even. I know what kind of a woman this is. Christ doesn't.

And therefore he cannot be a good man. He cannot be a prophet. it. But this woman, she said, oh yes, I believe in him.

I know what he is. He is the saviour, he is the messiah, I am trusting in him. And she longed for an opportunity to worship him.

That was her main desire. An objective in going into this man's house. In order that she might worship Christ. And we believe that her longing to worship him is expressed in her going in there because it wasn't an easy thing for her to go in there.

[15 : 40] Into the Pharisee's house. It was a most difficult thing to do, to go in there where these Pharisee's were who had condemned her all her life.

But yet she must go in. Why? Because her Lord was there. Because Christ was there. And so she steals into the house of Simon the Pharisee. No matter what it's going to cost her.

And what does she do? She comes to the feet of our Lord and weeps. she wept there. So much so that she was able to wash his feet with her tears.

Now you know it must take much tears to be able to wash one's feet with one's tears. It isn't just a drop here, a drop there.

It meant that she was weeping profusely. She was weeping and weeping and weeping. so much so that she was able to wash his feet. And you will notice what she does.

[16 : 47] With the glory of her womanhood she dries them. That is with her hair she dries his feet. Now picture it. Now just try and take yourselves into this house.

There is this low very low table and these men are sitting around this table. and this woman comes in, goes round behind our Lord, comes to his feet, bows down and weeps there and weeps and weeps.

Because the original language actually is very strong here in the word used in weeping. It meant that it was weeping that was constant. And so constant was her weeping that she was able to wash his feet and with her hair she now begins to dry.

these feet that she has been washing. But not only so, she goes further. She takes out this little, what we read in which our version speaks of as the alabaster box of ointment.

It's just a vial of ointment, a little bottle that is meant. And she breaks the seal of this bottle and what does she do? She pours its contents over the Lord's feet.

[18 : 04] It is a bottle of perfume. The word oil is bad here also because this perfume was not oily at all like we are told. It was just a perfume used by ladies, usually by well-to-do ladies.

And this woman was able to gather enough together to purchase this perfume. And so she pours, she anoints his feet with this perfume.

Why does she do this? it is because she is a new creature. The cast away is now a penitent. And so we see first of all here her repentance.

She comes into his presence and she weeps in his presence. Not just tears of gratitude. Yes, there are tears of gratitude, but there are tears of penitence also.

Tears of sorrow and shame because of what she had been and because of what she is, because she knows she's a sinner. She knows she's a sinner, but she now confesses this openly and she comes in there and she weeps in the presence of the Lord and these men.

[19 : 24] And notice her humility. she comes her who had been once a brazen sinner and she stands bashfully behind her Lord and Master.

She wouldn't venture to come before him, in front of him as it were, and anoint his head. Mary of Bethany did that, but she couldn't do that because she was so afraid in one respect and yet in another sense she couldn't hold back.

She must do it. She must serve him. She wouldn't venture to anoint his head, but his feet only. And there you see her humility as she worships her Lord and Master.

But you see also her courage. Her courage. Courage. Much courage was needed, first of all, as I've already said, in order to enter the house of the Pharisee at all.

she was held in contempt by all, but in particular by those gathered there that day.

[20 : 34] They held everyone in contempt who was not of their own clique, as it were. This is something that was sadly true of the Pharisees. And I'm afraid it may be true of some still, unless we're of a certain type, then we will not be accepted into their fellowship, and so on.

Now that is not of the Lord. Well, this is the type of people these Pharisees were, but this woman comes in, well, whether you want me or not, I know my Lord and Master wants me. I know he will have me, and so I come, and I weep.

And she weeps, and she anoints him. And notice the practical side to her washer. She gave to Christ her most treasured possession.

She breaks this bottle of perfume, its seal, and pours it out upon the Lord. You see, she acted here instinctively because she had to bestow her love upon him.

She had tasted of his love, so she must show her love to him. this is how love always works. It must be shown.

[21 : 55] Notice her love then. What does our Lord say about her? In parabolic fashion, he speaks to Simon the Pharisee, and then he says to him, in so many words, she loves much because much has been forgiven her.

Does this mean to say that a person who is a great sinner necessarily loves the Lord more than those who have not entered into sin in that respect? Of course not. But those who are conscious of the fact that they are sinners are those who are conscious of the love of God to them as sinners. Because this is how God works. By his spirit, he convinces us of our sin. And it's not our actual transgression of God's law openly, only that God convinces us of.

But particularly, God the Holy Spirit convinces us of the sin that is in our hearts. And as we come to know the sin that is in our hearts, we ought to love the Lord Jesus Christ all the more.

And we do if we know ourselves as sinners. We love him all the more because of the fact that he loves us despite what we are. Indeed, he loves us as we are, as sinners before him.

[23 : 21] Maybe we have never transgressed God's law openly as this woman did. But we know that in our hearts we have. And we know that in our hearts there is the same sin that she committed openly.

And that we are guilty before God, our Lord in the Sermon of the Mount taught that so clearly. It is in the heart that every root of every sin is found.

And if you and I have come to know our own hearts in the light of God's word and have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, we will love him all the more because of this.

Compare this woman with Simon the Pharisee. What a difference we see between the two of them. He showed outward respect to Christ. He desired him that he would eat with him.

This was his desire. He desired that Jesus be in his company, yes. He desired that he would eat with him. And yet he was offended at the sight of this woman being allowed to wash our Lord's feet.

[24 : 29] Notice what he says. he said if 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.

That's all he can see, the self-righteous Pharisee. He just sees this woman as a sinner, nothing else. His hospitality, the hospitality, the place he gave Christ, was not in the right spirit.

It was cold and grudging hospitality. It was loveless hospitality. Christ says to him, thou gavest me no water for my feet.

This is, oh yes, you have this open show of religion and respect for me, but do you really love me? You have not given me any water for my feet.

That is what he says to her. Thou gavest me no water. Thou gavest me no kiss, my head with oil, thou didst not anoint. This is the Pharisee for you.

[25 : 40] He has this outward veneer of religion, but he knows nothing of love to Christ. Do we really feel affection toward the Lord Jesus Christ, my friends?

Let us ask ourselves that question. Or is it just that we give lip service to him? Do we invite him as it were into our homes?

As this man did, and yet know nothing of the worship of heart that this woman knew. She loved her Lord.

God said to Simon, he turned to this woman, it is as if Simon had turned away for a while from looking at the woman, and our Lord says, now look at this woman, do you see her?

I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water, but she had washed my feet with tears. Look at the great difference. Simon, had he given the Lord his proper place, even following the manner of the custom of that part of the world at that time, would have washed his feet, because that is what they more often than not did.

[27 : 14] When a guest was invited into a home, the first thing that was done was they washed their feet, if he was highly respected, and if they thought much of him. But the Lord says, now listen Simon, you never even washed me, you asked me in here, yes, but you did wash my feet, but this woman, she did with her tears.

Thou givest me no kiss. Now that again was a custom, in the East still is, when a guest arrives, there is the kiss that is given.

Now he says, you never even did that for me. Again there is the anointing with the oil, with the perfume, that also was a custom. Now all these things the Pharisee did not do.

He did what was just sufficient to make Christ feel as it were so much at home, but he didn't take these extra steps that were so essential, and that he would have taken, were he truly worshipping the Lord, were he truly looking upon Christ as his saviour.

And this woman went so much further, my friends. Notice what she said. She, she washed his feet with her tears, she continually kissed him, that's what it says in the origin, she continually kissed his feet, and she anointed his feet with his oil.

[28 : 35] love. You see, this woman's love was real. It was the effect of forgiveness, not its cause.

It was the consequence of her forgiveness, not the condition. It was the result, not the reason. As I've already said, it was instinctive for this woman to so worship the Lord.

She loved him, and she felt love for him. She must bestow her love upon him. Let us ask ourselves this question. Do we really feel affection towards the Lord Jesus Christ?

I'm not asking do we go through the motions of meeting together Sabbath after Sabbath, weekday after weekday. I'm not saying do we go through the motions of saying prayers. I'm not saying do we go through the motions of worshipping him, but I'm asking myself and yourself today, do we feel love for the Lord as this woman did, as Mary of Bethany did, as the disciples did.

And notice her service, it was personal. She did all this herself, and she did all this to him. She loved her Lord, and she thought nothing was too much for her to do for him, no matter what other people said, no matter what the Pharisees thought of her.

[30 : 07] I will quote to you what Bishop Bryle says in the light of this narrative. More doing for Christ is the universal demand of all churches.

It is the one point in which all agree. more good works, more self-denial, more practical obedience to Christ's commands.

But what will produce these things? Nothing, nothing but love. The fear of punishment, the desire for reward, the sense of duty are all useful arguments to persuade men to holiness.

but they are all weak and powerless until men love Christ. However much the world may sneer at feelings, the great truth still remains.

Behind that feeling is the secret of doing. It is always the loving workman who will do the most in the Lord's service.

[31 : 17] this woman loved much. So she served him. So she worshipped him.

So she gave her all to him. As I said, what a new person she was. Oh, my friends, do we bear the fruits of God's spirit in our lives?

Do we love the Lord? Do we serve the Lord? I'm not saying do we serve the church, do we serve our fellow men, but do we love the Lord? As this woman loved him, do we feel love for him?

Not that we love God, of course, but that he first loved us and gave his son to be the propitiation for our sins. But, my friends, if we know what that means, then we love him.

is it not true that all God's people say with Peter of old, Lord, thou knowest all things.

[32 : 35] Thou knowest that I love thee. I have failed thee. I have come short. I have not lived as if I love thee.

I forsook you. I denied you. But yet, deep down, I love you. And remember, this is what the word of God tells us.

That though we should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though we should give our bodies for the burning, though we should understand all prophecy, although we should have everything that people in the church think so much of, and be so acceptable, be applauded by men. if we have not love, we are nothing. We are worse than nothing. How this woman loved, oh, that we would emulate this woman, and seek the grace of God so to do.

May God bless his word to us. Let us pray. We beseech thee, O Lord, to bless us this day, in our great need that we may love thy name.

[33 : 54] We marvel at thy great love and condescension to sinners such as us. We have been contemplating thy love to this woman many days ago, many years ago, and yet thy love to thine own is still so wonderful.

Thy love to me was wonderful, said one of old, and this is what thy people still say. May we know thy love working in us, that we may bear fruit to thy glory, and that we may go on ultimately to be with the Lord.

For that is the desire of thy people still, that they would know thee and the power of thy resurrection, the fellowship of thy sufferings, that sweet fellowship that comes only through living close unto thyself.

Oh, that we would know that there is one thing needful. May we be found at the feet of Christ, learning of him. Bless us this day, and come out with us in the evening, and pardon us for Jesus' sake.

Amen. things. Amen. Days' Bon, Tim, ca. ■■■ do a non, ■■■, p. Hold' him. Pi. Lee, p. defeat.

[35 : 14] arise name! In. Lee, pit.tes.ifen. A In.■■■. Clinton, Sachen. Web coverage. editions.■chl