

# Go in Peace to Love Others

Sermon July 17 2022

Luke 7:36-50

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We are studying the New City Catechism this year, because it is a great summary of what we believe as Christians. I will read the question 29 and then we will read the answer together.

## Question 29: How can we be saved?

Only by faith in Jesus Christ and in his substitutionary atoning death on the cross; so even though we are guilty of having disobeyed God and are still inclined to all evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of our own but only by pure grace, imputes to us the perfect righteousness of Christ when we repent and believe in him.

In our sermon today we will be looking at two different people who need God's pure grace. One repented and believed in Christ. The other is invited to repent and believe. Now I will read Luke 7:36-50, and then we can look closely at God's Word together.

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat.

37 When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume.

38 Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping.

Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair.

Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him.

She's a sinner!"

40 Then Jesus answered his thoughts.

"Simon," he said to the Pharisee, "I have something to say to you."

"Go ahead, Teacher," Simon replied.

41 Then Jesus told him this story:

"A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other.

42 But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts.

Who do you suppose loved him more after that?"

43 Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt."

"That's right," Jesus said.

44 Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman?"

When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

45 You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet.

46 You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.

47 "I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love.

But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love."

48 Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 The men at the table said among themselves, "Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?"

50 And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

*"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."*

## **Let's pray together.**

Father in heaven, we come to you because you are the source of life and truth. Jesus, we worship you because you are full of mercy and love. Holy Spirit, please open our hearts and minds to be transformed by the word of God. Amen.

Verse 36 sets the scene for us.

36 "One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat."

Notice that Simon asked Jesus to have dinner with him, in Simon's home. Eating a meal together was very significant 2,000 years ago. Today, also, many cultures around the world believe that eating a meal together creates a bond between people. That is one reason we have dinner every week at One Voice Fellowship. In today's passage, Jesus is eating dinner in the home of a Pharisee. They were very serious, very conservative religious leaders. They tried very hard to be holy, and also expected everyone around them to obey God's law.

Jesus spent time with Pharisees like Simon, but also with people who were rejected by the Pharisees. If you look back two chapters in your Bible, you find this event recorded in Luke 5:27-32.

27 "After this Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth.

And he said to him, "Follow me."

28 And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.

30 And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

31 And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

32 I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

People go to the doctor when they know they are sick and need help. Jesus liked to spend time with people who understood their need for a Savior. The big question in today's passage is this: "Do you know that you need God to heal you?"

Now let's look more closely at Luke 7:37-39.

37 When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume.

38 Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping.

Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair.

Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.

We don't know the name of this woman, but we know at least two things. She had a sinful reputation in the community. It is very possible that she was a prostitute. The second thing we know is that she loved Jesus. It seems that they have met before, and Jesus offered her forgiveness and acceptance. The woman's tears and kisses are the response of someone who has received

amazing grace. She has a little bottle of expensive perfume that she probably used in her past life to attract customers. But that life is now behind her. Jesus has given her new life, new hope, and new priorities. Therefore she thinks the best place to put this valuable perfume is on the feet of the man who changed her life.

However, it is understandable that people at the dinner were disturbed by this woman's actions. She has a bad reputation, and she is showing very personal attention to this Jewish teacher named Jesus.

Look now at verse 39.

39 "When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him.  
She's a sinner!""

Maybe Simon suspects that Jesus is one of her customers. Or Simon thinks that Jesus has poor judgment. We begin to see the heart of Simon, as he thinks critical thoughts about both Jesus and the woman. Notice that Simon said these things "to himself." But Jesus can read his mind, and answers Simon's unspoken thoughts. What will Jesus say to Simon? Let's see what Luke reports in verses 40-43:

40 "Then Jesus answered his thoughts.

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43 Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt."

"That's right," Jesus said."

Jesus loves to teach with stories called parables. Parables are like truth wearing human skin. The New City Catechism is very helpful, because it provides a summary of biblical truth in 52 questions and answers. But the Catechism isn't personal. Jesus takes the truth of God's Word and makes it very personal.

The prophet Nathan did the same thing with King David. David took another man's wife and murdered her husband. Nathan wanted to help David see the awful sins he had committed. Nathan told David a story about a rich man who had many sheep, but he stole a young lamb from a poor farmer. The story broke through David's pride and denial so he could understand what he had done. David saw the reality of his sin against God and Bathsheba and Uriah.

Jesus is doing the same kind of thing here with Simon. In the parable you have two men who owe a debt. The silver coins in the story were Roman denarii. They looked like this. This Roman coin was the average pay for one day of work. The average man had to work 50 days to earn 50 of these silver coins. And 500 days to earn 500 pieces of silver. Obviously, the man who owed 500 silver coins had a very large debt to pay.

What is the point of the story that Jesus tells? Forgiven people respond with love. That is the point. Jesus is saying there is a connection between love and forgiveness. If you don't show abundant love to the people around you, it is because you have not received abundant love from God.

Jesus tells the story about the forgiven debtors because he wants to turn Simon's eyes to his own heart. But the story is only half finished. Before Jesus explains it completely, he invites Simon to actually see the woman, and to see God's grace. Look now at Luke 7:44-47.

44 "Then Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman?"

When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

45 You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet.

46 You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.

47 "I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love.

But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love."

Jesus says in verse 47 that the woman's sins are many. But Jesus also tells Simon about his sins because Simon cannot see them. Simon thinks he is a "50-coin sinner." Simon thinks the woman is a "500-coin sinner" and judges her. Simon thinks he is better than her.

And Simon thinks Jesus is a fake prophet. Remember that in verse 39 Simon thought, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him." Jesus wants Simon to learn that he isn't seeing clearly. Jesus healed men who were physically blind. Here Jesus is offering a cure to another blind man!

Something very significant happens in verse 44. Look at this.

44 "Then Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman?"

Who is Jesus looking at? Luke reports that Jesus was looking at the woman, but speaking to Simon. Let's do an experiment. What happens if I say, "Do you see this piano?" Did you look at the piano? Of course you did.

Jesus is teaching Simon to actually see this woman for the first time. Jesus wants Simon to see her present actions, not her sinful past. Simon is a religious leader. But if Simon cannot see people clearly with love and compassion, then he cannot help them spiritually or in any other way.

Love begins with seeing. Earlier in this same chapter, Luke tells us about Jesus and a widow near the town of Nain. Listen to Luke 7:12-13.

12 "As Jesus drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out.

He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.

13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."

The author Paul Miller observes that there are three steps of love in verse 13. See, Feel, Act. Jesus saw the widow. He saw her fully, understood her pain and loss. Therefore Jesus had compassion for her. The English word compassion means "feel with." The mind of Jesus understood the widow's situation, and the heart of Jesus felt the widow's pain. The third step of love is action. Jesus moved toward the widow, spoke to her, and then resurrected her dead son.

Love begins with seeing. Simon doesn't love Jesus or the woman because he doesn't truly see them. Simon cannot love them or see them because he cannot see his own heart. Pride blinds us to the truth about ourselves and other people. In love, Jesus wants to break our pride and show us our sinful hearts. Not because he enjoys seeing us in spiritual pain. Jesus does this because he knows that more repentance equals more understanding of God's love.

In English we often say, "actions speak louder than words." Or "a picture is worth a thousand words." Maybe you say something similar in your language. Simon's failure to show basic hospitality to Jesus speaks loudly. Simon thinks he is better than Jesus and better than the woman. His actions reveal this. Jesus wants to help Simon see the depth of his sin, so Simon can receive deep love from God. In the eyes of our holy God in heaven, we are all 500-coin sinners. The number is not intended to be specific. Jesus is talking about a debt that is impossible to pay.

Look at this chart with me please. The top line represents our understanding of God's holiness. The bottom line is our understanding of our sinfulness. If you think you are a 50-coin sinner, then you only seek 50 coins of forgiveness from God. Your understanding of Christ's love and sacrifice will be small. And your love for other people will be small.

Simon thinks his holiness is high, definitely higher than Jesus or the woman. Simon doesn't think he needs a Savior, or a big Savior. Simon thinks he has a little sin. Simon thinks he needs only 50 coins of forgiveness from God. Therefore Simon only has a little love to give other people.

But the woman understands that she is a 500-coin sinner. She also understands that Jesus loves her very much, and God has forgiven her very much. God has forgiven her 500-coin debt, therefore she shows a lot of love to Jesus. If you see that you need 500 coins of forgiveness, then you will know how much God truly loves you. You will worship Jesus with joy and gratitude. And you will love others with the kind of love you received from God.

Simon will not love anyone well until he sees that he is also a 500-coin sinner. My friends, when the Holy Spirit is revealing your sin to you, don't resist him. If he is showing you new dimensions and depths of your sin, don't close your eyes and ears. God is kind and reveals more of my sin to me every week. This makes me love him more, because I understand in new ways how much love and forgiveness I have received.

I need to finish this sermon, so we should look at the last three verses now.

48 "Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 The men at the table said among themselves, "Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?"

50 And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace.""


Simon was wrong about Jesus. Simon's sinful pride blinded him to the reality about Jesus. When Jesus answered the silent thoughts of Simon, Jesus revealed that he was the only true prophet in the room. In these final verses Jesus reveals that he is more than a prophet. Jesus reveals that he is God himself, because God alone can forgive sins.

First Jesus speaks to the woman. People have been talking about her, and watching her actions. Now Jesus speaks to her directly, to comfort her and remind her that she is forgiven. Looking closely at the text, I think she was probably saved before this event. I believe the woman's loving actions reveal a heart that was forgiven and accepted before she came to the dinner. The other guests are surprised and upset that Jesus told her she is forgiven. Therefore verse 50 is spoken to the woman, but also for the benefit of everyone at the dinner. Jesus is underlining his authority, and he is telling everyone how they should treat her. This woman was a rejected, despised sinner in her community. But Jesus has changed her heart and changed her life. Now he wants to change the way she is treated by the community. He says, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." That is Christ's message for us today, also. If you have trusted in Christ to forgive your sin, then you can leave here with the peace of God in your heart. And you can love others generously, because God has loved you generously.

## **Let's pray to him now.**

Jesus, thank you for making forgiveness possible on the cross. Holy Spirit, please continue to reveal our failures and weakness

to us. Because the more we see our sin, the more we understand the love of Christ for us. Thank you that the communion table is a tangible picture of the love we have received. Encourage and feed us spiritually today, so we can love you and love others. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

 One Voice Fellowship