

Jesus Loves the Pharisees Too, Part 2

Luke 7:39-43

Starting in Luke 7:36. "One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment.

"Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.' And Jesus answering said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he answered, 'Say it, Teacher.'

“‘A certain money lender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, the other fifty. And when they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?’ Simon answered, ‘The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.’ And he said to him, ‘You have judged rightly.’ Then turning to the woman he said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.’ And he said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ “Then those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?’ And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’”

Just a brief point I wanted to insert. It’s important to help us see clearly how Jesus loves even his enemies. He loves even those who don’t love him. He loves even those who treat him poorly, even those who treat him with utter contempt. He loves

them. This is how he loves those who harbor sinful hidden judgments against him. This is how he loves those who conspire against him. "Simon, I have something to say to you."

Think back to yourself, your own life before Christ. Put your own name in that blank. So-and-so, now redeemed sinner, I have something to say to you. Aren't you thankful that he looked past your hard-heartedness, past your judgments, past your sin, past your criticisms, past your rejection and said, "I have something to say to you," to you for your benefit, for your sake?

In what follows, Jesus makes no defense about his own knowledge. He doesn't say, Hold on there, Simon. Just read your thoughts. That's pretty good for someone who's a non-prophet, right? Just read your, your thinking. He doesn't even say anything like that. He's under, he's really under no compulsion to justify himself in the face of Simon's sinful thinking and conclusion. And as a matter of fact, it's interesting that Jesus doesn't even mention what Simon was thinking. He doesn't even bring it up. He doesn't reveal what he knows in his divine perception. He simply takes what he knows and now he uses it,

not to make Simon feel it, he uses it to love Simon. He uses it to hopefully bring conviction to Simon's proud and sinful heart. "Simon, I have something to say to you." This is for you, Simon.

Rather than confronting Simon pointblank, Jesus takes a more indirect route. This is a confrontation, to be sure, but it's a loving confrontation. The story serves a purpose of strengthening the indictment of Simon's thinking, but it is for the purpose of bringing him to repentance. The story here is told for the purpose of exposing Simon, yes, but also loving the man.

It's a short parable. Like most of Jesus' parable, this one yeah, it starts with familiar things they understand, but it kind of has a surprising twist to it, something that's unexpected. Look at verses 40-43. "Jesus answering said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he answered, 'Say it, Teacher.' 'A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.'"

And just quickly, a denarius is a day's wage for a soldier or a day laborer. The higher debt here is about two years' worth of wages. Lower debt, about two months' worth of wages. Not paying back debts that are owed could and often did land a debtor in debtor's prison or could result in someone being enslaved until that full payment was made. So that's just the predicament that Jesus names here.

"A certain moneylender has two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Folks, I hope you see how clearly Jesus' story portrays the Gospel. There's a moneylender and there are two debtors. Whom does the moneylender represent? God, right? God is the one who owes no man but graciously gives to all. "The Most High," Luke 6:35, "is kind to the ungrateful and the evil every single day." More than that, he forgives the transgressor who cannot undue his transgression. He forgives.

So who do the two debtors represent? Now before you say that the debtors represent Simon and the sinful woman, consider what it says in verse 42, "When they could not pay, he cancelled

the debt of both.” I wish that the ESV translators would not have translated that verb *charizomai* as cancelled, as if Jesus were talking here about merely an accounting issue and not a theological issue. The verb *charizomai* has at its root the word *charis*, which is the Greek word, grace. King James translates the phrase, “He frankly forgave them both.” The NAS translates it, “He graciously forgave them both.” Forgiveness is the idea.

Cancellation of debt, sure, but forgiveness because grace is the root idea here. The theological concept of unmerited favor. That’s grace. That’s what Jesus wants to convey to Simon. Neither of these debtors could pay and the moneylender forgave. He graciously forgave both of these debtors their debts. The five hundred denarii, two years’ wages, gone. The fifty denarii, two months’ wages, gone. The favor they each received was unmerited. They had nothing with which to repay him. So the creditor, he swallowed their debts. He ate the costs. He took the hit. He suffered the loss.

Okay, so I’ll ask the question again. Since the moneylender is a picture of God, do the debtors in the story represent Simon and the sinful woman? Let’s assume for the sake of the

illustration here that the answer is yes, that Simon and the sinful woman represent the two debtors in Jesus' story. Then I have another question for you. Which debtor represents Simon? And which debtor represents the sinful woman? Is it obvious that the sinful woman is the five hundred denarii debtor and that Simon is the fifty denarii debtor? Or is it the other way around?

We tend to judge matters like Simon did, don't we, by outward observance? It's all we can do. We're limited, we're human. We've learned that in 1 Samuel 16:7, "For the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." It's not an indictment of our vision. We're just limited creatures. We can't see beyond what's externally observable, right? It's not an indictment, though, it's just a fact. It's also a caution, though, as well, isn't it?

We're all debtors whether we've sinned much or whether we've sinned heinously, whether we've sinned little and mildly, whatever it is, we've sinned. We've transgressed. James said, James 2:11, that "He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' that's

the same one who said, 'Do not commit murder.' Okay, so if you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you become a transgressor of the law." And before you say, I'm good to go, then. I haven't done adultery or murder. There's no bodies buried and there's no women coming calling. Before you think that, consider what Jesus said to say, you know what, any lustful, errant thought in your mind is tantamount to adultery. Any anger in your heart that's unrighteous is tantamount to murder.

Now where do you stand? We all stand condemned. We're law breakers. We're transgressors. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," right? We don't measure the weight of our sins; we don't calculate the gravity of our sins based on the nature of sin alone. We don't, we don't base the gravity of our sins on the consequences or the repercussions of the sins that we commit. Although, we do that all the time. It's just a little sin. It's just a minor thing. It doesn't hurt anybody. Only God knows the true nature of our sins. Only God can spot and see and trace the full consequences of our sins. The full measure of our sins is something that only an omniscient and just judge can see and decide.



But the gravity of our sins is most fundamentally understood not in view of the crime itself, not in view of the repercussions or effects of that crime. Biblically, we measure the gravity of sin in light of the one against whom we have sinned. I'll often use this analogy when I share the Gospel with people, try to help them understand the reason that every transgression against a holy God carries the stiffest penalty possible, that is, damnation in eternal hell. People balk at that, but I tell them, Look, I, I lean right into it and I say, Of course, why wouldn't it? When you consider the holiness and the greatness of the one against you, whom you sin.

They often don't get it, so I give them this illustration. I say, Hey, you might get angry at me for a sermon I preach and then you punch me after the service. That's bad and I would prefer that you just write me an impassioned letter, or something like that. But if you do punch me, probably nothing would happen. I'd just give thanks that I was punched for the sake of the Gospel, right. Or maybe if you broke my jaw, I might ask for a little help with the medical bills.

But let's say you keep punching me, keep pummeling me and perhaps some kind Christian in our church calls the cops. They see what's happening. Our pastor's getting the life beat out of him. I wonder if he wants help. Maybe call the cops. So they call the cops. Cops come, pull you off of me. Thank you. Love the law enforcement, don't you? Love them. Cops come. You don't like their firm and authoritative manner either. So you punch a cop. Now you've crossed the line, right? You're going to jail for sure.

They haul you off. Days later you are escorted into the courtroom and as you're walking toward the courtroom being escorted by the police, you happen to see Greeley's Mayor, I believe is Tom Norton, right? And you break away and you go punch him. That's going to carry even a bit stiffer penalty, right? What's the difference between us, me, the cop, the mayor? We're all men. We're all covered by the same flesh. We're all bleed the same blood. The difference between us is not our flesh and blood. We're all equal before God.

The difference between us is our status. It's our level of authority. From private citizen, to sworn peace officer to

mayor. There is a gradation of rank. There is a gradation of symbolic importance. We get that. That's why any sin against a holy God is high treason. And the penalty for committing any sin against God is you're going away for a long, long time.

So for Simon the Pharisee, for this sinful woman or for you and me, any one of our sins is enough to condemn us to hell for all of eternity. We've committed more than one. We've committed many sins, many sins against God. So who's to say who's the greater sinner? Only God. We might tend to think the woman is the greater sinner because her sins contributed to the defilement of men, the ruination of marriage, the destruction of family, so and so on, so many people hurt by her sin.

Or maybe we look at it from another perspective. We might think about Simon as the greater sinner here because he's culturally acceptable. His culturally acceptable propriety provided to him with a degree of credibility and that gave him a platform to propagate false teaching. How may does that ruin? He's a preacher of peace when there is no peace. He gives false assurance to those who are actually under divine condemnation. We tend to look at all these preaching, preacher scandals,

right? Priest scandals and all the rest. And we think about these Prosperity Gospel preachers and Roman Catholic priests who commit sins and once they do that, we're shocked and horrified, as we should be, all the while forgetting that their lifelong teaching has been condemning people to hell. Why aren't we upset about that?

In whatever way we might try to compare and contrast the sins of Simon and the sinful woman, we do know this for sure, on this occasion, at this dinner, on this particular day, it's Simon who is the greater sinner and the woman is the greater saint. After all, it was she, not Simon, who ignored the fear of man and who humbled herself. It was she, not Simon, who recognized Jesus for who he was and bowed to the floor in worship. It was she, not Simon, who used the members of her body as instruments of righteousness. It was she, not Simon, who gave her perfumed ointment, a gift in proportion to her wealth, that was quite sacrificial and far greater in proportion to the food that Simon gave from his own bounty that sat on the table.

So setting aside the past for the sake of argument, it's clear that Simon, not this woman, he is the greater sinner on

this day. But let's go back to that question I asked. Since the moneylender is a picture of God, do the debtors here in the story represent Simon and the sinful woman and the answer to that question is actually, no. Simon is not one of the two debtors in the parable. The purpose of this parable is to get Simon to reflect on the nature of love, to teach him how love motivates the kind of worship that he's seeing in this redeemed woman, to convict him that since he does not possess that love, he is therefore not forgiven.

Notice the question Jesus asked at the end of the story, end of verse 42, "Now which of them will love him more?" Love is present with both debtors, right? Love is present in both debtors who are forgiven. They have nothing to repay, both forgiven. They both love. The question here is not the presence of love. Love is present, the question here has to do with the degree of love. Degree. By asking Simon to discern the difference between the two responses of love, Jesus has just established a very important principle in his ministry here.

You know what the principle is? It's vital. You need to keep this in mind. It's an indispensable, spiritual principle

that those who are forgiven will always respond to the one who forgave them in love. Those who are forgiven will always respond to the God, their forgiver, in love. No love, no forgiveness. Now we can ask all kinds of questions about the measure of love, the degree of love, the kind of reaction or response that's elicited from those who do love, the varying expressions of love because we're all different. But love or no love, that's the question.

You know how we can actually grow in our expressions of love and worship to Christ as Christians, as those forgiven, those whose debts have been wiped away? Study God's Word. Learn here in the Bible what it says about the nature of sin. And then step away and go and look in the mirror. The more you understand your sin, the more you will grow in your appreciation for divine grace. The more you will love your merciful Savior, the less you see your sin. The more you think you're okay, the more you think there are others around you who are worse, the less you see your sin, the less appreciation you'll have for your forgiveness. The more arrogant you'll be. The more like Simon, actually. The less you'll love.

Simon ventured an answer to Jesus' question. You can tell he's kind of tentative about it. It would appear here that he answered a bit reluctantly almost, almost sensing that a trap is about to close on him. "Jesus asked, 'Which of them will love him more.' And Simon answered, I 'the one,' I, "I suppose,'" Am I standing on, on a noose or am I about to be get ensnared here? "The one I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.'" And Jesus then did spring a trap. "You judged correctly." You judged correctly.

Nothing wrong with Simon's judgment, right? Nothing wrong with his reasoning ability. Nothing misfiring in his logic, nothing wrong with processing, all the wires are connected. So what's wrong with Simon? No love. No love means no forgiveness. And no forgiveness means he, as he sits there among his guests, as he sits there in the presence of Jesus the Messiah in the presence of this bowing, humble, weeping female saint, Simon is the one who remains utterly unclean, vile, wretched and remains under God's wrath.

Simon's problem is that he's dead in his trespasses and sins and he's heading for hell and at this point, he doesn't see

it. He doesn't recognize it. He doesn't understand it. Well that's where Jesus, with a gracious heart of divine compassion, Jesus, who loves his enemies, Jesus who loves the Pharisee, too, by telling them the truth. He's about to blow the lid off Simon's problem, show him exactly what's wrong. That's what we'll see next time as Jesus applies the story that he told to Simon. He applies it to him; he exposes clearly the lack of love and his need for salvation. Such a gracious, gracious Savior to love sinners of all kinds. We, in this room, are representative of that fact, are we not?

Let's pray, give thanks to him for saving us. Our God and our Father, we thank you that you are our Father by your grace, by the kindness you have showed to us in Jesus Christ. We stand amazed in your presence to see that our sins, which are many, have been forgiven because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. You've taken all of our sins, along with this dear woman, you've taken our sins and you've placed them on your beloved Son. Instead of punishing us, you've punished him.

You poured our all your fury against sin, all your anger, all your wrath, duly deserved, you punished him, which is what



your justice required. And because of each and every one of our sins has been dealt with, you then turned and covered us with his perfect righteousness. He who fulfilled all of your law, did all of your will perfectly, now being united to him, we stand before you in the same state, completely pure of sin, but also completely standing in fulfillment of righteousness. The one who said, "It is finished," he's fulfilled it all for us. And we're so grateful because we, our sins are many before you.

Oh, Father, I pray that you would help us to love. That you'd help us to love everyone, even our enemies in the way that Jesus loved, by telling them the truth, by pleading to them to turn to you, the gracious God, and the Savior whom you have sent, Jesus Christ. He is your beloved Son in whom you are well pleased and all of us who are forgiven, are united to him and we stand before you now with no condemnation. Thank you for your kindness to us in Christ. It's in his name we pray, Amen.