

The Telltale Sign of Sinner and Saint, Part 2

Luke 7:44-50

Just to bring you up to speed, Jesus has been invited by a Pharisee to be his guest at his house at an afternoon dinner. Other guests are there. They share the Pharisee's heart and mind. They're friends of the Pharisee, but Jesus is "the Teacher," as you can see, he's called in the text. He's the respected, he's the featured guest at this dinner. What started back in verse 40 with, "Simon, I have something to say to you," ends here in verse 47 with the conclusion, therefore I tell you. I have something to say to you, now, therefore, my conclusion, "I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much." She who, "he who is forgiven little, loves little."

Therein lies the confrontation. As Jesus has pointed out in these three verses, Simon didn't love much. Simon didn't love a little. Simon didn't love at all. Jesus loved the sinner by confronting him, and now, number two, point number two, main

point number two, Jesus loves the saint by restoring her. Jesus loves the saint by restoring her.

Take a look at those final verses, Luke 7, start reading there in verse 47. This is where it starts. "Jesus said to Simon, '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.'"

That section of Scripture, it is full of Gospel assurance. From the mouth of the Savior himself, this is all about forgiven sin. There's only one person in the story who can listen to and claim these promises from Jesus Christ. There's only one to whom Jesus' kind words of assurance apply. There's only one in this scene who, the poor, she's become rich. There's only one here who, though hungry, is now satisfied. There's only one, who though, sorrowing and weeping, is now made to laugh.

Jesus had said, "Blessed are you when you people hate you, when they exclude you, when they revile you, spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets." This hated, excluded, reviled, spurned woman, she's identified herself here with the Son of Man, bowing at his feet.

And now, the Son of Man identifies himself with her. He restores her reputation here in full. Beyond that, he restores her into the company of all the righteous, exemplified by the holy prophets of God. This woman joins their company and Jesus wants to demonstrate that to everyone. Can you imagine that? The Savior, our Lord who died for us, restoring us, taking our side in public, boasting that we belong to him?

He restores her, first in the eyes of Simon. Then in the eyes of Simon's guests. Then in the woman's own conscience. We can make those three subpoints here. Subpoint A, restoration before the critic. Subpoint B, restoration before the public. And subpoint C, I couldn't find another "ic" to rhyme, so restoration in her own conscience, restoration in her own

conscience. So restoration before the critic, before the public and in her own conscience.

He starts by addressing Simon in verse 47, which is subpoint A, restoration before Simon the critic. You remember Simon said to himself back in verse 39, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who, what sort of woman this is who's touching him for she's a sinner." And Jesus totally contradicts that critical and false judgment here saying, don't call this woman a sinner any longer. "Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven." So attaching, sinner, to her; totally out of place.

In verse 47, again, read from the verse in terms of Christ's affirmation about one of his sheep, such heartening language, "Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much." Just briefly, I, wanna, want you to notice a few points in his affirmation to the critic about this woman. It tells us so much about how to proclaim an accurate Gospel. First of all, the Gospel provides justice. The Gospel provides justice. There's no Gospel, there's no good news

when sin is ignored. That is a counterfeit called, Cheap Grace, which is shallow and ineffectual.

The Gospel acknowledges our sin. It deals straightforwardly with our sins, all of our sins, each and every one of our many sins. And then the Gospel tells us how God takes those sins away in a just way. He does not set aside his justice when he forgives us. He satisfies his perfect justice with all of its legal demands when he pours out his justified wrath upon each and every one of our sins. He did that when he punished Christ instead of us when Jesus died on the cross.

"God was in Christ," 2 Corinthians 5:19, "Reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them." How can he do that and still remain perfectly just? Does God set aside his justice to love us? I recently heard what I call the mad ravings of a so-called pastor, who said to his congregation, "This is why the Gospel is still good news in the world today because," get this, "God broke the law for love." He repeated it, just in case you missed it, just to emphasize the heresy. He said, "I said to every sinner, 'God broke the law for love.'"

Folks, that is not good news. He just told every lawbreaker in the room that God became a lawbreaker to love them. What kind of lunacy is that? For God to deny his justice, to break the law means he's no longer God. For God to come short of his justice by one iota means God ceases to be God, the hope of salvation vanishes in a puff of whatever that guy's smoking. That is not Gospel.

God broke no law. Instead, the wisdom of God is manifest in this fact, that God completely executed his perfect justice by punishing each and every sin of ours on the cross in Christ. He punished Christ in our place. "God made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him." God is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. True Gospel deals with sin. True Gospel is executed in perfect justice.

Secondly, the Gospel promises full and complete forgiveness. Let me say that again. Secondly, the Gospel promises full and complete forgiveness. This is why Jesus can

say when affirming this woman there in verse 47, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven.” That’s the perfect tense, are forgiven; perfect tense, passive voice. They have been forgiven. It’s the verb *aphiemi*, a verb that’s derived from a preposition *apo*, which means, away from, and then the root verb, *hiemi*, to put in motion or to send. So God put in motion and sent away sin from us.

Psalm 103, verse 12, right? “As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.” He sends them away forever so that David said in Psalm 32:1-2, How blessed is this woman whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered? How blessed is the woman against whom the Lord counts no iniquity? God has forgiven this woman. She entered into the scene of this dinner setting having been forgiven, perfect tense, passive voice. Jesus simply declares to Simon what God has already done in her.

Just as God forgives the sinner today, looking back 2000 years to Christ’s atoning death for us and our sins, God had forgiven this woman of her sins by looking ahead just a short while to Christ’s atoning death for her and her sins when he

died on the cross. Her many sins have been forgiven. One more thing to note in verse 47 about the Gospel, thirdly, the Gospel produces the evidence of forgiveness, which is love. The Gospel produces the evidence of forgiveness, which is love. As we've already said, in the presence of a divinely begotten love in her life, the evidence is there. Prior to this, prior to her encounter with Jesus' teaching, she loved her sin. She loved herself. She loved her money. She loved her life. Now, she loves her Savior, and she loves him lavishly. She loves him publicly. Her much love is proof positive that she has been much forgiven.

So Jesus contradicted the judgment of Simon. He has erased the basis of his slanderous accusations and thoughts toward this woman. Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, period. How can Jesus know that? How can Simon know that? How can everybody there know that? How can we know that? Because she loved much.

Now, the Savior there, as we said, is done speaking to Simon. He's now addressing the woman. This is the first time we see him speaking to her, by the way, in the text. Jesus has restored this woman before the accusing Simon, before her

critic, and as he begins to restore this woman, verse 48, he strengthens her conscience with word of assurance. But there's another opportunity that arises for restoration here. And this time, it's before the dinner guests.

We might call this subpoint B, restoration before the public. "He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' And then those at the table, they with him, they 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.'" Look, the other guests at the table, they didn't recognize here that Jesus had been answering the objections of Simon's mind. Jesus read Simon's mind there in verse 39, but they think that they can ponder Christ's pronouncement of forgiveness kind of in the safety of their own minds, anonymity of their own thoughts.

So they do what Simon did earlier, they say to themselves. Same language used of Simon earlier. They say to themselves, in their own thoughts, in their own judgment, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" It could be taken as the language of doubt. But it need not be. They certainly came to the table prepared to doubt. They came to the table ready to entrap Jesus, to prove

themselves and to one another that he's nothing more than a false Messiah. They'd been listening in on what Jesus said to Simon. They heard the parable. They listened as Jesus applied the parable to Simon, as he confronted the host in front of them.

They heard what Jesus said here, too, about forgiveness. Beyond what's said there in verse 49, we really don't know much more about them. We don't know if they are negative in their judgment or expressing surprise and wonder, pondering what it might mean for Jesus to pronounce the forgiveness of sins in this notoriously, evidently formerly, sinful woman. We don't know the outcome of this. What we do know is that Jesus doesn't address their thinking as he has Simon, at least not directly.

He does address them, though, indirectly. In his final affirmation to the woman, he's answering their objections. How is it possible? How is it possible to pronounce the forgiveness of this woman's many sins? Faith. Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." That word of grace shows these dinner guests the instrumental means of forgiveness, the conduit, which is faith through which the grace of God comes to

forgive the sinner. And it shows the result in forgiveness in the presence of them all. Jesus essentially says, "This woman has been justified by faith and now has peace with God."

Paul would later write about the impregnable assurance that belongs to God's people. It belonged to this dear woman as well. "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It's God who justifies. Who is to condemn?" Amen.

The fact that the Savior restored this dear woman in the eyes of Simon and in public before Simon's guests, it indicates the fullness of her salvation means that not only is her sin forgiven as a theological fact, but also as a practical present existential reality. Jesus has demonstrated his attention to erase all the, the polluted shameful past and to do so publicly, to do so as far as the east is from the west. He intends to give her a brand-new reputation, not as a woman known for her sin, sinful past, but as a woman known for her extravagantly great love for Christ, just what he's done. And you know what? We're

reading about it today, 2000 years later on the other side of the world.

If that's what he's done for this woman, you know what? It's what he intends to do with you, too, your sinful past, all your shame, all the things you've done, and you really don't want people to know about. As far as the east is from the west. All of this for the assurance of our hearts, the joy of a clean conscience, the reconciliation to God through forgiven sins.

Let's look at one more subpoint, subpoint C, restoration in this woman's own conscience. Restoration in her own conscience. Our Savior said the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." That's more than, far more than a, a blessing to go on in the subjective feelings of peace. Grammatically what Jesus says there is far stronger, he tells her go forth, to depart from there, walking, not in subjective sense of peace, but in an objective and lasting condition of peace. The subjective feelings will follow close at hand, sure, but greater than the feelings of peace are the fact, is the fact of an objective peace, which she now possesses in a new relationship with God.

She's been reconciled through the full forgiveness of her sins. Another way to say this, Go and sin no more. That's what he's saying to her. Go forth, living up to what you've already attained. Another way to say it, be who you are, woman. Be who you are, living now as a forgiven saint, as a child of God, as a citizen of the kingdom. Live consistently with the peace before God that you now possess as a fact.

This is such a beautiful affirmation of her reconciliation to God. From the lips of the Savior himself and he's made this affirmation in public. He's made it in the hearing of a religious leader. How they treated this woman from this day forward, we don't really know, but that really doesn't matter, does it? If the son sets you free, you'll be free indeed. Jesus will not deny this woman before his Father who is in heaven. He'll acknowledge her before heaven, and he's just acknowledged her before earth as a true child of the King.

Such a blessed assurance we possess, isn't it? Just as a postscript on this beautiful story, the villain, or the

villains, as we might say that, in this story, are Simon and the hostile dinner guests. They certainly don't come off well in the story. Their thoughts are exposed. Their hearts are revealed for all the ugliness that's in them. And before we boo and hiss them off the stage, it's important to remember that but by the grace of God, there go I. Right? There go we.

You ever harbored a censorious spirit, a critical judgment? Have you ever had a proud attitude about yourself, about what you are, about who you are, especially in reference to others in putting them down? Of course you have. How would you like your thoughts to flash on a billboard for everybody to see in the moment you think them. Or worse yet, to be written in very permanent ink on the pages of Holy Scripture? That's why God covered her name. We don't know her name. You know what? God covered all of our Pharisaical sins as well. But beyond that caution, for all of us to have a humble attitude of self-reflection.

Notice that the narrative has ended, and we really don't know what became of Simon and his dinner companions. Luke has left that open-ended. Their fate here is unresolved, which

means, while there's life, there's hope, right. We don't know this woman's name, as I said, for obvious reasons. Love has covered over her shameful past permanently. We'll never associate her name with a sinful past. But it's not uncommon in Luke's writings to name those whom Christians know in the early church, to cite their names, people who, in his writings in Luke and Acts, are known to the church as believers. It's very possible here, it's actually maybe even more likely that Luke has done the same thing here.

We may, after all, see Simon in heaven. After all, we've got to ask with Luke and all his research, you can read about his research methodology in Luke 1:1-4, in all of his research and examination of documents, interview of, interviewing of sources, who was it that reported the thoughts that Simon had been thinking? Who reported to Luke the musings of the dinner guests? It very well might have been Simon.

Consider also that Luke was personally acquainted with a Pharisee like Simon, but someone who was actually far worse than Simon, a man who persecuted the church viciously murderously, who persecuted the church, and yet was converted, who was

called, radically called, and converted and transformed and used greatly by Christ. He was a traveling companion, companion of the Apostle Paul. So perhaps Luke wants to hold out hope here for us as readers. God saves notoriously sinful women and men. And he saves Pharisees, too, those who appeared to everybody to be wonderful on the outside. And perhaps Luke wants to hold out hope for us as readers that God saves all kinds of sinners from the tax collectors and the prostitutes, to the Pharisees and the politicians, from poor to rich, from slave to free, that is the love of God.

That's the love of God that has been poured out by the Holy Spirit on our hearts. That's the love we're commanded to show to everybody else. As the hymn goes, "The Love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell. It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell. The guilty pair, bowed down with care. God gave his Son to win. His erring child, he reconciled. And pardoned from his sin." That's Gospel, a Gospel that names, confronts, deals with sin, executes justice, but in grace, not on us, but on Christ. That's the Gospel that saved me and you.

PILLAR OF
—TRUTH— 

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for saving us. Thank you for your mercy and your grace. Thank you for the love that you showed, unmerited favor toward us in Christ and mercy beyond mercy that we should be called children of God. Thank you for causing us to be born again to repent of our sins and put faith in him, that we might rise as he has risen, that we might manifest on this earth, the love that he has shown us, that you have shown us in him. I pray that you would help us, like Jesus has shown for us in this example, to love our enemies, too. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.