

“She loved much.” (13)

Please turn your Bibles to **Luke 7**. We are going to look at “**The parable of the two debtors.**”

But before we get into our sermon let me share with you a story I heard about a new priest who was trying to institute some new reforms in his very old-fashioned parish by teaching his parishioners the new responses. He said to them, “When I say, ‘The Lord be with you,’ you will reply all together, ‘and with you also.’ Then I will say, ‘Let us pray.’” The day came for the introduction of the new form of worshipping but something happened to the microphone, and the priest, trying to adjust it said in a loud voice, “There is something wrong with this microphone.” The congregation responded with one loud voice, “And with you also!”

And I guess the point of the story is that when Jesus says He will be with you, He means it no matter how bad your sin has been. Our Bible reading this morning was **Luke 7:36-50** now we’re not going to read all the text again but let me give you a quick summary of what was read.

Jesus had an invitation to dinner from Simon and we don’t know when or where the dinner took place but we do know that it was in a Pharisee’s house. Now from this simple invitation we can tell a few things about **Simon the Pharisee**. For example we know that he invited others to dinner too. And so to be able to do this Simon would have had to have been a wealthy man, who lived in a house with many rooms which all led out towards the open courtyard.

You see the poor people of Palestine would live in single room houses but they didn’t have a courtyard. And it’s in the courtyard, in the heat of summer where rich people would have their dinners served to them. And that’s where Simon and the other guests would be eating their meal.

Remember when Jesus was in the upper room with His disciples in **John 13**? Let me take you into that room for a second and let you see it like you’ve never seen it before. How many of you have seen a copy of **Leonardo da Vinci famous portrait of ‘The Last Supper’**? It’s a magnificent work but it’s so wrong, they didn’t sit at a long table, in chairs, with a white tablecloth, Passover was eaten lying on the floor.

You see they would have a U-shaped table, with the host up at the front, in the very middle. There was someone on the right in a **special place** of honour and someone on the left in a **very special place** of honour, and everybody else would be down the sides. They would lie down on their left elbow and eat with their right hand.

You see that’s why the Bible said in **John 13:25** that “**John was up against the breast of Jesus.**” He didn’t have bad table manners; John was to the right of Jesus, right up against His breast as they ate. That’s how they would eat their meals together with the other guests. Now the Jews got this custom from the **Greeks** because the Greek word used there when translated means to “**Sit at table**” literally it means to “**lie down**” or “**recline.**”

Now before we go on let me say a few words about the characters in this parable. Simon was a Pharisee as we know and the name “**Pharisee**” literally means “**The separated one**”. These guys were “**Purists**” or the “**Separatists**” of their day, the strictest party of the Jewish religion.

When Paul is giving his testimony to **King Agrippa** in **Acts 26**, Paul says to him in **verses 4+5** “**The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee.**”

And like we know about the Pharisees it wasn’t so much their strict observances of the Law but by their binding of petty regulations about the Law that restricted them from others. The Pharisees tried to keep away from anything non-Jewish, but they also separated themselves from the mass of the people, the vulgar crowd, which they called “**The people of the land.**”

Yet **Luke 7:36** tells us that Simon invited Jesus to dinner. **But why? Why did He invite Jesus to dinner?** Well we don’t know why, possibly to find fault, as we know the Pharisees were continually trying to find fault with Jesus. Or maybe he was just curious and wanted to find out more about Him.

The thing is, we just don’t know but we know this much, the parable itself shows us that Jesus wasn’t invited out of a heart of friendship and love.

Let's look at the woman in the story, she is unnamed and unknown. Some people like to think it was **Mary Magdalene** and others think it is **Mary the sister of Lazarus**. Now we can presume all we like but the text doesn't tell us who she is except for one fact. **Luke 7:27 "She was a sinner and her sins were many."**

So what I want to do today is share with you **3 points** that we can learn from this parable. And the **1<sup>st</sup> point** is this; **Christ's love for us has no conditions. Luke 7:27+28 "When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them."**

Now notice that Jesus didn't stop this woman from approaching Him, He didn't stop her doing what she was about to do. And that's because Jesus was willing to receive affection from a corrupt woman. Now make no mistake loved ones, this woman was a known sinner all over town.

She's the one that people would point to in the street and say, **"Hey there's that woman, who is always involved in some sort of sin."** She would be the one that people would talk about in the local cafe, if they had one. And as we know the Pharisees would have nothing to do with the common people, never mind have someone who is the worst of them all in their home.

And when she walks into a Pharisees house, **can you imagine the look on their faces?** And when she began to **"Cry over his feet and got His feet wet from her tears and then dried them with her hair"**. **Luke 7:38. Can you imagine what was going through the Pharisee's mind?** Oh but she doesn't stop there, **"She kissed His feet and then poured perfume all over them."** **Luke 7:38.** And remember that this whole scene is enacted in public, before the very eyes of those who are so critical about the Law.

You know when it comes to women; Jesus was always upsetting people by talking to them, **wasn't He?** He did it in **John 4** with the Samaritan woman at the well, where the Bible says in **verse 27**, **"Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"**

And He's doing again here in the Pharisee's house. You see the culture of that time very much-suppressed women and it was unheard of for a Jewish Rabbi to speak to a woman in public. The Pharisees were fuming; in fact they started to whisper among themselves, according to **Luke 7:39**, **"If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner."** But Jesus did know what kind of woman this was but even so, He didn't stop her and He wasn't ashamed or embarrassed by her conduct.

And loved ones what this woman did took courage, nothing was going to stop her from approaching her Lord, nothing. **What about you?**

I heard a story about who was placed inside a juvenile detention centre awaiting a trial for stealing a **Mars Bar**. And he knew he was guilty. But on the day of his trial the judge asked him if there was anything he would like to say before he passes his sentence. The boy thought for a moment and said, **"Judge have you ever stolen a sweet from a shop?"** And a painful silence came over the courtroom. Finally the judge blurted out, **"No cross examination allowed! Case dismissed!"**

And the point is that we are all sinners, because nobody comes to the cross sinless. **Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** **But what's stopping you from being cross-examined?** You're past sin! Your present sin! If I can just stop drinking heavily then I will come to Christ! If I can just give up that one sin in my life then I will become a Christian!

You see some people don't come to Jesus because of their sin and so what they tend to do is wait. And what they are doing is trying to cleanse themselves in order to be worthy of Christ's love, but what you need to realise is that we cannot cleanse ourselves. Because when you do cross-examine yourself you will see that you are a sinner, through and through, because that's what the cross was about.

It was a symbol of death and **Romans 6:23** tells us, **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** There is only one thing that can cleanse us and Paul tells us about it in **Ephesians 1:7 "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."**

Peter also tells us about it in 1 Peter 1:18+19 “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

So give up trying to cleanse yourself before you come to Christ because you won't succeed. The only thing that can cleanse us is the precious blood of Christ and your sin doesn't have any conditions in it that can't be cleansed.

I remember hearing story about a preacher who was studying for months and months with this woman and at the end of the study he asked her, “What's stopping you from being baptised?” And she gave excuse after excuse after excuse. And after a long talk he finally said to her, “What's stopping you from being baptised is the same thing which is stopping many people from being baptised, it's your sin.”

And loved ones many people, people that I know and people that you know won't come to Christ because they have sin in their lives that they just don't want to give up. They can say it is because of this and that but the truth of the matter is that they don't want to give up their present lifestyle. They love having sex with lots of people before they are married, they love taking drugs; they love talking gossip about people.

And let me tell you loved ones there's not a person in this room who didn't love doing these things. The difference is the Christians in this room recognised that they couldn't clean themselves from their sins, they recognised they needed a Saviour to do that for them.

And that brings me to my next point. 2. Our love for Christ is in proportion to our consciousness of sin. There is a radical difference between Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman. You see Simon wasn't aware of his sins, but the woman could never forget that she was a sinner. Simon was a man who thought he didn't need much forgiveness but the woman knew she needed much forgiveness.

And so the difference between the two was basically a consciousness of sin and a need for a Saviour. And this parable does not teach that a person must be forgiven for great sins in order to have a great love for Christ. A person may spend 30 years in prison and appreciate their freedom more than a person who has just spent one night in a police station cell.

Romans 6:1-4 “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

You see if someone is truly seeking forgiveness, they cannot at the same time be loving sin. It's not the amount of sin but the awareness of sin that makes people appreciate Jesus. That's why Jesus told Simon the parable in Luke 7:40-43, He says, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said." In other words until we learn what Christ has done for us, we will never be able to see the people around us who are in so much need of the grace that you and I received when we became Christians.

And that brings me to my final point. 3. Love can do things that other things cannot do. The parable teaches us about the greatness of love. Jesus asked Simon, in Luke 7:42, “Which of the two men would love his creditor more?” Now why did Jesus ask him this question?

It wasn't a trick question; Jesus was simply trying to show Simon how important love was. That's why He asked Simon in Luke 7:44 “Simon, do you see this woman?” I mean how could he not see her, she's standing there right in front of him? Jesus was asking Simon to look within himself and see that he needs as much forgiveness as she does. Simon saw a wretch of a woman, a woman he wouldn't normally go to within 500 yards of, this sinful, evil woman who everybody talks about. Simon saw a woman who didn't deserve the grace of God.

You all know the story about the famous preacher G Campbell Morgan where he was walking home late one night with his friend, when this man came stumbling out of a pub. And his friend said, “What a sorrowful state that is.” And Morgan said, “There go I but for the grace of God.”

We all need His grace, [don't we?](#) And so Jesus goes on to appeal to Simon's heart and says in [Luke 7:45-48](#) "I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

You see this sinful woman even with all her faults had love. And love was the main thing that was lacking in the life of self-sufficient Simon. Simon's scrupulous observances of traditions couldn't replace love. She loved much and when she came face to face with her Lord she just broke down. She repented with her tears and the very things she used to seduce men with; she now uses to worship her Lord, what a beautiful picture that is.

In [Mark 12:29-31](#) when one of the teachers of the law came to Jesus, he asked Him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one" answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

You see love is basic, it's both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and without it, nothing is worthwhile. And that's because it is love that sustains everything. [1 Corinthians 13:4-8](#) "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." It's pure Christian, Christ-like love.

And if you thought the Pharisees were upset before when Jesus accepted this sinner near Him, look at the next verse. [Luke 7:49](#) "The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" In other words what they were saying was, "Who does He think He is? God! Well yes He was, Jesus was God.

Remember a few chapters back in [Luke 5](#) when some people brought a paralytic man to be healed by Jesus but they couldn't get in him in the house because of the crowd, so they lowered him through the roof? It says in [Luke 5:21-25](#) "The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." He said to the paralysed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God."

The Pharisees accused Jesus of blasphemy because He forgave that man's sins. Jesus could forgive sins because He was God, He was God in human flesh and He had the authority to forgive sins. [John 1:1-3](#) says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." And just a few verses down it says in [John 1:14](#), "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us".

And that's why Jesus could say to the woman in [Luke 7:50](#), "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." He can forgive because He was God. This parable also teaches us that our love for Jesus is no greater than our appreciation for pardon. But again our appreciation of pardon depends on our conviction of sin.

And make no mistake loved ones, God hates sin and we shouldn't make light of sin either and we should be grateful for our salvation. Maybe that's one reason why some Christians aren't willing to share the Gospel with their neighbours. Maybe some Christians appreciate their forgiveness so little; they only have a little to share with the world.

She loved much, [can you?](#) You see if you're not a Christian today then you too can love just like she did. You can show your love by being obedient to the Gospel of Christ and be baptised for the forgiveness of your sins and God will dwell within you in the form of His Holy Spirit. He will help you to stop sinning.

And just ask any Christian here today; if they sin and they will tell you that they do, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. But that's where it always comes back to the blood of Christ.

When someone comes into contact with the blood of Christ at their baptism, it cleanses us from all our past sins, but that blood doesn't stop there at your baptism. If we continue to walk in His ways and continue to confess our sins to God, then His blood continues to wash all our sins away. Not just the sins that we are aware of but also the unintentional sins. His blood washes it all away, so that when God looks at us, He doesn't see the sin in our lives.

The Bible calls it "**justification**". He sees us "**just as if**" we haven't sinned. We know we sin and we are aware of our sin and so if anyone asks us if we are sinners, we will always say, "**Well yes we are.**" But don't take my word for it; let me leave you with **John's** inspired words to think about as we close and take John's word for it.

1 John 1:5-1 John 2:2 "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."