

**Home : Sermons : Mar 5, 2006****Forgiven Much – Luke 7:36-50**

Introduction – The scene before us serves as a concrete example of the mocking that Jesus received in His day, “*eating and drinking...Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners...*” Jesus is willing to sit at a table with Pharisees. He is also willing to be anointed with a sinner’s love.

Table Fellowship – Jesus accepts an invitation to eat at the home of Simon, a Pharisee with many other guests. Having seen and heard of the miracles and teaching of Jesus, this Pharisee wonders who this carpenter really is. Sitting around a U-shaped table and reclining on their side, the legs of the guests would have stretched out behind the next person at the table. This is what gives the woman direct access to the feet of Jesus.

What is She Doing? – It would have been awkward. It would have been inciting. Some say that it would have appeared strangely promiscuous and completely out of place. This woman is a known harlot who somehow shows up in the home of a legalistic Pharisee in the midst of a home and a meal that would have to be ritually clean. Standing, she weeps, and then lets down her hair (another provocative move) and wipes His tear-stained feet. Kissing and anointing His feet with costly oil, she pours out her love and affection upon her Savior. Imagine what you might have thought if you were there, or if you were there with your children.

Evaluation of the Woman – The first great contrast to note is the evaluation of the woman by Simon and Jesus. The Pharisee condemns her as a sinner (v39). Jesus never denies that she has sinned, but focuses instead, through his parable, on the reasons for her actions. It is not because she is being promiscuous, but because she is overwhelmed at having been forgiven much (vv40-43).

Evaluation of Jesus – Simon doubts that Jesus can be a prophet (v39). Jesus knows what Simon is thinking, proving that He is a prophet (vv39-40). Even though Simon had invited Jesus to his home, he had not provided Him with the kind of hospitality that would be given to a truly honored guest. However, the woman lavishes honor and love upon her Lord, responding to Jesus with more discernment than this well-educated Pharisee. She is like the centurion who knows the God of Israel better than the Jews (7:1ff).

Evaluation of “Peace” – The Pharisee thinks that he is in a state of acceptance with God (Matt 23:13, 23-30). And yet, Jesus admonishes this man who has given himself to outward cleanliness and declares “*go in peace*” to the forgiven harlot. She is a moral disgrace, a social outcast, an unclean woman, and Jesus turns to her and says, “*Your sins are forgiven.*” We must be careful: there is a false “peace.”

Observations – Luke is showing us (really, through all of Chapter 7) who the True Israel is and who the True Prophet of Israel is.

Humility – The True Israel is made up of those who have humbled themselves before God. The kingdom of God is not something that we have to climb up to – it is something that we have to stoop down low to, and therefore is accessible to all. The centurion had a humble faith. The widow had a humble need. This woman had a humble love. God used a variety of means to bring them to Himself, but each one revealed God-given humility; and the Lord responded by lifting them up.

Bold Words, Compassionate Heart – Jesus is the Great Prophet. His Words have great authority and power. He speaks in a way that cuts to the truth and to the heart, because He is the Truth and He is Love. He mocks hypocrisy and self-serving, while showing great compassion to those who turn to Him with any need, any uncleanness, any sin. He bids all to come and receive much forgiveness, complete forgiveness. The mark that one has received such forgiveness, according to Jesus, is that such a sinner is filled with much love for the Savior. We are a people who have been forgiven much, and therefore we must be (and are allowed to be) a people who love our Lord much.

Forgiven Much – “*And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’*” (v 49). Far too often there are those watching a declaration of sins forgiven and wonder whether this is appropriate. Does Jesus realize all this woman has done? Does Jesus realize all this person here has done? Is that all he or she has to do? Do not doubt the power and authority and purposes of God in Jesus Christ. We are a forgiven people, a forgiven community, and therefore we must be

a forgiving people, a forgiving community (Col 3:12-14). Having heard these words from Jesus, we do not know if the Pharisee invited the woman to the table. A more important question for us is - would we?

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