

## Dining With Jesus – Luke 7

11/3/2019

**Reckless Love:** wow, what an incredible message contained in that song. It speaks of a God who doesn't behave in the ways that we often think God ought to behave – and that was certainly evidenced throughout the ministry of Jesus.

**“Reckless” is defined as:** *without thinking or caring about the consequences of an action.*

That's not actually true of Jesus because he was quite intentional in everything he said and did. But just looking at his actions and words, he often said and did things which seemed to be careless simply because they didn't conform to the manner people were used to. Jesus wasn't too concerned about doing and saying things that everyone else would approve of. He lived his life in such a way that people saw a different aspect of God than what they'd been taught or ever imagined. They got a picture of God that shocked them with his candidness, his approachability and his grace toward those who were told they're sinners who God is angry at and that He'll never love them because of their past. Jesus cut through all of those lies and demonstrated that God cares greatly for those who have been told that.

This morning we get to see that **“reckless love”** in action through the words and actions of Jesus.

Please turn in your Bibles to Luke 7, where we're once again joining Jesus at a dinner party. And just like last week, **this one is once again hosted by a Pharisee.** As we study these dinner parties it's pretty safe to say that there was never a dull dinner party when Jesus was in attendance, and we'll see that once again today.

Before I read our text, let me take a few moments to set up what we're going to read.

**Characters at the Dinner:** (There are **three main people** at the party).

**Host:** Simon the Pharisee

**Featured Guest:** Teacher Jesus

**Crowd:** No doubt the crowd contained **other Pharisees and Jewish leaders,** (they would have been the ones seated around the table), but also there would have been uninvited guests. In that Middle Eastern of Jesus' time, it was quite common for the host to leave their door open during the dinner for others to come in and listen to the dinner conversation. They would be seated along the perimeter of the room. And if there was any food left over, after the invited guests had all eaten, then these individuals could eat the leftovers. At this dinner party, there is one guest who stands out from the rest. We aren't given her name. She's only referred to as **“a woman who lived a sinful life.”** And apparently, by using that description, everyone at the dinner knew who she was. Wow, what a claim to fame. Often people will ask me who certain individuals at the church are. They don't know their name, so they usually try to explain who they are by the color of their hair, whether they wear glasses or not, how tall or short they are, what approximate age they are, and where they generally sit. What if sometime I responded with, **“Oh, I know exactly who you're referring to. “They're that sinner who sits on the window side, about halfway up on the aisle side.”** I'm pretty confident I'd get some strange looks and comments from the inquiring person. But that's exactly what happened at this dinner party, and apparently everyone knew who they were referring to. While that's a true description of everyone of us, **aren't you glad that God doesn't see us that way? God doesn't allow our failures to define who we are.** He sees us in His image with all the potential He gifted us with.. He sees us through the **eyes of love** rather than through the **eyes and heart of judgment.** And that's exactly what we see in the life and ministry of Jesus as well in his approach to people who've messed up.

And while the description, **“a person who lived a sinful life”** fit this woman, it also could fit everyone of us as well. According to the Bible, everyone who has ever lived has sinned. But, as we'll see in this story, it's pretty evident that this woman's life has been profoundly touched by Jesus prior to this dinner, although we're left to speculate what that interaction was. That's true with most of the individuals who came into contact with Jesus and encountered the character of God.

This woman heard that Jesus was going to be at this dinner party and so she quickly formulated a plan in her mind. Her plan includes showing her love and gratitude for Jesus by hopefully **anointing his head** with oil. So, she grabs an expensive perfume she kept in an alabaster jar and heads to the dinner party.

When exactly she arrives at the party is unclear, but from what Jesus says, it seems like she was there when Jesus arrives.

### **Dinner Party Protocol:**

The last thing I'd like to explain, before we jump into the text, is how a person was typically greeted at a dinner party.

1. The host would greet you with a **kiss**
2. The host would **anoint your head with oil**, or at least offer you oil to do it yourself
3. The host or a designated servant would **wash the dirt off of your feet** and **dry them**.

**Note: (Leave this slide up while I read the text)**

With that background please follow along as I read the text. **Luke 7:36-50**

So, how was Jesus greeted when he came into Simon's house?

- Was he greeted with a **kiss**? NO!!
- Was his head **anointed with oil**? NO!!
- Were his **feet washed and dried**? NO!!

All of the customary greetings were obviously, and I would argue, **intentionally, neglected**. It would have been completely understandable and acceptable for Jesus, after being so rudely greeted, to have left in anger. But Jesus sticks around. And following 1<sup>st</sup> century Middle Eastern dining traditions, the main guests would have likely been seated around a table called a **triclinium** (picture of it on the screen). The table is in the middle with pillows or benches around the middle table that the guests would recline on, with their feet sticking out behind or beside them. And as everyone looked around, Jesus' feet may have very well stood out from all others because they were caked with mud and dirt.

The text says that this sinful woman was standing right behind Jesus and begins to weep.

- Perhaps, these are tears of joy, for the difference Jesus has made in her life
- Perhaps they are tears of regret, as she's crying over her many sins in the past
- Perhaps she's crying because the rude way that Jesus has been treated since coming into Simon's house. Or, it could be a combination of these reasons for her tears.

But apparently this woman quickly changes her plans. I believe her original plan was simply to offer to use her expensive perfume as a gift of gratitude and love to Jesus. But when she saw how rudely he was treated, her heart was broken and she decided she couldn't let him be treated like this. So, she comes up behind and since she didn't have any water to wash his feet with, and since it's highly unlikely that the host would give her any water, she lets her tears fall down upon Jesus' dirty feet and wash them.

Imagine for a moment how much she must have been weeping in order to have enough of them to wash someone's feet. Then, **since she didn't bring a towel with**, she dries them with her hair. Then she kisses them and anoints them with the perfume she brought. She's just greeted Jesus properly, which the host refused to do. Now, all of this was totally inappropriate in that culture, on numerous levels.

1. A woman wouldn't kiss a man in public.
2. And a woman certainly wouldn't let her hair down in public. She would only do this in the privacy of her home with her husband. The Jewish commentary on the Law, called the **Midrash**, proclaims that a woman letting her hair down in public would be **just cause to divorce your wife without providing her with any compensation**. Everyone in the room would have known this. And they are all making quick assumptions and judgments. It's safe to say that this woman is displaying "**Reckless Love**".

The text tells us what Simon, the host, is thinking. "***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.***" And the logical conclusion is what? **That he would tell her to stop this shameful behavior.** It was widely believed and taught that the

prophets, and especially the Messiah, would have the **gift of discerning spirits** that would enable them to know who was good and who was bad. And since Jesus isn't doing anything to stop this woman, he must not know who she is and therefore Jesus must not be a prophet and certainly not the Messiah. Clearly they believed that the Messiah would tell this woman to stop. Simon, and the fellow Pharisees in attendance must have been quietly rejoicing over this turn of events. For this would certainly be the ammunition they needed to discredit Jesus before all the people. Jesus has just done our work for us.

But not so quick Simon. This is no ordinary person you're dealing with her. This is God in human form and he's about to flip the tables once again. He's about to challenge your commonly held beliefs and show you how God sees people, especially sinners. He proceeds to tell Simon a very short parable to teach him and us a very important principle.

*"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"*

43 Simon replied, **"I suppose** the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

*"You have judged correctly," Jesus said. (Luke 7:41-43 (NIV))*

At this point, Simon must have been wondering what Jesus was doing. What does "debts" have to do with this sinful woman who's been behaving so shamefully. I love that Simon responds, *"I suppose..."* This the answer of someone who is answering cautiously. The correct answer seems too obvious. There must be a trick somewhere in Jesus' question. Jesus must be trying to trick me. But he's not. Simon answered correctly, but Jesus is about to take this dinner party to a whole other level. Jesus is done discussing theology or many other debates about the Law. This is about to get very personal for Simon, the woman and you and I.

I love, love, love the subtleties of what Jesus did next.

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

**While looking at the woman**, I'm sure with eyes of love and grace and healing, he asks Simon if he saw the woman. Simon, and everyone else in the room, no doubt saw her and were outraged with her behavior. I guarantee no one in that house that evening missed seeing her. She was the main attraction during this dinner and everyone was glued to her and to see how Jesus would respond.

Jesus' question strikes at the heart of each of us as well in how we see people. **How do you look at people who are different than you?**

- What races through your mind and heart when you see people who are **dirty and smelly**?
- What races through your mind and heart when you see **panhandlers** standing in the medium at traffic lights with their cardboard signs?
- What goes through your mind and heart when you see the **mug shot** of a person convicted or hurting or killing someone else, even a small child?

As profound as it might seem, God sees these people and He sees you with eyes and a heart of love. He wants every person to come to know Him and find the kind of life that He always intended you and me to live, in a rich relationship with the One who designed us and loves us. So, often we judge people by their exterior looks or their actions.

Simon had put most everyone into two categories. **Holy** and **Unholy** and he believed he clearly belonged in the Holy category whereas this *"sinful woman"* belonged in the Unholy category. And yet in reality, everyone belongs in the Unholy category and only Jesus belongs in the Holy category.

Next, Jesus reminds Simon how this “*sinful woman*” had done for Jesus what Simon should have done and refused to do. “*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—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”*

Then Jesus said to her, “*Your sins are forgiven.*”

Somewhere along the way, this woman has come to know and be committed to following Jesus. It didn't require her to take a conversion class or to memorize a bunch of Scriptures. She doesn't have a card that declares she's an official follower of Jesus. She doesn't need one – because the testimony of her life speaks far louder than any card could. Jesus says, what's happened on the inside of this woman is evident in her acts of service, which are actually **amazing worship**. The core Hebrew word for worship means to bow down, and that's exactly what we see this woman do. In the book of Revelation we also see what worship looks like in heaven, around God's throne, and we see the very same thing. People are bowing before God, seated on His throne. This worship is not generated, by words appearing on a screen, but this worship flows from a heart in love with Jesus. Worship that breaks our hearts over our sins and how Jesus is so casually treated by so many in our society today. Even how Jesus is treated in many churches today.

It's a profound statement that “*whoever has been forgiven little loves little.*” When was the last time you brought to tears over your sins and the price Jesus paid for their forgiveness? Now, I realize that some of you can cry at the drop of a hat, and others of you rarely or never cry. But don't miss the point. It's not about tears; it's about your heart in relationship to Jesus. Some of you are an inspiration with the tenderness of your hearts toward God. But sadly, I'm afraid that many of us, who've accepted Jesus Christ, over time, begin to take our forgiveness for granted. And while we don't turn our backs on God, our relationship with God becomes **more intellectual than personal**. And if that's you, I pray that this sermon is a wake up call for you. And that you pray to God for a fresh outpouring and rising up of His Spirit inside of you to bring to you afresh the miracle of your salvation.

**Responses:** One response to this text would be to judge Simon for his hard hearted attitude and judgment upon the woman and Jesus. But before you level your judgment upon Simon too quickly, ask yourself – **in what ways do I think and act like Simon?** Do I form quick assessments, judgments of others based on externals without ever taking the time to get to know the source of their pain.

Sadly the story ends with the crowd questioning Jesus' right to forgive sins, rather than rejoicing that this woman has found salvation and demonstrating to everyone at dinner that evening a heart in love with Jesus.

May the events of that dinner party challenge us to consider if we've become too complacent in our relationship with Jesus and if we've become, even a little, too much like Simon by sitting in judgment of others.

### **Action point:**

As an action point this week I want to challenge you to engage in the **activity of noticing**. As you walk through your day and encounter people, just simply offer a quick prayer for God's blessing to be poured out onto that person and ask God for the ability to see them as He sees them.

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**Featured Guest:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Crowd:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DINNER PARTY PROTOCOL:**

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2. The host would \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The host or a designated servant would \_\_\_\_\_

Which of these protocols did Simon, the host, fulfill with Jesus?  
Which of these protocols did ‘*the sinful woman*’ fulfill with Jesus?

Why do you think the woman is crying?

What does Simon assume about Jesus?

How do you look at people who are different than you?

Describe the most amazing act of worship you’ve offered up to God?

How has God’s forgiveness of your many sins affected your life?

In what ways do you act and think like Simon?

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