

April 21, 2024

“Faith of an Anointer”
Lesson 3

Luke 7:36-39, 44-50

Intro

Earlier in chapter 7, Jesus heals a centurion’s servant (last week’s lesson) and then raised from death the only son of a widow. The people regard Him as a prophet and coming from God. Then John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to see if Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus’ response is to quote Isaiah 61:1: “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them.” Jesus shows He is the Messiah by the things He (and only He) does which fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy.

Then Jesus asks those around Him about John the Baptist, and concludes that “among those born of women, there is no one greater than John.” The people and the tax collectors agree with Jesus’s words, because they had “been baptized with the baptism of John.” But the Pharisees and the law experts “rejected God’s purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.” According to Luke 5:17, Pharisees from “every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem” have come to investigate Jesus. This contrast of views about Jesus is at the heart of today’s study passage.

Read Luke 7:36-39

1. vs. 36: Jesus gets invited to a Pharisees house for a meal

Jesus is invited to a Pharisee’s house again in Luke 11 and Luke 14

They appear to be interested, although at times they are looking for ways to trap Him

Here, they appear to be looking carefully at what He says

Their inner question seems to be, “Does Jesus believe in what we believe in?”

Based on His miracles, maybe the question should have been, “Do we see things the way that Jesus sees them?”

2. vs. 37: A woman comes to the Pharisee’s house after learning that Jesus was there

We are told that she was a sinner, that she lived a sinful life

It is frequently thought she was a prostitute (though the text does not say this)

This may be so, but she wouldn’t have to be a prostitute to be living sinfully

However, her reputation suggests this may be the case

This is certainly not a person a Pharisee would welcome into his house

She has obviously come prepared—she brings a jar of perfume

The value/cost of this perfume is not mentioned here

However, perfume was not an inexpensive item

This perfume indicates a great expense and sacrifice on her part

3. vs. 38: The verse says she was standing behind Jesus, but then began wiping his feet with her tears

A meal was usually eaten then at a low table, kneeling with one’s feet behind them

The woman must have bent down to be at Jesus’ level to be able to reach His feet

A woman’s hair at this time was usually bound up—here she is using it on Jesus’ feet

This indicates she let her hair down—a departure from what was considered proper

She doesn’t seem to care what anyone thinks; she is lost in the moment with Jesus

4. vs. 39: In a small town like Capernaum, everyone's identity and life is known
The Pharisee obviously recognized her as an immoral person, showing he knew of her
If He knew her, Jesus should also know of her, having spent much time in Capernaum
How could He not know about this woman, and let her touch Him?
This shows the Pharisee's thinking
If Jesus' thinking doesn't agree with the Pharisee's, then Jesus cannot be a prophet
This is because of the woman touching Him, and what kind of woman she was
The Jews believed that touching anything unclean made one unclean also
The Pharisees were obsessed with avoiding anything unclean and keeping the Law
There is a huge contrast occurring here
A sinful woman is expressing her love for Jesus, and the Pharisees view her with disdain

[In verses 40-43, Jesus tells a parable to Simon, the Pharisee who invited Him into his house. It is about a money lender who pardons those who are deeply in debt. Jesus is going to use the lesson of this parable in talking to Simon about this woman that Simon looks down on.]

Read Luke 7:44-50

5. vs. 44: Jesus begins making his application by turning toward the woman after speaking to Simon
This draws attention to her and on her; she doesn't want it, and most there don't like her
Jesus points out a big difference between how she has treated Him and how Simon has
Simon didn't provide any water for Jesus to wash His own feet
This is a usual act of hospitality provided for guests in this day
Footwear then didn't prevent dust and dirt from getting on one's feet
The roads were also unpaved, meaning lots of dust and dirt
Simon's actions were cold, not even meeting the basic guidelines
The woman, however washed Jesus' feet with her tears, and then wiped them with her hair
She wasn't concerned about how dirty his feet were, or how dirty her hair would be
She did this out of love for one who had shown kindness and forgiveness to others
She did this out of hope that he would love someone unlovable to others, like her

6. vs. 45: Jesus next brings up the fact that Simon provided no kiss to Jesus, but the woman did
This kiss is typical for the time as an expression of greeting and welcome
Usually the host would kiss the guest on the cheek, or both cheeks, as a welcome
Simon did not kiss Jesus in welcome, just as he did not provide water to wash feet
This indicates that Simon didn't truly offer Jesus full acceptance
The woman, however "has not stopped" kissing Jesus' feet
Instead of kissing his cheek, she kisses his feet!
Even if they are now clean(er), kissing another's feet is degrading
This shows she doesn't feel worthy of anything more than feet-kissing
This shows the great depth of her recognition of Jesus' kindness and her humility

7. vs. 46: Jesus finally notes that Simon didn't pour oil on His head, but the woman used perfume
This is another 1st Century custom, which shows favor toward the guest
Simon didn't show Jesus this courtesy either

He failed to show Jesus any of the customary courtesies of a host to a guest
The woman, however, uses perfume, again on Jesus' feet

Rather than a common, multipurpose oil, she uses something rare and expensive

She again shows her humility by anointing his feet, rather than His head

She demonstrates great humility, and great love and devotion, by her actions

8. vs. 47: Jesus now says the woman's sins "have been forgiven"

They are already gone and accounted for!

She is like the person in the parable (vs. 40-43) who loves much

She knows she has many sins to account for, so being forgiven means more to her

She has shown Jesus great kindness, great love, by her actions

Simon loves little, for he doesn't seem to feel any need to forgive

He sees this woman as a sinner, not a creation of God to be rescued and restored

He has shown Jesus no love, not even the basic kindnesses of the time

9. vs. 48: A short verse here, but full of importance

Jesus turns to the woman and says, "Your sins are forgiven"

Just as He did with the paralytic in Luke 5, Jesus says a person's sins are forgiven

This shows again His authority and position—only God can forgive sins

Everyone in the room hears this, as they heard Jesus' parable and comments to Simon

It's important to note that Jesus does not tell Simon *his* sins are forgiven

10. vs. 49: We see here that the other guests begin commenting about Jesus' forgiveness

Simon has shown that he does not treat others well whom he sees as inferior

He called the woman a sinner and looked down on her presence

He did not give Jesus any of the customary kindnesses a guest should get

The other guests are no doubt people like Simon

They are probably other Pharisees, religious leaders, or important people

These guests ask the question, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

They may have meant this as a criticism, but they hit the point exactly

They now need to answer the question for themselves

If Jesus can forgive sins, then He is God

If Jesus doesn't have this authority, He is guilty of blasphemy

11. vs. 50: Jesus tells this woman *why* her sins have been forgiven: her faith

She has placed her trust in Jesus, not in the Law for in the Pharisees

She had devoted herself to Him, and yielded herself to Him in repentance

She is also told to "go in peace"

This carries with it two important ideas

First, she is to be at peace because her sins have been forgiven

Second, she is to stay at peace by avoiding her former sinful ways

Application: If someone had taken a survey in the village of this story asking “Who needs to be forgiven, Simon or the immoral woman?”, no doubt a vast majority would have answered “the immoral woman.” But the reality is that it is not an “either/or” question, but a “both/and” one. Both the woman and Simon need to be forgiven, because both have sinned. Both fall short of following God completely and perfectly. They both need to have humble hearts before God, to follow Jesus, love God, and serve others.

Christians are called to flee from sin and to obey God. John says that this is how we show God that we love Him (I John 5:2-3). And one way we show that love is to love sinners who come to church without their lives being cleaned up first. We are to follow Jesus’ example in loving sinners and helping them as they learn about Jesus and what it means to follow Him, however imperfectly they do it.

Prayer: Father God, forgive us for the time we may have judged others for not being “good enough”. Help us to love others as you loved us and them by bringing the Good News of forgiveness of sins through Jesus to them. Help us never forget that we too are imperfect sinners in need of grace and forgiveness. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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