

Luke 7:36-50

NIV Harmony 81-82; Compassionate 96-101

Introduction

1. Have you ever had a pedicure or foot massage?
 - a. It may seem lavish, but it is a wonderful experience.
 - b. Recently, when I experienced an episode of gout, I had a foot bath as part of treatment.
 - c. Having your feet massaged at a spa is relaxing.
 - d. It is also humbling to have another person provide such personal care.
2. In this passage, Jesus experienced a lavish anointing and messaging of His feet by an unlikely dinner guest at the home of a Pharisee.
3. **Read Lk 7:36-50.**

A. Jesus Anointed by a Woman (36-38)

1. Jesus was invited by Pharisee named Simon to dinner at his house. (36, 40)
 - a. Simon's motives in inviting Jesus to dinner are unclear.
 - 1) Perhaps he wanted to entertain a famous rabbi?
 - 2) Perhaps he hoped to catch Jesus in a trap?
 - 3) Perhaps he wanted to make a serious inquiry into Jesus and His message?
 - 4) His actions reveal that he was more self-righteous than repentant.
 - b. Why did Jesus go to Simon's house?
 - 1) Warren Wiersbe comments, "Jesus not only accepted hospitality from the publicans and sinners but also from the Pharisees. They needed the Word of God too, whether they realized it or not. We trust that Simon's invitation was a sincere one and that he did not have some ulterior motive for having Jesus in his home. If he did, his plan backfired, because he ended up learning more about himself than he cared to know! (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 96).
 - 2) G. Campbell Morgan insightfully adds, "Jesus loved Simon just as much as He loved that woman. In Simon's house He sought to open Simon's eyes, and lead him into the light, just as surely as He had been a blessing to that woman who came there. That is why He accepted the invitation. It was an amazing thing that He should accept an invitation from a man like that, but I will tell you something more amazing. It is that He ever came to a world like this" (G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 101-102).
2. They "reclined at the table" which was the traditional way to eat a meal in Jesus' day.
3. An uninvited woman came to the dinner, and it's a wonder that she was even able to enter the house.
 - a. She "had lived a sinful (Gk., *hamartolos* – "missed the mark" cf., Ro 3:23) life." (37)
 - b. Wiersbe adds, "Her sins are not named, but we get the impression she was a woman of the streets with a bad reputation. Do not confuse this event with a similar one involving Mary of Bethany (John 12:1-8), and do not identify this woman with Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2) as many continue to do" (Wiersbe, 96). These are separate encounters with repentant women.
 - b. She brought with her "an alabaster jar of perfume" (37) – It would have been expensive and precious. Once the jar was broken it had to be used up. It may have been valued at 300 denarii (cf., Mk 14:3 where a similar jar is placed at this value).
 - c. The woman stood crying behind Jesus and wet His feet with her tears. (38) – Were they tears of repentance or tears of joy at being forgiven? Probably, they were a mixture of both.
 - d. She wiped her tears from Jesus' feet, kissed (Gk., "kept on kissing" – smothered them with kisses) them, and anointed His feet with the expensive perfume/ointment. (38)

B. A Pharisee's Question and Jesus' Answer (39-47)

1. Simon, the Pharisee, had an unspoken question in his heart.
 - a. "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." (39)
 - b. She was "touching" (Gk., *aptetai*) Jesus and thereby defiling Him in the eyes of Simon because she was a "sinner" (Gk., *hamartolos*).
 - c. Wiersbe writes, "Simon's real problem was *blindness*: He could not see himself, the woman, or the Lord Jesus. It was easy for him to say, 'She is a sinner!' but impossible for him to say, 'I am also a sinner!' (see Luke 18:9-14). Jesus proved that He was indeed a prophet by reading Simon's thoughts and revealing his needs...Simon and the woman were both sinners. Simon was guilty of sins of the spirit, especially pride, while the woman was guilty of sins of the flesh...Simon was just as spiritually bankrupt as the woman, only he did not realize it" (Wiersbe, 97).
2. Jesus discerned the question in this Simon's heart. Certainly, Simon's face expressed his disdain.
3. Jesus began His answer to the Pharisee's unspoken question with a parable: "Simon, I have something to tell you."
4. Jesus shared His parable of the two debtors.
 - a. One man owed 500 denarii and the other owed only 50 denarii to a moneylender (Gk., *daniste*). (41)
 - b. One denarius was the equivalent of a day's wages.
 - c. Neither debtor had the money to pay back the moneylender, but the moneylender cancelled both of their debts. (42a)
 - d. That would have been an unusual and gracious action for a moneylender.
5. Jesus then asked Simon, "Now which of them will love (Gk., *agapesei* – "self-sacrificial love") him more?" (42b)
6. Simon wisely answered, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." (43a)
7. Jesus answered that Simon had responded correctly. (43b)
8. Jesus applied this parable to the woman and to Simon. (44-47)
 - a. Jesus equated Simon with the debtor owing 50 denarii and the woman with the debtor owing 500 denarii.
 - b. Simon, as a lesser sinner, did not "love" Jesus as much as the woman and revealed that by his lack of loving actions.
 - 1) He did not "...give [Jesus] any water for [his] feet..." (44)
 - a) It was customary for a host to have a slave wash the feet of his guest when they came into his home.
 - b) Jesus would take the role of the lowest slave by washing the feet of His disciples at the Last Supper (cf., Jn 13:1-17).
 - 2) He did not greet Jesus with "...a kiss..." (45) – A kiss on the cheek was the customary greeting of a guest and would be equivalent to our modern-day handshake or hug.
 - 3) He did not "...put oil on [Jesus'] head..." (46) – This would have indicated that Jesus was a special guest in his home.
 - c. By contrast the woman as the greater sinner loved Jesus more as shown by her actions.
 - 1) She "...wet [Jesus'] feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair." (44)
 - 2) She did not "...stop kissing [Jesus'] feet." (45)
 - 3) She "...poured perfume on [Jesus'] feet." (46)
 - 4) Wiersbe summarizes, "Her tears, her humble attitude, and her expensive gift all spoke of a changed heart" (Wiersbe, 96).
9. Jesus pronounced, "Therefore, I tell you her many sins (Gk., *harmtai*) have been forgiven (Gk., *apheontai*)—for she loved (Gk., *egapesen* – present action of self-sacrificial love) much. But he who has been forgiven (Gk., *aphietai*) little loves little." (47)
10. Morgan comments, "Now the narrative makes it certain that before that, she had received the forgiveness of sins. The parable Jesus used makes that clear. It means, she loved much because she was forgiven. It was not the first meeting between the woman and Jesus. If it was, then do not forget that that day she had probably heard Him say, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It may be that in that restless crowd that listened to the great call, she was one who heard it, and understood it, and responded to it" (Morgan, 103).

C. Responses of Jesus and the Guests (48-50)

1. Jesus responded to the loving, repentant actions of the sinful woman by saying, “Your sins (Gk., *hamartiai*) are forgiven (Gk., *apheontai*). (48)
2. The implication, of course, is that Simon’s sins may not have been forgiven, since he had not acted with acts of love and repentance toward Jesus.
3. We do not hear a direct response from Simon, but he was certainly at least embarrassed if not angry.
4. The “...other guests began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’” (49)
 - a. Perhaps they were other Pharisees since Simon would only have invited the “righteous” to dinner?
 - b. Most likely, Simon had this same thought in his heart as well.
 - c. Their response reveals two major problems that the self-righteous Pharisees had with Jesus.
 - 1) Jesus claimed to be God/Messiah by forgiving sins.
 - 2) Jesus consorted with “sinners” and defiled Himself by contact with them.
5. Jesus concluded by speaking directly to the woman, “Your faith (Gk., *pistis*) has saved (Gk., *sesoken* – Pf tense – continuing action) you; go in peace (Gk., *eirenen* – into the sphere of peace).” (50)
6. Wiersbe comments, “Jesus made it clear that it was *her faith* alone that saved her (Luke 7:50), for no amount of good works can pay for salvation (Titus 3:4-7)...We are not saved by faith plus works; we are saved by a faith that leads to works’ (Wiersbe, 98).

D. Reflections

1. Are you neglecting Jesus, like Simon, or adoring Him, like this woman? Hug Him close. Serve Him humbly. Adore Him with the living of your life. He always values you, but He notices and honors your humble service.
2. Do you see yourself as a greater or lesser sinner in the eyes of God?
3. Truly, there is no scale of sin. We are all sinners worthy of ~~death~~. We should all be grateful to Jesus for forgiving our sins and should show it by our actions of self-sacrificial love to Him and others whom we serve in His name.
4. Your sins are not so great that they cannot be forgiven. Wiersbe comments, “I wonder how many rejected sinners have found salvation through the testimony of this woman in Luke’s gospel. She encourages us to believe that Jesus can take any sinner and make him or her into a child of God” (Wiersbe, 99).
5. Is your faith in Jesus exhibited in your words and actions of service? Do your words and actions reveal that you are thankful to Jesus for forgiving your sins?
6. Do you have the peace that comes only by knowing your sins are forgiven by Jesus (cf., Ro 5:1-2 – “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”) You can know that peace right now.