

FORGIVEN MUCH

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

Date: 04-03-2020

Scripture: Luke 7:36-50

Luke 7:36-50

Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason, I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Would you pray with me?

Father, touch our hearts, touch our minds, that we may know what You would have us glean from this passage that involves Your Son. And through Your Spirit, Master, teach us this evening and even beyond that, lead us Lord, to a place where we apply Your teaching in our lives. In Your name Lord Jesus, we pray this. Amen.

It's an interesting account of Jesus. Though early on in His ministry, by now He has preached the sermon on the Mount. So they are aware of the Beatitudes, they are aware of all the other things that He has said, and word has probably got out to a lot of people about who Jesus is, the kind of teaching that He is giving to people. People are astonished by His understanding of scripture and the way that He is acting and walking among people, especially walking with people who are poor and people who are considered sinners. This was despicable; these were things that Pharisees or the religious people of that day would never associate with. They would look at them with scorn.

So Jesus is invited to a Pharisee's home for dinner. He is reclining at the table as they would do at that time – head resting on left hand and feet stretched out behind. A woman who was

referred to as a sinner (at that time, a sinner was somebody who was a prostitute) came in with her hair all undone. A married woman or a good Jewess wouldn't let her hair down. And yet, here is this woman who somehow comes into the home of the Pharisee. Most of the Pharisees had huge homes with a big open square in the middle of their home. When the weather was good, they'd put a table out and would eat in the open. If a travelling rabbi was passing by, they would invite him into the square to teach them. This was open to people outside as well, and they would ring the perimeter so that they could listen to what the rabbi was saying. So when the woman came in, she would have had to go through all the people around and make her way to the table.

She brought with her an alabaster vial of perfume. Then standing at His feet, the Bible tells us that she began to weep and wet His feet with her tears; then with those tears she wiped His feet and tried to dry it with her hair. She anointed Him with the perfume. The Pharisee looks at the picture of the woman weeping and Jesus reclining and letting this be done to Him, and he thinks to himself: What kind of a prophet is this? If He truly was a prophet, He would realize that this woman is a sinner, and He would never let her touch Him.

In the Old Testament, the question was asked – if somebody holy touched somebody unholy, would the unholy person become holy, and the answer was 'No'. The flip side of this question was: Would the holy person become unholy, and the answer was 'Yes'. Because of this, the Pharisees felt that associating with sinners could make them unholy.

But Jesus, being Jesus, knew what was going on with this Pharisee, and poses this question to the Pharisee. "Tell me, two people have a debt to pay; one owes 500 denarii, which was equal to probably a year and a half salary, and the other owes 50. The person is able to forgive both debts when they are unable to repay. Which of them would love him more?" The Pharisee says, "The one whom he forgave more," meaning the one who owes 500. And Jesus says, "You have judged correctly." That's interesting, the verse that Jesus used – You have judged correctly. I believe that it's a pun on what was really happening here, because he was judging this woman as she had come to Jesus, weeping. Jesus now uses the same words and says, "You have judged correctly."

But then He says, "Do you see this woman, see what she is doing to Me? I came into your house. You didn't wash My feet." Typically, in any home, there would always be a bucket of water outside, and if the host didn't wash the feet of the person entering, they would have a maid who would do that. But nobody entered without their feet being washed. The Pharisee didn't wash Jesus' feet. It was also traditional, that when you welcomed somebody, especially a rabbi, you placed your left hand on his shoulder and then gave him the kiss of peace – which he didn't do. Jesus says, "can you see that this woman used her tears to wash My feet. You gave me no kiss, but since the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil but she anointed My feet with perfume." Then He says, "He who is forgiven little, loves little. One who is forgiven much, loves much."

I want us to think about the idea of being forgiven, and how you and I treat forgiveness – whether it's a hurried 'Lord, please forgive me', and off we go realizing that 1 John 1:19 is now in play: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Then we go happily on our way. We're done and dusted; that's history! Are we really filled with remorse for the things that we do? Are we really broken by the things that we do? Sometimes we only think that the 'big sins' like murder, adultery and all those lead us to come crying to God and say, "Lord, I have sinned." But

when we look at Galatians 5, it has a string of things that talk about a mean spirit, dissension, strife, envy, anger. How will we treat these sins in our lives? Do we really believe that when God forgives us for an angry outburst, that He has done something huge?

On what basis, beloved, is forgiveness given? It is on the basis of the Cross. If Jesus hadn't died, there would be no forgiveness of sins. It's on the basis of the Cross that forgiveness is extended to us. How can we ever take that lightly? Even for this angry outburst, or these words of dissension or gossip, or a lie, God paid on the Cross through nails and blood and death.

But we don't really need to stop there. I'd really like you to think about that, but Jesus goes a step further because this is pre-Calvary right now. He says, "To whom much has been forgiven, she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." Here's the thing: the woman at the feet of Jesus recognized what she had loved. The Pharisee on the other hand looked at him and said, "I'm okay, I'm fine." And Jesus' point to the Pharisee was that – the way you look at the sins that you commit and how you receive forgiveness is directly proportionate to your love for Me. To whom much is forgiven, much love comes, and for whom little is forgiven, little love comes.

I think that is our thought – to understand why our love for Jesus may be shallow or not as much as we would like. I think we need to back up and ask the question: How much have I been forgiven? What am I being forgiven for everyday? And I say Lord, I am sorry for what I said, words that I didn't mean. James says that when we know that something is wrong and we do it, we sin, and sin is separation from God. Are we okay with that? When we know that we have done something that is wrong, then it is sin. Sin by definition separates us from God.

When we get angry, when we speak words that hurt, when we lie, when we think thoughts that we shouldn't, when we sin – we take steps back from God, and the distance between us and Him grows. We may still have a relationship with Him as a Father in heaven, but the fellowship that we can enjoy with close proximity to Him gets further and further and further away. That is why it gets difficult when we have sinned, to read the Word of God. This is the first thing that goes out. The second thing that goes out is our prayer life.

A good indication of where we are in our fellowship with God is those things that we still harbor in our lives that we know to be sin. I said something that I shouldn't have said, but that's the way I am. I got angry, but I inherited anger. I'm an angry person. And we let these things lie in our lives without realizing that we have lost wonderful fellowship with Him. Because when we bring these things to Him, and we recognize that even what may be little in our eyes cost Jesus the Cross, we must come to Him with a deep sense of remorse and say, "Lord, I'm so sorry – for speaking those words, for losing my temper, for being ungracious to You, for this and for that – things that we consider little, but which in God's economy is not little at all because it cost Him His Son.

Jesus points out to the Pharisee, "When you understand how much you have been forgiven, then your love for me will be directly proportionate." I think that's the question for us: Do we recognize how much we have been forgiven? Are we constantly forgetting it? Have we begun to treat the blood of Jesus shed at Calvary slightly, with contempt because we don't even think about it? Do we have that kind of an understanding that says, "God help me not to sin, because every act of forgiveness is a reminder of what You went through for me on the Cross? I cannot, cannot sin. I love You too much to do that."

Beloved, it's just like with the people we love around us; the more we love them, the less we want to hurt them. How often are we hurting the Lord in our daily lives would be a good indicator of how much we love the Lord. what kind of fellowship do we have with Him today? Are we far away from Him? Have we stopped talking to Him? Do we need to make amends?

I love this song written by Matt Boswell and Matt Papa that says, "My sins they are many, but His mercy is more." God looks at us mercifully. Maybe we are saying, "I am a sinner saved by grace; God's grace of course. There are things in my life that I really need to get my act together. I've always considered these things as little things that can co-exist. But to know that it breaks my fellowship with You, and to know that the distance between You and me grows, the communication gets broken – that I don't want. I want to grow in my love for You."

As we listen to the first verse of this song, and if you have been harboring any of these things, I would like you to come to the altar, throw yourself at His feet and say, "Lord, I need to be here, because I am convicted by Your Word this evening." I would like to pray for you.

Verse 1:

What love could remember, no wrongs we have done
Omniscient, all-knowing, He counts not their sum
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Verse 2:

What patience would wait as we constantly roam
What Father, so tender, is calling us home
He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Verse 3:

What riches of kindness He lavished on us
His blood was the payment, His life was the cost
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Chorus:

Praise the Lord
His mercy is more
Stronger than darkness, new every morn
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Father, bless these ones who come acknowledging their desire to grow in You. Let their hearts be softened as they understand how much You love them and how much You have forgiven, that their love for You will grow exponentially. O Master, let their hearts be overflowing with love for You. Fill them with Your love that their relationship with You may be something that is so beautiful that as they delight in You, they recognize how much You delight in them. Meet them, Lord, at this altar. Touch them with great power, with great authority. May they be wonderful lovers of You. Bless them abundantly, Lord. in Jesus' name I pray. Amen.