

## Luke 7:18-50

### Verses 18-33:

--(18-20) *Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"*

--At this point, John the Baptist is in prison (3:19-20), and for some reason, he begins to doubt whether Jesus is truly the Coming One. Maybe because Jesus hadn't yet moved to punish or destroy (Mt. 3:7-12; Lk. 3:7-9) as John prophesied the Messiah would?

--To have faith *with patience* is always challenging—especially in difficult circumstances.

**\*Hebrews 6:11-12: And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.\***

--Abraham's faith never failed. He always believed he would have an heir, but his patience with God's plan failed when he took Hagar and had Ishmael.

--We must not become discouraged with God's work because it is not done in our timing.

--(21-23) *And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind he gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."*

--John's disciples ask their question as Jesus is miraculously healing. The Greek word for **infirmities** describes any unhealthy condition, and **afflictions** describe *scourges* or painful conditions. They watch Jesus' healing work as indisputable evidence of the kingdom of God and prophetic witnesses to His mission as the Messiah.

--Jesus gives two messages to pass back to John.

--First, the witness of what they had seen. The kingdom of God was evident in merciful healings and the good news going to the poor. Hearing that, John the Baptist would understand that Jesus *was* acting as the Coming One, just not yet in judgment.

--Second, Jesus gives John a subtle rebuke and exhortive promise.

--Everyone will come to places in life where Jesus challenges the way *we think* He should be and the way *we think* He should work. Many stop following and serving the Lord Jesus Christ because something He says or does offends them. **\*Jn. 6:66\***

--There is a promised blessing for all who faithfully and patiently continue to abide with Jesus Christ as He is.

--(24-28) *When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: 'Behold I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."*

--When *speaking to* John the Baptist, Jesus is very direct. When *speaking of* John the Baptist, Jesus is also very direct! I'm sure this was not the opinion John would have imagined Jesus held of him when he received Jesus' message from his disciples, but that is why it is so important for us to see this! \*Jesus' heart for us in our mistakes and weaknesses is so evident!\*

--Jesus lets the crowd know that John was not a fickle servant because of a moment of doubt in the most trying position of his life.

--In fact, John the Baptist was the greatest Old Testament prophet due to his place as "the hinge" in the plan of God. Also, Jesus quotes from **Isa. 40:3 & Mal. 3:1** (See also **Mt. 11:11-14**) proving that John the Baptist was *more than a prophet*, showing that he himself was a fulfillment of prophecy.

--How are the *least in the kingdom of God* greater than John? Commentators have various interpretations here. I believe it is because of the blessings and revelations we enjoy in the New Covenant.

**\*Luke 10:23-24: Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."\***

--(29-35) *And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him. And the Lord said, "To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying:*

*'We played the flute for you and you did not dance; we mourned for you, and you did not weep.'*

*For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by all her children."*

--(29-30) Is either a narrative insertion by Luke, or the words of Christ. I think the most natural reading is that Christ is still speaking.

--Jesus wants to compare the sinners who *justified God* by accepting John's baptism with the Pharisees and religious leaders who *rejected the will of God for themselves*.

--He then compares the general Israelite of the day with fickle children, frustratedly trying to play games with one another.

--The point: ***For John the Baptist came. . . The Son of Man has come. . .*** No matter how God spoke to His people, His message was rejected. The majority of Jews, especially the religious leaders, were determined to reject the work of God for themselves.

--John the Baptist and Jesus Christ had distinct missions and ministries with different “flavors”. Jesus admits this. But people rejected both—never satisfied. \*Not all ministers are meant to be the same. Don’t try to mold them into anyone else’s image.\*

--John was too harsh and holy. Jesus was too loving and joyful.

***\*Matthew 21:31-32: Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.”\****

--(35) Even so, the wisdom of God was recognized by some in the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Those who responded accordingly were to be considered the *children* of wisdom. \*Similar expressions as the *children of* or *sons of* are found in: **2 Sam. 7:10; Job 41:34; Isa. 57:4; Lk. 16:8; etc.\***

#### **Verses 36-50:**

--(36-39) ***Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, “This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.”***

--(36) Here is another account found only in the Gospel of Luke. This is not the same woman, timing, dinner, or scenario as we find later with Mary of Bethany pouring out her flask on Jesus before His burial.

--Jesus is invited to a meal with a Pharisee named Simon. Because Jesus eats with sinners, He accepts the invitation, knowing what is coming and loving nonetheless.

--We don’t have Simon’s reasoning for inviting Jesus. Obviously, it wasn’t a sincere desire for friendship, as even the most basic hospitality is withheld. Maybe simple curiosity about the so-called prophet from Nazareth? \*His attitude Vs. Gentile centurion!\*

--So we find Jesus—knowing all of this—sitting with a Pharisee and his friends. These religious leaders are so close to salvation, life, and God, but don’t know it!

--(37) Luke then tells us to **behold**, an introduction of special importance. A woman of the city, an infamous sinner, enters the scene. We have no details of her sin, but at the very least, she is a sinner even in the estimation of other sinners!

--She is drawn to the Pharisee's house because of Jesus. She has a clear intention. Luke takes note that she brought an alabaster flask of ointment, which was typically a glass vessel with a long neck. It was very costly, maybe a year's wages.

--Jesus would have been reclining on His left arm with His feet toward the wall. The woman slips in, takes her place along the wall by His feet, and then begins to weep. That would cause a scene in just about any culture.

--Then she breaks the flask, lets down her hair (which would have been culturally shameful for a woman to do in public), and begins to kiss Jesus' feet, and with her hair begins to wipe away the dirt and grime. Finally, she anoints His feet with the fragrant oil.

--Quite a scene! I imagine a strained silence in the room.

--Though it was a common practice to enter a home and stand along the wall to observe a dinner, it was huge for *this woman* to enter a strict Pharisee's house uninvited. Her need to express her love overcame her social fears or shame.

--In approaching Jesus, a sinner often faces two fears:

1) The fear of God: Somewhere along the line, this woman heard the words of eternal life and no longer feared God. Maybe she heard Jesus say...***Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.***

--She was forgiven and now no fear of man could keep her from demonstrating her love and gratitude toward her Forgiver. \*The tenses of 48 are: ***Thy sins have been forgiven.***\*

2) The fear of man: There will always be the icy silence and glare of Pharisees to press through if we would find our way to Christ. Someone who doesn't believe we have been forgiven.

Someone who wouldn't be caught in our presence or let us touch them. \*We should never be the Pharisee! We should also never be kept from Jesus!\*

--Shame and condemnation are powerful weapons for Satan! We fear what others will think, or say, or what our reputations will be.

--Is Jesus holy or loving? Jesus is full of grace and truth. His holiness is the source of His sympathy. He alone can measure and see the true damage and potential of the human soul. He has no sympathy for sin, the destroyer, but He does for the sinner being destroyed. Somehow, some sinners perceived the incredible reality about Him, that His purity and holiness were not in conflict with His love and sympathy.

\*Saphir (Jesus and the Sinner, pg.112): *"Sinners knew and felt that; therefore they were attracted to Him. They had known saints, but they had shown them no sympathy; they had known sympathy, but it was not that of saints."*\*

--Jesus brought holiness and love together. She came to Him who made her feel her sin and the joy of cleansing and forgiveness. She sensed that in some way, He was her Savior.

--(39) Notice that the Pharisee doesn't speak of the woman who weeps, anoints, kisses, and loves, but of the sinner who touches! He fully believes that Jesus has a lack of perception. He cannot imagine a holy servant of God accepting this expression of love from a sinner like this woman. \*Wrong beliefs lead to wrong perceptions of God.\*

--(40-43) ***And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it."***

***"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, 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 rightly judged."***

--This insightful parable should have convinced Simon that Jesus was a prophet!

--Because Jesus also loves Simon—a sinner—He uses this simple parable to point out his lack of perception, and proves that He knows the woman, Simon, and God! Jesus accepted this invitation and the cold courtesy because He knew the woman and Simon needed His love! What a servant!

--500 vs. 50 days wages, may have very well been the reality of their sin. Simon and the woman may have differed in debt, but they were alike in bankruptcy. As sinners, all we can really do is acknowledge our incalculable debt to God.

--How often had Simon read **Ps. 32 & 51**, yet the embodiment was sitting in his house before his eyes, and he couldn't see it.

--I also think it is important to see that Jesus was willing to give a clear and stern rebuke while being entertained in another's home. Rebuking a host at their own dinner table was also not very culturally acceptable! Even so, Jesus would always speak the truth in love. \*Do we bow to what is customary or cultural Vs. What is truly Christ-like?\*

--(44-46) ***Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."***

--Jesus had been looking at Simon and speaking about the woman, but now He turns to the woman, and asks Simon if he saw her! ***Do you see this woman?***

--Jesus points out two things:

1) Simon—who didn't believe in this woman's forgiveness—has just admitted that someone who was forgiven a greater debt would display greater love. By that admittance, he has validated the woman's actions and indicted himself!

--Jesus is saying: She loves Me more than you; this you cannot help but see—***I entered your house. . . you gave Me no. . . but she. . . You gave Me no. . . but this woman. . .***

--Simon had not even offered Jesus the common courtesy of an invited guest, let alone an honored one. Simon didn't think he was a sinner, and therefore, he showed little love. \*We must beware of becoming too informal with Jesus! We never cease to be forgiven! In fact, the awareness of Christ's forgiveness will only grow in our lives, and so should our love and gratitude.\*

2) Simon's lack of love and kindness was more than made up by the sinner he thought God would never accept anything from! In like manner, the "good" formalist will find their religious actions—devoid of any loving heart reality—they thought accepted of God on Saturday or Sunday was simply vain worship rejected by God, but the simple acts of forgiven sinners made up that lack all week long. \*Beware of joining the side of the one wondering about another's expression of love to Jesus, like Judas did with Mary of Bethany!\*

--Jesus notes the woman's tears, hair, kisses, and oil. So too He notices every act of devotion—no matter how small—from the thankful heart of His forgiven sons and daughters.

--(47-50) ***Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."***

--(47) Notice, everyone admits the greatness of this woman's sin. Her, Simon, and Jesus! ***Her sins, which are many!*** Trying to lessen, excuse, or cover sin will never produce a clean conscience.

--The great sinner knows in their heart that every sin isn't the same. A simple reading of the Bible will prove that. Sin isn't the same for nations, cities, leaders, or individuals. Sin differs in scope, harm to ourselves or others, in consequences, against light, in harvest, etc. There was a reason Jesus warned the Pharisees they would receive the ***greater condemnation 20:47***).

--Anyone whose sins are many needs to realize that Jesus' love doesn't excuse our sin. Since He paid for it, His love is superior to our sin.

--As the spotless and priceless Lamb of God, He alone has the right to say: ***Your sins—which are many—are forgiven!***

--Again, this woman wasn't forgiven because of her love. Her love was an expression inspired by the real experience of God's forgiveness. She was already conscious of forgiveness when she entered the house with her alabaster flask, and love was overflowing from her heart before she humbled herself and poured affection on Jesus' person.

--The parable makes it clear that the debtors were forgiven *first* with nothing to pay because of the free mercy of the Master. Forgiveness came first, then love out of gratitude: ***Which of them will*** (future not past tense) ***love him more?***

--Jesus makes this clear when He tells her: ***Your faith has saved you (50).***

--The tools of this woman's trade: her body, her hair, her eyes, her hands, her lips, were now used to pour out acceptable and pleasing love to Christ.

***\*Romans 6:18-19: And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.\****

--Jesus allows forgiven sinners to honor Him! This woman was a reflection of a soul in right relationship to God. Never fear that sin has rendered your service unacceptable to God! Christ expects the exact opposite and has set you free for that very thing!

--(48) Jesus establishes this woman's sense of forgiveness by His Word. He wants her to find peace by trusting Him. This is still how we find peace! \*Jesus speaks about her actions to Simon, but He speaks about her faith to her—We see the fruits, not the roots.\*

--(49) Who is He to forgive sins? The question is a fair one! Jesus is the only One worthy to forgive sins because He is the only One who paid for sins!

--(50) Jesus brings together people from totally different worlds! What a contrast: Man & Woman; Pharisee & Prostitute; Rich & Poor; Respected & Despised; Self-righteous & Conscious of sin; Prideful & Humble; Stingy & Lavish; Dry-eyed & Tearful; Disdainful & Worshipful; Questioning & Loving; Unbelieving & Believing; Unrepentant & Repentant; Guilty and Forgiven.

--But how do they leave? One we don't know, and the other, ***in peace***.

--I hope we see Simon in heaven!