

Expecting the Kingdom

Part 7: The Barrenness of Disdain

Big Idea: We cannot bear fruit for the King if we disdain sinners

PRAY!

READ Luke 7:36-39 (NIV)

When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸ As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. ³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "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."

STORY: Unwelcome! (Beer commercial): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RS3iB47nQ6E&t=8s>

- I find it **deliciously ironic** that a beer maker has something to teach the church.
- A couple lessons here:
 - 1) The guests felt **intimidated** – unwanted & unwelcome. → **What vibe does our church give?**
 - 2) The guests also had **preconceived notions** about bikers. → **Prejudice is ugly.**
- The **Point:** *How we look at "outsiders" matters.*

- Today, we continue examining ***the faithful servant who awaits the King.***

- A brief **recap** of last week:

Matthew 21:43 (NIV) – *Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.*

 - The King held Israel accountable for refusing bring the harvest of his vineyard.
 - This happened because of **idolatry**, and specifically in Jesus' time, "fixing" their pagan idolatry of the past by completely *despising* pagans – and idolizing their religion & nation as a result.
 - This rendered them **incapable** of engaging the very people they were to harvest among.
 - So the Kingdom was taken away from them and given to the church.

- So I want to pick up there and talk about *how the principle of accountability applies to the church.*

- Just like Israel, ***we cannot bear fruit for the King if we disdain sinners.*** (Big Idea)

- The King will return soon, and he will be looking for a return on what he entrusted to us. **Repeat?**

- * **Q:** Why is our baptistery empty month after month? Are we OK with that? What will the King say?

- Listen. I know we cannot save people. That's God's work.

- But we can **TELL** people. And that's my concern.

Are people hearing good news from our lips?

- For years, we've relied on church leadership to create opportunities for us to invite people.
 - In other words, we have expected the church to have an *institutional evangelism strategy*.
 - But that is not found in the NT, doesn't work anymore, and is **never coming back**.
 - **YOU** are the strategy, our job is to equip **you**, and your love for unbelievers is **CRUCIAL**.
- There will be no harvest if we do not love sinners. → WE must guard against Israel's idolatry.

Our text today is **Luke 7:36-50**

Here's my **Outline**:

- 1) Unclean People and Jesus (vv. 37-38)
- 2) When Religion is Your God (v. 39; vv. 44-46)
- 3) The Power of Grace (vv. 40-43)
- 4) The Harvest Awaits (vv. 48-50)

1) Unclean People and Jesus

READ Luke 7:37-38 (NIV)

A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸ As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them

- Who is this woman? What can we learn about her from the text?
- She "lived a sinful life..." The NAS says, "a woman in the city who was a sinner..."
- So first of all, I think we're looking at someone here who was **currently living** a sinful life, in an **ongoing** fashion, and had a **reputation** for doing so.
- You know the type, right?
Lots of bad choices, and even when they experience the consequences, they *keep on truckin'*.
- We don't know what kind of sin, but it seems to have **defined her life**.
- But there's more to her than her sin!
- "She came there" (v. 37). Came where? → To the PHARISEE'S HOUSE.
- That's pretty remarkable. She KNEW she wouldn't find *welcome* or *redemption* with a Pharisee.
- Why on earth would she RISK going to such a place? → She learned that **Jesus was there**.
JESUS WAS THERE.
- What was it about Jesus that gave her **hope**? Why was he so **attractive** to a sinner?
- So attractive that she brought a jar of perfume – She had a plan.
- The text doesn't say, **but we know**: He came to seek and save the **lost**. The lost **coin**, the lost **sheep**. The lost **son**.
- Remember the Shepherd **leaving the 99**? Remember the celebration for the **Prodigal**?
- Far from repulsing the unclean, Jesus **WELCOMES** them. → **And a welcome is worth the risk!**
- This woman KNEW she was lost. How do we know? She could not stop weeping (v. 38).
- Then she humiliates herself by letting her hair down, wiping his feet and kissing them.
- Then – the ultimate: She pours out a jar of perfume. No doubt an expense to her – a sacrifice.
- Why would she do all this? → *Jesus loves sinners and offers **hope of redemption***.
- Hope is refreshing. Overwhelming. **Exhilarating**.
- As we will see, she finds **forgiveness**. She **knew** she would. And so she **loves extravagantly**.

2) When Religion is Your God

READ Luke 7:39 (NIV)

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "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."

- A few problems here.
 - The obvious one is his attitude towards the woman.
 - His indignation indicates that he thinks she is unworthy and less than. Certainly not love!
 - Another is his *religious aversion to touching the unclean*.
 - The Jews had a history of associating touch with **contamination**. But that was to be applied to ceremonial purity, not people.
 - *How can there be **hope** for people trapped in sin if they cannot be **touch**ed?*
...If association with them renders one impure?
 - **STORY**: Dad's trouble with Model Club back in the 1970's. Or Day Camp objections.
 - And the third is his perception of himself. Clearly he does not see himself as a sinner. [So that's why Jesus tells the story: TWO men owed]
 - You can tell religion has become your god when the church van or church building is more important than the kids who make them messy.
 - When people who smell like smoke are a problem rather than an opportunity.
 - When challenging questions from unbelievers are a threat instead of a blessing.
 - When the messy lives of new Christians are judged instead of engaged.
 - You can tell religion has become your god when you're no longer grateful for your **own** redemption.
 - You see in vv. 44-46 that the Pharisee had a very different response to Jesus than the sinful woman.
 - No water for his feet, no kiss, no oil. Those were the most basic acts of hospitality in that culture.
 - Religion as god provides no wonder, no awe, and no gratitude. Just self-righteousness & smugness
- I would encourage us to **examine ourselves** in light of this text. *How much like the Pharisee are we?*

3) The Power of Grace

READ Luke 7:40-43 (NIV)

Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. ⁴¹ "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.

- "*Jesus answered him*". Simon didn't say anything – Jesus knew his **heart**. Yet here Jesus was, at his house, teaching him.
- Jesus has grace for *self-righteous religious people* as well as sinful women!

- This is the amazing thing about grace: **ALL** of us are debtors. **ALL** of us need our debts forgiven!
- *“Neither of them had the money.”* The **size** of the debt is **irrelevant** if you can’t **pay** it. Right?
- There is GRAVE danger in seeing the sins of others as worse than yours!
- Of course there are worse sins than others, but they all come from the SAME PLACE: **Dethroning God**. And they all have the same **penalty**.
- And we’re **all equally unable to pay**. Jesus alone has that power. And it **cost** him.
- But the one who *perceives the immensity of their debt* – that is the one who overflows with love once it is paid.
- **Forgiveness is precious in proportion to one’s awareness of their sin.**

4) The Harvest Awaits

READ Luke 7:48-50 (NIV)

Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”⁴⁹ The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

- Don’t you just love it when people **mutter**? → Oh my! So **offended**!
 - **Why?** → Did they think he was presumptuous? → Did they think she was unworthy?
 - Make sure you’re not offended by sinners.
 - Make sure you’re not offended by forgiveness.
 - Make sure you **rejoice** when the worst sinner is forgiven.
 - Make sure you extend the hope of **redemption** to vilest, lowest enemy of God.
 - **These very people are the harvest.** → **In fact, that was US!**
 - This unclean, unworthy woman was **saved** by **grace** through **faith**, and experienced **peace**.
- * How many opportunities have we **missed** because we saw people as **unclean**?
 - * How many people have we not talked to because we thought they were too far gone?
 - **Right outside this door lies a great harvest.** Right outside the door of your home as well. Maybe even right inside!
 - Right at our fingertips lies the **joy** of seeing people we thought were impossible come to the Lord and find **LIFE**.
 - Imagine our worship services if we regularly saw God do the impossible!
 - All we have to do is repent of seeing people as Samaritans – as untouchable or irredeemable.
 - * What can be done if that’s me? If that’s us?
 - 1) Ask “Who are my Samaritans?” Write the list down and repent of each category.
 - 2) Ponder the wonder that God would save someone like you. Maybe weep a little. The gospel gives us cause for both confidence and humility.
 - 3) Ask God for a supernatural love and a supernatural hope for those far from him.
 - 4) Start loving, start talking, start valuing, start ministering to whoever God brings your way. Start yielding the King his fruit!

PRAY