

Luke 7:36-50
Forgiven Much, Loves Much

PRAY

VV36-38 (READ)

INTRO: We live in a world that often defines people by their worst mistakes.

For some, those mistakes are known and public; for others, they are hidden but still weigh heavy on the heart.

In this passage, we see a woman who was known for her sinful life. Her reputation was no secret — people judged her, avoided her, and labeled her.

But when she meets Jesus, everything changes. This story is not just about her; it's about us.

It's about how Jesus responds to sinners, how He offers forgiveness, and how He transforms lives.

V36: The scene is at the house of a Pharisee. We are not given the name of this Pharisee until **V40** where Jesus refers to him as “**Simon.**”

Pharisee was part of a respected Jewish religious group that was known for:

The Pharisees were one of the main Jewish sects during the time of Jesus (alongside the Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots).

They were **devoted to the Law of Moses** and to oral traditions — extra rules they believed helped people avoid breaking God's law.

They often taught in the synagogues and had a lot of influence over the people.

In **that culture**, it was generally **a good thing** to be known as a Pharisee — they were seen as moral, knowledgeable, and serious about God's law.

People looked to them as spiritual leaders and examples.

However...They became known for **legalism** (adding man-made rules to God's commands).

Many were **self-righteous** — thinking their outward obedience made them better than others

Jesus often confronted them for **hypocrisy** — appearing holy on the outside but being corrupt or prideful on the inside

Matthew 23:27–28: Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Today, if we were referred to as a “pharisee” no longer is it the prestigious title and example of devotion to God; rather its offensive and a description of a hypocrite.

V39: This pharisee asked Jesus to come and eat with him. Simon the Pharisee **wasn't inviting Jesus over as a friendly gesture**, but more as an opportunity to **observe, test, or even judge Him**.

In **Luke 14:1**, another Pharisee invites Jesus to eat on the Sabbath, but it specifically says they were to find something to accuse Him of.

Luke 14:1: Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely.

To invite someone to your home for a meal was a sign of **honor, fellowship, and acceptance.**

Meals were not just about food — they were **social events** where relationships, reputations, and respect were on display.

Pharisees in particular used meal invitations to test or evaluate a rabbi's teachings (which seems to be Simon's motive here) to size Jesus up.

V37: We are now introduced to a woman “**in the city.**” No name is given; the only description we get is “**she was a sinner.**”

Luke doesn't tell us exactly what this woman's sin was.

The phrase ‘a woman in the **city who was a sinner**’ could refer to any public, known sin — though many believe it likely meant sexual sin, the fact that her reputation was well known in the city, and Simon the Pharisee reacts strongly to her even having physical contact with Jesus (**V39**).

But here's the thing: the Bible isn't interested in putting her past on display. It's not about *what* she did — it's about *what Jesus did* for her.

Her story reminds us that our past doesn't define us once we come to Him. His forgiveness wipes the slate clean.

V38: Yet she walked into that room, uninvited, past all the stares and whispers, and went straight to Jesus.

In **that culture**, *washing feet* **was customary** — but **how she did it** here in **V38** was **not customary at all.**

Foot washing was a basic act of hospitality in the ancient Middle East because people wore sandals and walked dusty roads.

Normally, a host would provide water, and a servant would wash the guest's feet (**Genesis 18:4; John 13:4–5**).

If there was no servant, the guest would be given water to wash their own feet.

V38: When a guest entered: The host would provide **water to wash feet** (because of dusty roads, sandals, and long travel).

V38: A **kiss of greeting** was customary as a sign of welcome and respect.

V38: **Oil for anointing** was often offered — refreshing the guest, especially in a hot, dry climate.

Simon did none of these for Jesus (**VV44–46**). By neglecting these basic customs, he effectively insulted Him — showing outward hospitality but inward contempt.

What Was Unusual About This

She used her tears, not water — showing deep emotion and repentance.

She used her hair as a towel — in Jewish culture, letting down one's hair in public was highly unusual for a woman and considered very intimate.

She kissed His feet repeatedly — an act of deep humility and affection.

She anointed His feet with costly oil — oil was sometimes used on the head as a sign of honor, but anointing feet was rare and deeply humbling.

Psalm 34:18: The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalm 51:17: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise.

True worship comes from a heart that knows it's been forgiven. It's not about looking good; it's about loving Jesus deeply.

VV39-40 (READ)

V39: Simon thinks to himself, If Jesus knew her sin, He wouldn't let her touch Him.

That shows us his mindset: he believed holiness meant staying away from **“people like her.”**

But Jesus does know her — better than Simon ever could — and He welcomes her.

1 Samuel 16:7 – Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

People may judge us by our worst mistakes, but Jesus sees the heart and offers grace.

V39: Simon doesn't speak out loud — he's thinking to himself: “If this man were a prophet, He would know who and what manner of woman this is...”

This reveals Simon's heart: he doesn't see himself as needing forgiveness; he sees *her* as the sinner and himself as righteous.

Simon's silent judgment questions both **Jesus' identity** (“If He were a prophet”) and **her worth** (“she is a sinner”).

John 2:24–25: But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*,²⁵ and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

V40 – Jesus Responds to His Thoughts “And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’”

This shows Jesus’ divine knowledge — He doesn’t just hear words; He knows thoughts and motives.

V40: By saying, “**I have something to say to you,**” He’s inviting Simon to listen with an open heart, but also setting up a loving confrontation.

Psalms 139:1–2: O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.

IN VV41–43 Jesus is about to tell a short parable about two debtors — not to embarrass Simon, but to reveal:

Her great love is proof of her great forgiveness. **Simon’s lack of love** is proof he doesn’t realize his own need for forgiveness.

VV41-43 (READ)

Both debtors are bankrupt. One owes a large amount, the other a smaller amount — but neither can repay. The creditor forgives both.

Key Point: The amount forgiven impacts the depth of love. Those who realize they’ve been forgiven much often love much in return.

Our sins may look different from others, but without Jesus, we are all spiritually bankrupt.

When we grasp the depth of His forgiveness, love overflows.

V43: “I suppose” can come across as: “Well... I guess... if you put it that way.”

It’s not the language of someone eager to learn — it’s the language of someone reluctantly admitting the obvious.

Sometimes our pride makes us slow to acknowledge truth, even when it’s staring us in the face.

But a soft heart says, **‘Yes, Lord,’ not, ‘I suppose.’**”

Proverbs 26:12 – Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

V44 (READ)

Turning to the woman – Jesus shifts His physical posture toward her, signaling honor and acceptance.

Speaking to Simon – Even while honoring her, Jesus is confronting Simon.

V44: “Do you see this woman?” – A piercing question. Simon saw her sin; Jesus is asking if he can see her value, her repentance, and her love.

The Word “See” here means more than just a glance — it involves **perception, recognition, truly noticing.**

Jesus is asking Simon, **“Do you really see her — not just her reputation, but her heart, her actions, her devotion?”**

Simon’s Eyes: He only **“saw”** her sin and her past reputation (**“a sinner” V39**).

Jesus' Eyes: He saw her repentance, her faith, and her love. Jesus exposes Simon's blindness — he saw her body in the room but missed her heart before God.

I Samuel 16:7 “For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

V44: “DO you see this woman?

I love what Jesus is doing here; remember with me in **V39** Simon's description of what he thought of her: **“for she is a sinner”** (how Simon sees here)

HOW Jesus sees her: calls her **“woman”** (*gynē* in Greek), which is a **dignified word** for an adult female.

Jesus restores her **dignity** before everyone in the room. He shifts the focus from her past reputation to her present faith and devotion.

We are not identified by our past mistakes. Jesus doesn't see us through the lens of our past sin like Simon the Pharisee did with the woman.

He sees us as loved, chosen, forgiven, new, and complete in Him.

Ephesians 2:4-7 (READ)

Simon failed to do the most basic custom of offering water for dusty feet; she went far beyond the custom, using tears and hair.

Matthew 25:40 “As you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me.”

V45 (READ)

The kiss of greeting – A normal, respectful welcome in Jewish culture (**Genesis 29:13; 2 Samuel 15:5**). Simon skipped it.

V45: Her kisses – She hasn't stopped since she came in. This is persistent affection, flowing from gratitude.

Our worship of Jesus should not be a one-time gesture but a continual expression of love.

V46 (READ)

V46: Anointing the head – A sign of honor for a guest (**Psalm 23:5**).

She anoints His *feet* with costly perfume — lowering herself to the place of a servant.

This is **sacrificial worship** — she gave something valuable to honor Jesus.

Jesus contrasts Simon's religious coldness with the woman's heartfelt devotion.

Simon gave nothing — she gave her all. Simon's love was absent — her love overflowed.

Simon's pride blinded him — her humility opened her eyes to who Jesus was.

V47 (READ)

Jesus acknowledges her sin – He doesn't minimize it or pretend it never happened.

V47: Her sins, which are many, are forgiven

Jesus acknowledges the reality of her sin — He doesn't minimize it. She had a reputation for being a sinner (V37, V39).

But He declares forgiveness. This is not earned by her love, but evidenced by it.

Forgiveness is an act of God's grace, not human works. Her love is the fruit of forgiveness, not the root.

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

V47: “For she loved MUCH” (agapao-agape love)

Her extravagant love (tears, kisses, perfume) is proof of the forgiveness she has experienced.

Jesus is showing Simon: love is equivalent to one's awareness of forgiveness.

She knew the depth of her sin, and therefore the greatness of His grace.

1 John 4:19: “We love Him because He first loved us.”

V47: “But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”

Jesus contrasts the woman with Simon. Simon doesn't see himself as needing much forgiveness — so his love for Jesus is shallow.

It's not that Simon had “less sin,” but that he had less awareness of his sin.

The danger of self-righteousness is that it blinds us to our true need for grace and therefore stifles love for Christ.

Romans 3:23 “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Love flows from forgiveness. If our love feels weak, maybe we’ve lost sight of how much we’ve been forgiven.

Beware of Simon’s blindness. Pride makes us think we need less grace, which makes our worship cold.

True worshipers never forget their debt. The deeper our awareness of forgiveness, the deeper our devotion to Jesus

Psalm 32:1–2: Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven. *Whose sin is covered.*² Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no deceit.

V48: “Your sins are forgiven”

A direct, public declaration. No more whispers about her past could have authority over her now.

In Jewish culture, only God could forgive sins — another strong indication of who Jesus is-the Son of God

The verb tense points to a completed action with ongoing effect — forgiveness already granted, with continuing results.

IN OTHER WORDS: “Your sins have been forgiven.”

Isaiah 43:25: I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.

VV49-50 (READ)

V49: This shows that forgiveness is central to Jesus' mission — and it shocked the religious mindset of the day.

They were wrestling with His authority and identity, just as Simon was.

When Jesus works in someone's life, it will make others stop and wonder who He really is.

V50: “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace”

Your faith – It wasn't her works, tears, or perfume that saved her — it was trusting in Jesus.

V50: “Saved” – The Greek (*sōzō*) carries the idea of being rescued, healed, and made whole.

V50: “Go in peace” – She leaves with a new status: forgiven, accepted, at peace with God.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, ^[a]we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

Closing Emphasis

The Pharisee kept his distance from her; Jesus drew near. Religion gave her no hope; grace and forgiveness gave her peace.

Her past was many sins; her future was peace with God.

This woman's story is really our story. Every one of us has a past — sins we can't erase, shame we can't shake.

But Jesus offers the same words to you today that He spoke to her:
‘Your sins are forgiven... your faith has saved you... go in peace.’

That forgiveness isn’t earned — it’s received by trusting in what Jesus did for us on the cross, dying in our place, and rising again.

That’s the gospel. In Christ, we are no longer defined by our past failures, our reputation, or what others label us.

We are made new, forgiven of all sin, and set free.

2 Cor 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

THREE HEARTS ARE REVEALED HERE:

The heart of the woman known simply as a sinner: Broken; Loves much because she knows she’s been forgiven much.

The heart of Simon: Cold, proud, blind, showing little love because he thinks he needs little grace. Looks down at others

The heart of Jesus: Forgives, restores and loves

Which heart do you represent when it comes to those around who have done evil? Who are in sin or who are broken?

Do I have the heart of Jesus, extending grace to the broken?

Do I have the heart of the woman, overflowing with love because of forgiveness?

Or do I have the heart of Simon, hardened by pride and blind to my own need?

May our lives always reflect the heart of Jesus: to love and care for the broken and even to love the “Simons.”

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

AMEN?

PRAY