

Dinner With Jesus Part 2

Clean Up This Mess

Luke 7:36-50

Memory Verses: Luke 7:47

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

We are in a new series focusing on fellowship, grace, relationships, and more, all revolving around the times in the Bible where we see Jesus sitting down to eat a meal. In these moments we see Jesus eating with friends, of course, but also strangers, outcasts, and even his strongest enemies. In doing so, Jesus models for us what His Kingdom really looks like. The kingdom of God consists of a family, so tightly knit that they want to spend time with one another on a consistent basis. The kingdom of God feels like coming home to a homemade meal, made fresh by mom and grandma. Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, sides of corn and green beans, rolls with butter, and apple pie for desert. And this meal is too good to eat it alone. We have a bountiful meal in the Lord, in our fellowship, and there are people out there who are starving.

Our prayer this morning is that when we look at these passages, these meals that Jesus ate at, three things become apparent to us. One, our God is gracious to us and worthy of our worship. Two, we desperately need more fellowship around the tables and homes in our church. And three, there are those who don't know of the goodness of the fellowship of the Lord who need to be invited to the table!

Last week we began by looking at Jesus' meal with Matthew the tax collector. We saw that when Jesus sits down to eat, He doesn't wait for people to have it all figured out. He extends grace first and allows his love to lead people to repentance and faith. In other words, **Jesus sits with sinners before He ever stands to preach**. We should always sit first.

Today the table has shifted a bit. This morning we will see Jesus is invited to a Pharisee's house to eat a meal. And at this meal a stranger comes in and starts acting really weird. Some could say, it gets really messy really fast. Let's look at it together in **Luke 7:36-50**. This is pretty crazy to say the least. Try to put yourself in this position. You invite someone over to your house, and all of a sudden someone comes into the house and starts weeping and wiping your guests' feet with perfume and tears and hair. It's pretty unforgettable. Simon is like... hey, wait a minute... clean up this mess. But look at Jesus' response. He doesn't get weirded out. He recognizes it for what it truly is... worship. A meal with Jesus, fellowship around the table of Christ, should lead us to

worship... even if it's messy.

And of course this is where it gets real for us. We could choose to see this as a simple story about a Pharisee and a sinful woman with Jesus. Or we could recognize the truth... this story is about us. We are, unfortunately, too often the Pharisee and too frequently the woman. We want to look like we've got it made in the shade. We serve Jesus, we invite him in, but only when it costs us very little and when it's very organized; nice and neat. But when it comes to a worship that might get a little out of the box... when ministry might get a little messy... we hesitate.

I've got to be honest with you. I've struggled with this my whole life. I've actually struggled with this a lot lately. At times I'm like Simon the Pharisee, I want my time with Jesus to be perfect. I want ministry to be streamlined and in its place. The lineup is set, the praise team is prepped, the presentation on the screens is typed out and has no errors. No sound issues, no seating issues, no bickering, no distractions, no smelly visitors, no awkward interruptions. But guess what, that's not ministry, that's not worship. Worship is messy and weird at times and as we learn with the woman here is that... it's fine! In fact it might even be better. There have been so many times over the years where the service didn't go perfect, or ministry got hard and weird, or I didn't know how to handle a situation in a normal manner, and guess what... those are the times I remember and cherish the most, because those are the times when my time with Jesus felt the most real. **Worship got real!** And so, the main point this morning is this... **When our messy lives crash into the grace of Christ, worship becomes uncontrollable.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing I want us to see this morning is that... **A Polished Religion Can Sometimes Seem Powerless**. Let's look at the first part of our passage in **Luke 7:36**. Simon, a Pharisee, invites Jesus in, opens his home to him, lets him sit in the recliner, the ole lazy boy, gives him a choice seat at the table! This looks pretty good. Good job Simon. You knew the assignment... and up to this point you've executed it flawlessly. The set up is sweet. If I were Jesus, I would feel very honored.

But not so fast. Let's skip down to verses **44-46**. After the woman's messy display and Jesus' philosophical parable, the facts of the matter are laid out. At first everything looked great, Simon, but then you kind of just dropped the ball. You didn't give me water to wash my feet or hands with, you didn't greet me with the standard kiss, and you most certainly didn't give me oil for my hair. Where's the fine china, where's the fancy silverware, where's 5 star service? You treated me like a commoner... not a treasured guest.

And why? Why did Simon treat Jesus like this? Was it because he hated him or wanted to wrong him? Was it because he was setting him up?

No, nothing like that. It's more simple than that. He just didn't care enough. **Don't miss this. Religion, represented by Simon the religious pharisee, often looks super organized and very stable. Nice cathedrals, pretty stained glass, clean buildings, great performances, polished speakers, a place for every age and stage of life. Nice suits, great staff, paved parking lots, beautiful landscaping. But when all is said and done, are the poor cared for, are the orphans and widows looked after. Are strangers and prisoners visited and loved on. Is intentional discipleship happening. Are the people passionately seeking Jesus in worship and giving and praying and fasting... or is it just a show!**

Simon was putting on a show and missed the opportunity for something greater! **It's like someone throwing a birthday party for you! They get all the friends to come, they surprise you, they give you gifts and the decorations are great. But the friend who set it all up just ignores you the whole time. They were all about the party... but not really about you. Real religion isn't for us? Who's all of this for? Not us! It's for Jesus! He's the guest of honor. And we should go all out for him! When Christ is the honored guest, we should hold nothing back in our love for him. When our messy lives crash into the grace of Christ, worship becomes uncontrollable.**

The second thing we should see here is that... **A Passionate Worship Can Sometimes Seem Profane.** Let's look at the second part of our passage in **Luke 7:37-39.** Again, try to see this image in your head. A woman wanders into a party that she hasn't been invited to. She is balling uncontrollably. She's already making a scene. Then in a very profane manner she let's down her hair. In this culture this was considered a scandalous action. And then she begins to wipe Jesus feet with her hair and pours expensive perfume on them... and she kisses them. Can you imagine? You'd be covering your face. You'd be leaving the room. You'd be like... this is hard to watch. It's so uncomfortable and awkward. And Simon is disgusted. This Jesus thinks he's a teacher and a prophet and yet he can't even tell that this is a prostitute who is touching him and doing so in an inappropriate manner. Either Jesus is delusional or also he's a sinner. Simon is basically saying, "stop you harlot, clean up this mess. You and this kind of behavior do not belong here in this house."

Why was she doing this? Why was she acting so undignified? Why was she so clueless and lacking self-awareness? The answer is simple. She didn't care what people thought about her. The only thing she cared about was worshipping Jesus. That's all that mattered. The people's opinions didn't matter. Her shame of her past life didn't matter. The accusations didn't matter. The threats of the religious elite didn't matter. The only thing that mattered was lavish worship for her savior.

The context leads us to believe that this act of worship was in response to an earlier encounter with Jesus. There are a few theories. Perhaps she was Mary Magdalene who Jesus had previously cast 7 demons out of and has also been associated with prostitution. Perhaps she was the woman, caught in adultery, who was saved by Jesus from being stoned. Regardless of who she really was, she had previously been saved from a situation by Christ and was now here to show her thankfulness and gratitude. That's what worship is; **worship is our response of gratitude to what Christ has done in us, through us, and for us.** It's not a chore that has to be done... or some religious obligation. It's a spiritual reflex to a great and glorious savior.

In other words, she couldn't help it! She had been saved from much and so she had to love Jesus with much! This is the point that Jesus makes in his parable. Those who are forgiven of much love much! **Let me ask you a question. If you had been spared and rescued from eternal spiritual torment and separation from God forever. If you had been saved from the grip of sin on your life and the chains of addiction and idolatry. If you had been given the Holy Spirit to comfort and guide you through this life. If you had been given an abundant life of meaning and purpose. What would an appropriate response look like? Maybe it would look something like this.**

Maybe it would look something like David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant when his wife rebuked him. David responded, before the Lord in worship, I will become even more undignified than this! I think it is clear that one of the things the Bible is trying to get across to us here is this; Worship can get messy and that's not a bad thing! **We try so hard to contain our worship don't we. How dare we lift our hands in worship to the savior. Someone may think I'm being too emotional. Someone may think I'm being fake. We try to make sure that we keep things nice and reverent. No crying, no shouting, no waving. Don't get out of your seat and come to the altar. Don't step out of your row and lay on your face before God. Don't even kneel. We have to keep this thing orderly!** And I'm sorry if this bursts your bubble this morning... but when you see what Jesus has done for you and who he is and how much he loves you... when that hits you... it is going to sometimes trigger actions that don't look like you are in control!

Maybe you need to let the Spirit take some control? Maybe you need to let your emotions show to your savior. Maybe you need to give him an offering of praise that is going to seem undignified. All I'm saying is that; according to the word of God, **messy worship is better than managed appearances. When our messy lives crash into the grace of Christ, worship becomes uncontrollable.**

Lastly, we need to recognize this... **The Power of The Cross Forgives Sinful Pagans.** Let's look at the parable in the middle of our passage one more time in **Luke 7:41-42.** When you are forgiven of a debt,

you will naturally love the one who forgave you. The bigger the debt forgiven, the bigger the love... the bigger the response of love. The woman is labeled a sinner, and rightfully so. She is a prostitute, she is an adulterous, she has probably done a few other things too. She's wicked and evil... she's a filthy pagan who deserves the wrath of God.

But so am I. And so are you. Look at **Titus 3:3**. But if we simply place our faith in Jesus Christ and confess our sins to him, then he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins. Look at **1 John 1:9**.

This woman, not Simon the Pharisee, simply put her faith in Christ, and she was forgiven. Christian... please understand this. **You've been forgiven of more than you will ever understand**. In Christ you have been given a second chance.

Application

I feel the application is pretty simple this morning. Our worship is meaningless religion if there's nothing behind it other than obligation and managed appearance. Can you worship with your hands down, with a frown on your face, with a blank stare, with no emotion? Can you worship without song or shout? Of course. Of course you can. No one can judge the heart. It may look like a famine on the outside and there is a festival happening on the inside. I can't judge that. But I do know this... this woman, who is our example to follow, wasn't just worshipping Jesus in her mind. She worshipped him unashamedly with passion. She couldn't hold back her emotions and her lavish adornment.

Conclusion

I'm not saying your worship needs to always be messy or undignified. That's probably also an error. It will undoubtedly become contrived and fake. And, I'm not saying we should step outside of scripture either. I'm not advocating for speaking in tongues in the service without interpretation. I'm not advocating for slayings in the spirit, barking like dogs in the spirit, or any of the contrived concoctions of the charismatic movement.

But I am saying this... an equivalent response in worship to what God has done for you is going to be evident at times in the way you praise him... and it will no doubt be seen in the way you live. So the next time something a little weird happens in worship... maybe instead of thinking... someone needs to clean up this mess... how about you recognize that you are the mess that Jesus had to clean up! It might change your whole perspective on worship. **When our messy lives crash into the grace of Christ, worship becomes uncontrollable.**