

52 THE PURSUIT OF JESUS

Does My Past Determine My Future?

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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are continuing our Quest 52 series in our year-long **Pursuit of Jesus**. We are looking at the **Person of Jesus** and focusing in this first quarter of our study on **Who He is**. In this 11th week of 2022, we are asking another question: “Does My Past Determine My Future?” During this year of pursuit, we will see vividly the magnificence of this Person we call Jesus and will have the opportunity to be changed forever.

SCRIPTURE¹

Luke 7:36-50 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have *dinner* with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and *reclined at the table*. 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*. 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. 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*.” Jesus *answered* him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said. “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him *five hundred denarii*, and the other *fifty*. 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*?” Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the *bigger debt* forgiven.” “You have judged *correctly*,” Jesus said. Then he turned *toward the woman* and *said to Simon*, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are *forgiven*.” The other guests began to say among themselves, “*Who is this* who even forgives sins?” Jesus said to the woman, “Your *faith* has saved you; go in peace.”

Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are *weary* and *burdened*, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am *gentle* and *humble in heart*, and you will find *rest for your souls*. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

OBSERVATION Our study this week is about an encounter where Jesus is invited to dinner with a Pharisee. During this dinner the host is guilty of violating numerous rules of hospitality – not because he wasn’t aware of

1 Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is **NIV**

them, but because he was deliberately disrespecting Jesus. Interestingly, he is given a lesson on manners from a woman who was not even invited to the dinner.

QUESTION: When have you been invited to someone's home and have been treated inhospitably? How did you handle that occasion?

During Jesus' time, special meals were served at a table that was only a few inches off of the floor. It would be U-shaped and host and guest of honor would recline at the top. In those days, guests were greeted with a kiss on the cheek or hand and the host would wash the guests' feet. If the host really wanted to honor someone, he would anoint them with an inexpensive olive oil.

QUESTION: What special actions have been taken by someone hosting you at their home?

Jesus was invited to dinner and none of these things happened. We have to wonder why Simon, His host, bothered to invite Him! Well, he was just doing what was expected of Him when a rabbi was in town. He was just checking a box out of a sense of duty.

QUESTION: When have you hosted an evening with some because you thought you should but really didn't want to?

During the dinner a party crasher arrives in the form of a young woman who was known in town to be a prostitute. She was hardly a guest who was welcomed by the host. She brought an alabaster jar in which was very expensive perfume and she emptied the jar over Jesus' feet. Then she dried them with her feminine glory – her hair. What an intimate exchange that was. Through this process she honored Jesus to the greatest extent she could in her circumstances while the rude host looked on in judgment.

QUESTION: In what ways do you show gratitude to Jesus and honor Him as your Lord and Savior?

Then Jesus told the crowd about a moneylender who forgave debts owed to him by one man for five hundred denarii and by another man for fifty denarii. Jesus asked, "Which one will love him more?" and all agreed it was the man who owed the most. The woman who crashed the dinner party owed the most in her situation as she had sinned the most for the longest time. Jesus described how she has honored Him and has repented. She has been forgiven much and she showed great love and gratitude to Him

QUESTION: What is the stronghold that continues to be a shadow over your life?

APPLICATION

There is something about brokenness and desperation that helps us realize that we have been forgiven much. Many of us in the church want to be both characters in this story: Simon who was well-respected and appeared to have it altogether and doesn't seem to have any struggle with sin in his life; and the woman who experienced the love and grace of Jesus as she was forgiven. The truth is that we are all broken – both the religious and irreligious. Some of us are broken because we think we deserve to be in Jesus' inner circle yet we are distant from Him. Others are broken by our past sins and feel the shame they bring. We think they disqualify us from joining His Kingdom. In the Prodigal Son story one son returns to his father after sinning greatly and experiencing brokenness. The older brother is broken by his self-righteousness.

QUESTION: Where do you find yourself these days? Does the host or the woman represent you?

The woman in this scripture showed extravagant love. That was her response to forgiveness and it needs to be ours. We can show it by how we give generously, how diligently and faithfully we serve, and through our worship and devotions. Those are expressions of extravagant love.

QUESTION: How do you show extravagant love to God, to family, to friends?

So, what do we think motivated the woman to come to Jesus? She may have been weary and worn out by her sin and shame. We don't have the opportunity to take do-overs or mulligans for our sins. They are what they are, but we have the forgiveness of Jesus Christ that will cover us with His blood. Matthew offers the solace we need in order to leave the anchor of our pasts behind – we can find rest for our souls with Jesus.

QUESTION: What are you doing to put your past sins behind you? What is keeping you from accepting Christ's forgiveness and going forward in ministry for Him?

PRAYER Heavenly Father, help us to put our past sins, our shame and our self-righteousness aside and rest in Your forgiveness and care. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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