

The highly respected Guy and the loose woman both have dinner with Jesus.

Luke 7:36-50

Proposition: God loves us all equally and will speak to us in the way we need to hear Him.

Luke 7:36-50 (Contemporary English Version)

Simon the Pharisee

³⁶A Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner with him. So Jesus went to the Pharisee's home and got ready to eat. ^[a] ³⁷When a sinful woman in that town found out that Jesus was there, she bought an expensive bottle of perfume. ³⁸Then she came and stood behind Jesus. She cried and started washing his feet with her tears and drying them with her hair. The woman kissed his feet and poured the perfume on them.

³⁹The Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this and said to himself, "If this man really were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him! He would know that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰Jesus said to the Pharisee, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

"Teacher, what is it?" Simon replied.

⁴¹Jesus told him, "Two people were in debt to a moneylender. One of them owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other owed him fifty. ⁴²Since neither of them could pay him back, the moneylender said that they didn't have to pay him anything. Which one of them will like him more?"

⁴³Simon answered, "I suppose it would be the one who had owed more and didn't have to pay it back."

"You are right," Jesus said.

⁴⁴He turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Have you noticed this woman? When I came into your home, you didn't give me any water so I could wash my feet. But she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You didn't even pour olive oil on my head, ^[b] but she has poured expensive perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷So I tell you that all her sins are forgiven, and that is why she has shown great love. But anyone

who has been forgiven for only a little will show only a little love.” ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹Some other guests started saying to one another, “Who is this who dares to forgive sins?”

⁵⁰But Jesus told the woman, “Because of your faith, you are now saved. ^[c] May God give you peace!”

We have heard this story read and preached many times. It’s a powerful illustration of how much Jesus loves sinners. You and I read this and we say wow, this lady was really sorry for her sins, she had a change of heart, she really worshiped God for his forgiveness and Jesus who is God was able to show her great compassion and to forgive her sins.

That’s the main story if you like in this account in Luke 7. But its not the only story, its not the only thing that is happening here.

We are going to have a lot of fun with missions month this year. In the last week of march, we will come dressed in cultural dress and people will be invited to bring an item, a dance, some food to share etc. In the sermon we are going to look at how the character of grace is worked out in a church and how that dynamic in a faith community will always make it a contagious church.

This morning as we look at this passage I want us to focus not on the love of God for this loose woman who has come to Jesus for forgiveness, but Simon the Pharisee who has invited Jesus to dinner so that he can catch him out, and discover some weakness in him. You see, even though we recognize just how much Jesus showed love and grace to this woman, often we miss the fact that Jesus loved this Pharisee just as much and Jesus wanted to spend time with him as well.

Vs 36 again A Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner with him. So Jesus went to the Pharisee’s home and got ready to eat.

Now let me paint for you a bit of a picture of how the Jesus/ Pharisee relationship would have unfolded.

Back in those days there were 6000 Pharisees in Israel, all men.

These guys were the ultimate padantic, dot the I's and cross the tees sort of guys. The name Pharisee meant separated out ones and they tried to be totally different, much more holy than the common believer.

They worked hard to keep all the laws of the OT AND the traditions of Judaism scrupulously. They were the ones who developed ceremonial washing. EG before each meal a Pharisee would hold his hands together as if in prayer pointing upwards and another person would slowly and carefully pour 1.5 egg shells of water over his hands. When the water started dripping from his wrists the Pharisee would invert his hands together and wait until the water dripped from his longest finger. Then he would use the fist of his right hand to scrub the palm of his left, then the fist of the left hand to scrub the palm of his right hand. Then as his hands were pointed down again further water would be poured over his hands, and again once they were turned upward. Often repeated 3x.

These guys had rules and regulations about everything. They were determined to be better than everyone else, the separated out ones as their name means.

They would have nothing to do with anything that in any way could be contaminated by sin. When they walked down the street they would not look up and watch where they were going in case their eyes caught the sight of an attractive woman and as a consequence they were known to walk into buildings and walls. On the Sabbath they would not carry anything of any kind. As you know God set one day aside a week for us for our benefit and liberty but they loaded it up with rules. In those days false teeth were made of wood and false limbs were made of wood. And so a Pharisee rather than risk carrying anything on the Sabbath would have to take out their teeth and unscrew their leg and hop around rather than break their Sabbath rules.

Pharisees with only a couple of exceptions in the bible had it in for Jesus. They hated him healing people on the Sabbath. When Jesus one day reached down to the earth and made mud out of spit and dirt, mud being the mortar of the day when building brick houses, when he made mud that day and put it in the blind man's eyes and healed him, the Pharisaical community went into fits of horror. They didn't like him, his liberty, his freedom, his love of sinners and they were

always trying to trip him up and find fault in him. There was no doubt in my mind that this guy was doing that to. He was sitting back at the dinner table trying to find fault and weakness in Jesus. A cold critical, analytical type of person. And when Jesus allowed this sinful woman to anoint him with her tears and oil and to wash his feet Simon the Pharisee quickly thought boy if he were really a prophet he would know what type of person it is who is touching him. Simon believed that a Godly man would not let a sinner touch him, every.

Now Jesus knew the sort of man that Simon was. He knew Simon was out to trip him up, or to discredit him or to find fault in him. Jesus knew that and yet I want you to notice vs 36 again *A Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner with him. So Jesus went to the Pharisee's home to get ready to eat.*

Now when we first read Luke 7 we think quite rightly, wow, Jesus loves sinners who come to him and seek his forgiveness. Wow, Jesus is so kind and gentle and strong. But don't miss this. Simon the Pharisee. Cold, calculating Simon, who didn't offer Jesus the common courtesy of a kiss to greet him and offering to wash his feet, who didn't offer Jesus the special honor of anointing his head with oil as he arrived. When fault finding, legalistic, analytical Simon asks Jesus to come to his house to spend time with him Jesus knowing full well what kind of man Simon was says immediately, you are on. I'll be having a feed at your place tonight. Why does he do that? Because he loves that Pharisee and the Pharisees of the world.

Jesus loves this repentant sinner (no surprises there) and this Pharisee equally and he wants to eat with, have time with them both. Admittedly to the lady he spoke with grace and kindness and to the Pharisee he spoke quite directly and with words of correction.

The Pharisee thought that true religion, true spirituality had to do with keeping rules and being separate from the world. Jesus left him in no doubt that grace and mercy and worship were the important issues in life. Jesus corrected the Pharisee directly.

He spoke kindness to the repentant lady and correction to the guy who had missed sight of the really important issues in life but he loved them both.

What makes Jesus accepting a dinner invitation to Simons house all the more amazing is to understand the culture of the Jews. And particularly their thinking around food. They had this idea, this belief that if you and I share the same food, we eat from the same loaf of bread, we share the same burger, we share from the same pot of soup, that in some mystical way we become joined together. And so a Pharisee would never eat with a sinner, a unbeliever or a non Jew. Never because when you eat together you become in some way bonded with that person and that would be awful.

And yet Jesus, knowing full well the manner of man that Simon was didn't hesitate to say yes, to him. Simon you are asking me to have a meal with you. Absolutely, I'll be there.

That's what Jesus is like. Did you know that Jesus never turned down an invitation to any meal in the bible. And he has never turned down an invitation from any person who invites him in to get to know Him better, to experience closeness and fellowship with Him.

Now you and I might look at this repentant sinner, crying tears of gratitude and anointing his head and feet with her worship, and you and I might think, hey I understand why Jesus loved her, what a testimony, she has been forgiven so much. But why would he love Simon and why would he love me because at times I feel analytical and stand off ish and a bit skeptical and critical. I can understand why Jesus loved her and treated her so graciously but if at times I feel a bit Pharisaical would he love me just the same?

Maybe you are here this morning and you remember a time when you realized that against the 10 commandments that you are not a good person and you need the forgiveness that Jesus bought for you on the cross. And you remember what it was like to anoint his head and his feet with your worship and gratitude. But as the years have rolled on and the decades have passed grace, feels familiar and is not so awe inspiring. Maybe at times you listen to a speaker or watch the worship or observe what the church down the road is doing and you feel a bit stand-off-ish and critical an analytical and you wonder how you got from there with the woman, to some times now sitting at the table with the Pharisees.

Jesus says to you again this morning, I want to come to your place, to hang out with you, to enjoy a real closeness with you. I love you and I am knocking at the door of your heart Christian wanting to get close again.

I think that if you have known the Lord for a long time you can find yourself awed by grace, like this lady. and then feeling stand off ish and analytical and cynical all in the same day.

The reality is sometimes I am like this lady, heart full of worship and sometimes I am like this Pharisee, analyzing, coolly evaluating. When I hear another preacher I need to not get upset if I hear only one or two verses of scripture used, or maybe I notice that the worship is all 'I' focused, or maybe I notice that this church or that group are not caring for the poor, or they don't have what I would call healthy biblical teaching.

When I do that I am thinking and moving like Simon the Pharisee. Latter in the year we will do a mini-series on the book of revelation (probably in the evening service). Do you know what one of the most striking things about Rev 2 and 3 is?

Every type of church that has ever existed in history is described in Rev 2 & 3 as one of those 7 church's. They are all so different. Some get a kind word from the Lord and some get a correcting word from the Lord. Laodicea gets roasted. Why because Jesus loves them all. In fact he is seen walking amongst each of the 7 church's.

This year I believe that God is going to build his church on the leadership choices he has made and on the gifts and ministries each one of us have.

I believe that while there will be challenge and opposition at times, we are really going to see the goodness of God on this fellowship and a Holy Spirit anointing for the supernatural on this site. Those things I think are already in the pipe line, they are on the way.

What concerns me most is not what will God do, but what attitude culture will we create for the holy spirit in our hearts and in our life together as a missionary family.

Can we present grace to the seeker, that Jesus has covered their sins and paid the price and wants an eternity long journey with them.

And at the same time, can we who are longer in the tooth invite Jesus in again and again. Let Him mould and soften our hearts to keep us away from natural, clinical, analytical, cynical tendencies.

Can we, family create a culture of grace in our lives together, based on the truth that God loves everyone equally. Instead of observing and analyzing can we be a family that says daily, Jesus – I want to have fellowship with you, daily change my heart to be more like yours. Jesus help me accept that you love me just as much as the next person, help me bask in that powerful, life-changing love and let it flow out of my life to others.