

NOTES FROM JOHN PHENIX'S SERMON 5th March 2023 am

SERIES FROM LUKE'S GOSPEL "God's love for the lowest"

Part 11 "Responding to Jesus"

Scripture references from the ESV

Luke 7: 36-50 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. ³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among ^[h] themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

If you died tonight, would you go to heaven? This is a simple but profound question that you may not consider very often. Some people don't like to think about death, but none of us know how long we have left. Many people are hopeful rather than confident:

- I think I'm a good person overall and I do good deeds for others. I'll probably end up in heaven

Is there a way to be able to answer the initial question with confidence, or do we just have to be hopeful that our good deeds are enough?

Three people are involved in the passage above: Jesus, Simon the Pharisee and an unnamed woman who was an uninvited guest in Simon's house.

1. **Jesus:** Jesus accepted the invitation from Simon the Pharisee, and went along to eat and talk. However, he wasn't shown the courtesy that a visitor is usually shown. He wasn't offered water to wash his feet, nor was he greeted with a kiss or offered oil to anoint his head.

When he reclined at table, a notorious sinner came in and wept at his feet, anointing them with expensive oil. Rather than being embarrassed, Jesus responded with kindness towards the woman and let her continue.

2. **Simon:** To give him his due, he had wanted to find out more about Jesus and so had invited him to his house for a meal. However, he did not do much to welcome Jesus in the usual manner. There was no servant to wash Jesus' feet, no kiss of greeting and no oil for his head.

Simon did not think that Jesus was the Messiah (v39 above). The Pharisees were part of the religious establishment, publicly obeying all the rules, many of which they had made up themselves. He was shocked by the actions of the woman and by Jesus' reaction to her. The woman was a known sinner and Simon looked down on her, thinking he was better than her. He was equally shocked that Jesus would allow this known sinner to touch him.

Simon, though he knew he was a sinner, did not show much love toward Jesus.

He was lukewarm towards Jesus.

3. **The woman:** Her name is not given to us, nor are we told what her sin was. All we know about her is that she was known as a sinner. Yet, since she sought out Jesus, she clearly already knew him and had made a commitment to follow him. She knew who Jesus really was. When she went into Simon's house, displaying great courage, she publicly showed repentance and humility towards Jesus.

The woman knew she was a sinner, and had a public reputation as such. She knew she needed saving.

She was willing to do anything to express her love for Jesus.

If you were to die tonight, would you go to heaven? Are you confident or are you just hoping you are good enough?

If you are confident, then pause for a moment and think about the reasons for your confidence:

- Are you confident because you are trusting in Jesus alone for your salvation?

If so, you are right to have this confidence. Christianity is the only religion that can give you such assurance. As a result, you can be joyful because that confidence is well placed.

If you are just hopeful, relying on doing good things to get you to heaven, then there is bad news for you. Many people live their lives expecting that, at the end, there will be a weighing up of the good things against the bad they done. The assumption is that the good will outweigh the bad. However, that is not how it works. You cannot balance out sin with good deeds.

God is a holy God, completely without sin, and he hates sin. No sinful person can come into his presence.

Even if you have been a really good person, there will be sin that blocks your relationship with God.

- The truth is that you can never be good enough to get to heaven on your own.

You may think you have not sinned, but if so your definition of sin is wrong.

- Sin is not putting God first, not having him as Lord of your life.

Every one of us has, at some point, in our life failed to put God first and to follow his commands. You may not have murdered someone or robbed a bank, but we have all been selfish or told a lie or been angry with someone. We can never cover our sin with good works.

- We all need a Saviour, someone who takes away our sin and deals with it justly, so that the sin is taken away and we can come into God's presence.

In the parable that Jesus told (vv 41-42 above), there were two debtors. One owed more than the other but **neither** could pay their debt. Both of them needed their debt cancelled. Jesus is the only one who can deal with our sin. He was able to tell the woman that her sins were forgiven.

There is a third option, apart from confident or hopeful.

- You may feel **not good enough**. Perhaps you know that you are a sinner, and you think you can never be good enough because of what you've done in the past.

The good news is that there is no amount of sin that is too much to be forgiven. The woman's debt was bigger than Simon's but Jesus did not tell her that it was too big to be cancelled. Instead, he told her that she was forgiven and that her faith had saved her.

We are all sinners saved by grace - a free and undeserved gift.

- Pause and ask yourself if you are confident or merely hopeful that you will get to heaven at the end of your life.
- Then ask yourself how you will respond to Jesus?

You have heard his message, and may have heard it many times. Today Jesus is speaking to you through his word.

Both Simon and the woman reached out to Jesus in their own way, and Jesus reached out to them, in return.

- Simon reached out to Jesus by inviting him to his house – you may be doing something similar by coming to church or watching online.
- The woman reached out to Jesus by going to Jesus, publicly showing love and humility to him by washing his feet.

Jesus reached out to both of them.

- He went to Simon's house and was patient with him. He stayed even though he wasn't made properly welcome.
- Jesus showed compassion to the woman, when he could have just shooed her away. He told her publicly that her sins were forgiven.

Whether you think you're doing just fine, or you know for sure that you are not, Jesus is reaching out to you today.

What will your response be?

Will you respond like Simon?

Simon was trying to be a good person, but he was lukewarm towards Jesus, not showing him the love and respect he deserves.

- If you are a Christian already, you may have let your love for him become lukewarm. If so, then ask God to make you aware of your sin and what he has done for you. When we see the price that was paid and how huge our debt is, then we cannot help but respond with more love to Jesus.

- If you are not yet a Christian, you may think you're doing ok when you compare yourself to others. However, we need to compare ourselves to God's standard. God abhors sin. We have all sinned and no good works can cancel it out. You need to respond differently.

Will you respond like the woman?

She had sinned a lot, and was well known for it, but she humbly acknowledged her sin. Simon looked at her and saw a sinner, but Jesus really saw her. He saw her not for what she had been but for who she had become. He publicly declared that her sins were forgiven to show that this woman was clean.

- She understood that she was a sinner and knew she could never be good enough to earn salvation.
- She had found the answer and had faith in Jesus to deal with her sins and to save her.

This unnamed woman could be any one of us – a sinner needing a Saviour.

If you were to die tonight, would you go to heaven?

For by grace you have been saved, through faith, not a result of works so that no one may boast (Eph 2:8-9)

In the parable, neither person could pay their debt and this is true for us. We cannot pay the price for our sin and disobedience. We do not bring anything to God to earn our salvation. It was not the woman's actions that saved her, but her faith.

This free gift of grace is available to you today. You can be confident of salvation.

Jesus is speaking to you now. How will you respond?

Take some time to respond to Jesus.

- If you are lukewarm towards him, ask him to show you what he has done for you.
- If you don't know Jesus, ask God to be Lord of your life.

Don't delay.

**If you want to be confident that you are going to heaven,
there's only one person you can trust to save you and that is Jesus Christ.**