

“How Much Do We Love Him?”  
(Luke 7:36-50)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

Last week, Jesus reminded us

Who John really is:

He was the one God sent

In the spirit and power of that great prophet, Elijah,

To warn those Jews who had become comfortable with their sins –

Who didn't seem to notice them any longer,

Who weren't concerned that they would one day stand before God

To account for their lives to Him –

He was sent to make them uncomfortable –

Something we rarely see in the church today,

Where everything is so focused on God's love for us,

That we don't hear about how we are to love Him –

He was sent that they might listen to God,

To know not only that His judgment is real,

But that it was coming –

That it was as sure to take place as the day of their death –

And that they would be destroyed if they weren't ready –

But he was also sent to give them hope:

God's promise to save them

Was about to be fulfilled –

Messiah was coming –

The One who could take away their sins;  
The only One who could save them from judgment.

Those who believed John –  
Who knew things wouldn't go well  
For them on that day –  
Turned from their sins,  
Received John's baptism,  
And began looking for the Messiah.

But those who didn't believe him –  
Who thought God would receive them as they were –  
That their good deeds would outweigh their bad –  
That their relationship to Abraham was enough –  
That their church membership would save them –  
The scribes and Pharisees –  
Didn't repent,  
Weren't baptized,  
And set themselves to reject Messiah.

Jesus said, "Wisdom is vindicated by her children" (7:35).

If we're truly wise,  
We'll listen to what God says  
As He speaks to us through the Gospel –  
We'll turn from our sins,  
Trust Jesus to make us right with God,  
And be ready for that day.

But if we're foolish –  
 If our hearts haven't been changed by God's grace,  
 Like the scribes and Pharisees –  
 We'll continue to think we're good enough,  
 And that we don't need to listen to God;  
 But in the end, we'll be destroyed.

## B. Preview.

This morning, our Lord tells us  
 Not only how we can know we're safe –  
 That we really are trusting Him  
 And are ready for that day –  
 But also how we can have  
 A stronger assurance that we are:  
 Through our love for Him.

We'll look at three things:

1. Two every different individuals.
2. Their different responds to Jesus.
3. And what Jesus has to say about them.

## II. Sermon.

### A. First, we see two very different individuals:

1. The first is Simon, the Pharisee.

The Pharisees –  
 As we were reminded last time –  
 Were the religious leaders of Israel –  
 Those the Lord appointed

To lead His people in the truth,  
And to be living examples  
Of what that looks like in practice –  
Basically, they were to the OT church,  
What elders are to the NT church.

God wants us to live in a particular/holy way,  
And so He appoints leaders to teach us by example  
So that we'll be encouraged to do the same.

The only One who has ever succeeded  
In doing this perfectly is Jesus:  
He alone loved His Father with all His heart,  
And wanted to please/honor Him in everything He did –

That's why we need to trust Him to be saved –  
He's the only One who's done what God requires;  
He's the only One the Father will accept –

But that's also why we need to follow His example –  
Because He did everything exactly as it should be done.

Though that's true,  
There's still a sense in which  
We are also to follow those who follow Him:  
Paul writes to the Corinthians,  
“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

We should look for good examples to follow:

There are many in the history of the church,  
Who were used powerfully by Him:  
Who loved and gave themselves to Him  
And weren't willing to compromise with the world.

But getting back to the Pharisees:

They were to be examples,  
But they had a problem:  
They were self-righteous.

That may not have been the case with all of them:

There may have been some who really were seeking the truth;  
Who were faithfully looking to God  
For the fulfillment of His promises –

Nicodemus was such a Pharisee;

He mentions others in John 3:1,

“Rabbi, *we know* that You have come from God as a teacher;

For no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” –

But for the most part,

They were a self-righteous lot,  
Who thought they were holy,  
While the common people were unclean,  
So they separated themselves from them  
Because they didn't want to be soiled.

Simon was no exception,

As we'll see in a moment.

2. The other individual is this woman:

We don't know exactly who she was,

But we do know what she did for a living:

Luke says she was a "sinner."

A. T. Robertson – the Greek scholar –

Tells us this phrasing means

She was "a woman of the town";

"A sinner in the city";

One devoted to sin;

Someone known to be so;

In other words, she was a harlot –

But she had repented –

We've already read what she did

To show her love for Jesus:

She had already trusted Him

Before she came to Simon's house –

Her love was the evidence.

But we should notice as well,

That even though her life now showed

That she deeply regretted

How she had lived,

And that she had turned to Jesus,

Her reputation still clung to her –

At least as far as Simon was concerned.

We should never forget

That when the Lord forgives us

He no longer identifies us with our sin:

Paul writes, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. *Such were some of you*; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

He further writes, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17).

If God doesn’t see us in this light any longer,

Then not only should we not be concerned what others think,

We should no longer see ourselves or others in this light:

In Jesus, we are new.

B. Second, we see that both this Pharisee and this woman

Responded to Jesus in a different way:

1. Simon invited Jesus to dine with him –

We see from the end of the passage,

He invited others as well –

Likely, some of his fellow Pharisees.

And Jesus graciously went –

He was willing to serve

Wherever His Father opened a door –

He knew it wouldn't be easy –  
He would be meeting with an enemy/enemies –  
But He did it any way  
For the good of this Pharisee,  
And for the honor of His Father –  
An example we are also to follow.

When He arrived,  
Simon began by slighting Him –  
He didn't show Him  
Any of the common courtesies  
He would have shown his other guests:  
  
He provided no water to wash Jesus' feet;  
There was no customary kiss of greeting;  
And no oil to anoint His head.  
In other words, Jesus wasn't really welcome.

Neither was the woman:  
Which he made quite clear  
By what he said about her under his breath.

And when Jesus allowed her  
To show her affection towards Him,  
Simon despised Jesus even more.

## 2. But what about this woman?

She came to Simon's house

Because she knew Jesus would be there:

She wanted to show Him

Just how much He meant to her.

She was willing to do this

Knowing the hatred and contempt

This Pharisee would show her –

She came with something precious to her –

An alabaster vial of perfume –

To anoint Jesus.

She stood behind Him,

Overcome by His mercy:

And as her tears of joy

Fell on His feet,

She wiped them with her hair,

Kissing His feet,

And anointed them with perfume.

What Simon refused to do –

Because of his disdain for Jesus –

This woman did because of her love –

A love that can only come from a heart

That has been transformed by His grace.

C. So what did Jesus want Simon –

What does He want us –

To learn from this?

He tells us in verses 40-43,

Jesus said, “‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ And he replied, ‘Say it, Teacher.’ A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?’ Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose the one whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have judged correctly.’”

He goes on to say:

The one who is forgiven much, loves much.

The one who is forgiven little, loves little.

And, what is implied here

The one who isn't forgiven, doesn't love at all.

Jesus has the power to forgive sins,

And those He forgives, love Him.

That's how we can know we're saved:

That we love Him.

Paul writes in Galatians 5:6,

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.”

It doesn't matter whether

We have the outward sign of the new birth –

In the OT, it was circumcision,

In the NT, baptism –

What matters is whether we have the new birth –

How can we know?

If we have a faith that works through love –

A faith that not only believes that Jesus is Lord and Savior,

But one that lovingly receives Him as Lord and Savior –

We can only *know* we have this by *how* we live:

James writes, “For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also *faith without works* is dead”  
(2:26).

Jesus says, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

If we’re willing to obey Him,

If we’re willing to own Jesus

As our Lord and Savior and serve Him –

Not only when it’s easy

But also in front of those who hate Him

As this woman did –

We really do love Him.

But if we refuse to show Him

Even the affection we would show our friends –

As this Pharisee did –

Then we’re still far from Him.

If that’s the case with you:

Trust in Jesus.

Let’s also remember:

It’s one thing to love Him,

But it’s another to love Him as we should –

Jesus said the one who is forgiven much, loves much:

It's when we realize *how much* we've been forgiven,

That we'll love Him as we should.

How much has He forgiven?

If we're trusting Him,

He's forgiven us a debt

That even an eternity in hell couldn't pay.

The Lord has shown us infinite mercy:

May He give us the help we need to reflect that

In how we love Him in return. Amen.

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