

36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him. And He entered the Pharisee's house, and reclined at the table. 37 And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, 38 and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." 41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." 44 And 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 she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. 46 "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. 47 "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 And He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." 49 And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" 50 And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

We come to this beautiful and tragic story this morning. It's a longer passage than we usually take all at once, but of course it's a single

incident with combined and complex truths.

Within this incident Luke shows us who enters into the kingdom and who is excluded, and the results are a complete upset. Topsy turvy backwards to what the religious jews thought would be the case.

The pharisee's were a sect within judaism who believed that their religious law keeping made them more than acceptable to God. They had replaced the law of Moses with centuries of man made traditions of men. It was a religion of doing stuff.

Not disimilar to the muslims who kneel on a prayer rug and face east every day at set times. Do stuff. Do it this way. Do it over and over at set times. God will accept you if you religiously do stuff. Keep a skeleton of morals to be seen by men while in your heart you secretly commit every sin in the book.

Everything was outward. That's why Jesus called them whited sepulchres. Whited tombs. Whitewashed on the outside but inside the rot of decaying death.

In Matthew 15 the famous conflict with Jesus and the pharisees we learn everything we need to know about the sect of the pharisees to rightly understand the situation on this day.

The pharisee's come accusing the disciples, and by extension of course, Jesus of breaking the Sabbath by gleaning wheat in the corner of some field.

They were doing nothing wrong according to God's revealed and inspired truth. Rolling wheat in your hand and blowing away the chaff and eating the grains, on the Sabbath day, was neither work, nor was it forbidden in God's word.

Yet the pharisee's had over centuries come up with the most ridiculous definitions, traditions of men, about what constitutes work, and they accused the disciples of breaking the Sabbath day.

Jesus says, *“And why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”*

Jesus accuses them, rightly, of setting the commandments aside, break the commandments to keep silly man made traditions. He gives an example of how they would let their parents needs be unmet while they dedicate the things which could have helped the needy to God. A phony deal. Let your parents go hungry while you "set aside" that which could have eased their need, they "set it aside" for later, sorry, can't disturb that money, it's promised to God, and then they would spend it later on themselves. Dishonor your parents for your tradition.

7 “You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying,

*8 ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.*

*9 ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,
TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’”*

Phony religion with a detached heart. Hypocritical religion. All show, but there is filth inside. It was worthless. When Jesus quotes Isaiah that their religion is in vain, it means; worthless. Empty. Zero. Bankrupt.

That's the scenario for our story this morning which illustrates empty, worthless religion, and real worship, from a heart broken over sin.

The pharisees were so full of themselves, so sure they were the objects of God's delight. They were confident that they were just slightly underneath God Himself in the order of all things. God, pharisees,

ordinary jews, sinners and heathens. In that order.

The pharisees are in open conflict with Jesus. They have already rejected Him and have openly plotted how they will achieve ridding themselves of Jesus.

Was Simon, the man in this story, an exception? Was he an honest inquirer. I think the story reveals his heart. Nicodemus was an honest inquirer. He came alone at night. He wants to understand. But Simon, invites all of his pharisee friends to come on over for a meal with Jesus.

I submit to you what is not written but what I would speculate is that this request to have Jesus come to his home was perhaps a set up. The pharisees want Him dead. They hope if they give Him some rope that he'll hang himself. As usual we'll have to wait until we get to heaven to ask.

We don't have to speculate on the coldness of the reception at Simon's house. None of the usual accoutrements normally offered to guests in the east at that time are present. The welcome mat was stored in the garage.

None of the customary greetings for a guest were offered to Him. No water to wash his feet, no kiss, no oil to annoint his head. Nothing for Jesus.

36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him. And He entered the Pharisee's house, and reclined at the table.

At this point the pharisee is un-named. Perhaps if Jesus hadn't spoken to him by his name, we'd never know.

37 And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner;

This woman is un-named and will remain un-named. This is similar, but not the same as when Mary Magdalene poured out her expensive perfume on Jesus who would soon be executed. Perhaps Mary Magdalene was so moved by this woman's act of love that she copied her later.

This is simply, a woman of the same city as the pharisee, but the word woman is surrounded by two words that are defining of her. Behold! Wow! Dude! Why the exclamation? What's remarkable about her. She's a sinner. The greek word is loaded.

Not just any woman, she is recognizable. Everyone knows who she is and what corner you can pick her up on. All of that is in the greek word here simply translated, *sinner*.

This is a woman who would cross to the other side of the street in order to avoid a pharisee. Unless of course it was night time and the pharisee was one of her regular's.

It's interesting how the pharisees believed that sin was contagious. Sin is transferred by physical contact. Being anywhere near this woman is to become unclean.

It's also interesting that we are told that she is a sinner, but the story teller is telling his story from the perspective of the jews. Pharisee's are righteous. This woman is a sinner. Jesus is going to turn that upside down.

and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,

Now, if you had the conspiracy theory gene at all, you might ask, how did she learn that Jesus was at the pharisee's house. Is there a possibility that this is a set-up to try to trap Jesus?

Simon, you get Him to come to your house, and we'll get what's-her-name from the corner, and we'll mix up that combination and see what happens. Give Him some rope, see if He'll hang himself.

We don't know the details, but what unfolds is more remarkable than anything that man could ever plan. Because God has a sovereign plan that involves this unfortunate woman and His Son.

God has poured out in this daughter's heart a repentance and a love for Him that has turned her life 180 degrees opposite direction.

By the way, if you are a christian sitting in this house this morning, it wasn't you who chose God, it was God who chose you. Repentance is a gift from God. Repentance is granted to us by God.

Acts 11:18, Peter telling the church at Jerusalem about the gentiles getting saved. *“So then, God has **granted** even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”*

That theme is common in the new testament. Paul writes to Timothy 2Timothy 2:25 *with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may **grant** them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,*

God **grants** repentance. In Ephesians 2 the very common verse that says, *for by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourself, it is the gift of God.*

God pours out his Spirit in our hearts. God grants repentance. God removes the blindness from our eyes. God quickens our dead spirits from death to life. God grants the repentance and the faith necessary to believe.

We don't know when it happened, but some time before the very next scene, God woke this lady from the dead and poured out His Spirit in her heart. Her heart is broken over the magnitude of her sin and God's forgiveness. And she only wants to worship such a magnificent God.

And she's an emotional mess about the change that has come over her. God has forgiven an enormous sinful past in order to purchase this daughter for His own. And she's well aware of that.

38 and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume.

This is a scene. This is "not OK" in that society, in that home, for a harlot to be weeping uncontrollably at Jesus feet and wiping his feet with her hair kissing them over and over.

Two polar opposite impressions of this scene. The "righteous" pharisee's are aghast. This sinner is just getting sin all over Jesus. Jesus is ruined. He's contaminated goods. He's a big old sinner by association. He's allowing this harlot, this untouchable sinner to make a scene at His feet.

That's the viewpoint of the pharisees. The righteous people.

Let me give you another viewpoint. The angels in heaven are rejoicing because God has rescued a lost lamb and restored it to safety. From God's point of view, this is some of the most remarkable worship we'll ever witness this side of heaven.

39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

Notice that at this point in our story, this man is still nameless. He's still the pharisee. But his motive for having Jesus in his home is revealed. He's looking for evidence to condemn and reject Jesus. Is He a prophet, or not? Is He righteous, or not. . . . *he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."*

Also notice that this conversation is not a public one. The man said this to himself. This conversation is brain waves, not sound waves. The pharisee is thinking to himself, I think we've got Jesus sufficiently trapped. We've got Him. He's no prophet. No prophet would allow this scene to take place.

A real prophet would know that he's being defiled by someone who is defiled. A real prophet would know. A righteous person, like me, would never allow this woman to touch him and defile him. Jesus is a phony. No prophet at all. A sinner by association with sinners.

I love Al Mohler's explanation about mud and white gloves. Mud never gets glovey. A white glove gets muddy. That's how it works. With one exception. When Jesus touches you, He doesn't get dirty, you become clean.

Oh, and Jesus reads minds. Jesus is going to answer the pharisee's thought. Jesus just heard the conversation in this man's mind and heart. He heard the brain waves, the silent inner conversation, and He is going to answer with sound waves.

And just here we must revert to the Authorized Version. I love it too much to not read this from the King James. It sounds like two scotsmen talking to each other.

Vs. 40 And Jesus answering said unto him,

Jesus answering? No one spoke. How can Jesus answer someone's thoughts? The text is clear. The pharisee didn't speak, he thought to himself. Jesus answers our thoughts. If Simon were sharper he would immediately recognize, prophets don't do that, God does that. But hatred has blinded Simon the pharisee.

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

There's a certain snarkiness going on here. I mean we just were made privy to the conversation in his mind. "We've got you Jesus. You're no prophet at all. No prophet would let THAT woman touch him. You're obviously clueless, Jesus."

Why the shift to proper respect now. In his mind he's saying this is no prophet, but when Jesus speaks, he responds in hypocrisy to that inner voices conversation.

Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

You can just hear the condescension. Master, you have the floor. Do speak. He uses the title of honor, master, or teacher, as he's thinking dishonorably about Jesus. Like a cat with a mouse. Like Rush Limbaugh with half his brain tied behind his back. Teacher, please tell us. We defer to you. Hypocrite. Hate inside, patrimony outside.

41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?"

Now, in all fairness, Jesus is going to talk down to Simon. A little bit. It won't be the first time He gives them some of their own medicine. We know his name now. Simon.

Simon, I'm going to start you out on something easy. I mean, the jews have always been good at math, right. They understand profit and loss. If it were anyone else I might get in trouble for the politically incorrect sin of stereotyping. But no one in the politically correct world likes the jews right now, so I'm probably OK. Jews are good at math, which makes them good at business. Jesus question is so easy it's insulting.

OK, a denarius was a days wage for regular wage earning folk. So if we put this in 2019 terms, the one guy owes the lender \$12,000 and the other guy owes \$120,000. Neither could pay. The lender graciously, remember that word, graciously cancels both debts.

Here it comes Simon. Which one will love him more? It's almost a rhetorical question. It's so easy Simon is thinking, He's got something up His sleeve. This is too easy.

And note that Simon's answer is sort of non-committal.

43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

I mean, what else could he say. It's a question with an obvious answer. But Simon answers with that same condescension as before. Really? Really, teacher. I'm only dignifying you with an answer because we're sort of playing along with your game. *43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."*

This is the uncomfortable moment in the game. He's made Simon say the words. He required Simon to acknowledge the simple math. Simon doesn't know where this is going yet.

It's like that moment in the chess game when you've made your move,

and when we were little kids, we wouldn't take our hand off our chess piece while we're looking around trying to double and triple check our jeopardy. As long as you're touching the piece you could still back out and do it different. That's how little kids play.

Simon has acknowledged Jesus obvious metaphor. Nothing else he can do. It's Jesus move, and Jesus goes in for the checkmate. When you play chess with Jesus, it'll never be you that gets to say, checkmate. *And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."*

44 And 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 she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. 46 "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.

This is a study, by Jesus, of value. How Simon valued Jesus, and how this woman valued Jesus.

Simon because of the association with the pharisees in all likelihood loathed Jesus. No love at all. He asks Him to His home but he wastes no water, no kiss, no anointing with oil. None of the customary greetings for someone of value.

The woman however has made up for Simon's de-valuing of Jesus. She's making water with her many tears, to wash His feet. She's smothering His feet with kisses that Simon lacked. She's wiping His feet with her hair. And she has anointed His feet with perfume that cost many hundreds of times what the oil that Simon refused to anoint His head with costs.

Jesus was actually kind in His story to only make the gap between the debtors one to ten. Because the value this woman has placed on Jesus

by her actions is far more than 10 times. Infinitely more.

Jesus then makes it about sin. He takes the value difference out of the dollars category and makes the value differential in relation to sin.

That's a shock to pharisee's. He's crossed over a line. Because money's one thing. A money lender might forgive a loan. That money lender would be a fool to these pharisees though. But when you take it out of the money realm and make the value differential about sin; Only God can forgive sin.

*47 "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."
48 And He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."*

They were working an angle that He thinks He's a prophet, but He isn't because He associates with sinners and doesn't shun sinners in order to keep righteous. That was their initial accusation.

But He just made it easy. He thinks He's God. He thinks He can forgive sins.

Back for a moment to what Jesus said. The value of the love is equated to the value of the sin forgiven. Simon is righteous. He needs no forgiveness. There's no basis for him to love God because of a forgiven debt. Nothing to forgive. Simon and God are practically equals.

The woman realizes her sin debt is immense. She thinks it's impossible for God to forgive someone such as herself. But He does, and the tears flow. And flow, and flow.

What we learn, if we study God's book, is that both Simon and the woman have an un-payable debt. There's no way to pay the debt. We are ruined. We are born into an unpayable debt. My debt is about a

thousand times the national debt. Millions of trillions. And I have trouble filling the pickup with gas.

All of us, every human born into this vile sinful rebellious planet has one option. Beg the judge for mercy. Don't invite Him to your house and mis-treat Him!

49 And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?"

There's no movement with the sect of the pharisees. Who does He think He is? God? No one forgives sins but God alone.

For Simon and the pharisees, the gap just got wider. We thought He was a sinner by association and a non prophet, a poser, but what we've got here, is a blasphemer. This lunatic thinks He's God. Blasphemer!

50 And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

One person that day left Simon's house a new creation. The weight of sin is lifted. She is at peace with God. Her love overflows in relation to the weight of sin that was lifted. Her debt is cancelled.

If you think you're OK, God can't help you.

The modern church, the mega-church movement in America, the big-box store churches of our time do not confront sin. No one talks about sin. Sin is unpopular to talk about, and teaching about sin empties churches.

No one wants to discuss sin. What it is, according to God's moral laws, and how God graciously removes sin. That's taboo in our culture. So the mega-churches, by and large, do not visit God's laws or for that matter, any of the other new testament passages that speak of sin.

Isaiah 59:1,2

1 *Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short
That it cannot save;
Neither is His ear so dull
That it cannot hear.*

2 *But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your
God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not
hear.*

Sin separates people from God. From Adam forward. Sin removes us from the presence and the sweet fellowship of knowing God.

Sin is the problem that MUST be dealt with in order to be reconciled to God. But no one wants to talk about sin any more in our culture. In fact it's getting so that people who speak of anything moral defined by the authority of this book are segregated out of the culture. Taboo to say anything is sin. At all.

The idea that there is a God who is a judge and who defines morality is loathesome to our culture. Taboo to speak of. That conversation is over. Forever. Even in the mega-churches that claim to be about Jesus. Talk of sin is hushed.

But I end this morning with a question. If sin is removed from the conversation, and sin, the forgiveness of sin, is the basis of the quantity or value of our love for the Saviour, where is love for God in our modern churches.

47 "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."

No more sin. No more forgiveness. The logical conclusion to that equation is impossible to ignore. No more love. No more worship.