

JESUS THROUGH THE EYES OF – The Prostitute

Luke 7:36-50

Sermon at Peace Church

January 31, 2010

PURPOSE – To present Jesus as God’s forgiveness on earth whose presence motivates us to serve God in worship & service.

MAIN IDEA – By the power of his forgiveness, Jesus transforms us from a “have / need to” to “want / get to” life with God.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. WHO IS JESUS? HOW DOES HIS LIFE CHANGE OURS?

This morning we look at Jesus through eyes of the “sinful woman” (Luke 7:36-50) – generally agreed to be a woman of the streets; a woman who made her living by selling her body to men; a prostitute.

(i) Through her witness we learn that Jesus is God’s forgiveness on earth ... and He changes our life with God from:

A “Have to” to a “Want To”

A “Need to” to a “Get to”

... from the should of responsibility to the joy of love!

2. Sometime it feels like there are so many things we should do in our life with God – and it can even get tiring!?

I.e. – praying / hospitality / reading the Bible / serving the poor / tithing / witness / going to worship / being part of a small group ...

WHY DO WE DO THESE THINGS?

- Cause we have to or want to?

Do we do these things from a place of freedom & joy ... or necessity & weight?

(i) I remember, before I met Jesus, church was definitely more of a lifestyle responsibility than a joy! It was a family thing to do, and as long as I lived under my family roof I was expected to go to church. Bible was read every meal together ... but when I moved out, I stopped going to church. I never did read the Scriptures for myself.

Worship was a HAVE TO, not a WANT TO thing.

... But then I met Jesus and things changed! - I went back to church ... gladly ... to be with Him!

(ii) Jesus has come to transform religious responsibility to loving delight – by the power of His forgiving love.

That's the witness of this sister from Luke 7.

Because she has Jesus, she is definitely a WANT TO worshipper and servant of God!

II. THE WOMAN'S WITNESS

1. She so WANTS TO WORSHIP Him that she crashes a party to do so!

She, a woman of the street, musters amazing courage to walk into a high society home where Jesus is in order to bless Him. Can't stop her!

That's how much she wants to go to worship! (Lord, give us that kind of heart on a Sunday morning!)

2. She WANTS TO GIVE – she looks forward to the offering plate coming her way!

She carries her alabaster jar of perfume – her most costly possession. She wants to anoint Jesus with her giving!

This is the key to giving – to ANOINT JESUS IN IT!

3. She WANTS TO SERVE – she wants to practice hospitality!

Simon has not welcomed Jesus properly into his home. Yes, he invited Jesus and let Him into his house – but he has not treated him at all with the expected manners of the day.

(i) It was custom for a host to greet his invited guests with a kiss of welcome.

He didn't do it! He's like a host today who remains seated on his couch, keeps the TV on, and just waves someone in. RUDE!

It was custom in that day for a host to provide his invited guests with water to wash their feet – People wore sandals. Feet got dusty.

It was custom to provide olive oil to refresh the skin of the hands & face.
SIMON DIDN'T DO THIS ...

A. ... BUT THE WOMAN DID!

- She served the poor around her by washing Jesus' feet with her tears.

- She welcomed the stranger in that home by giving Jesus the kiss of greeting

- She refreshed the weary by anointing Him with her perfume

(ii) Those ACTS OF SERVICE – that worship & giving – was not done cause she “should” do it ... SHE WANTED TO! ... WHAT A WITNESS!

4. WHY? Cause she had received God's forgiving love in Jesus and in doing those things she was ministering to Jesus.

- That's OUR MOTIVE – it BEGINS by knowing God's forgiving love in Jesus.

(i) As Jesus says in our passage, “He who has been forgiven little, loves little (an indirect, but clear comment on Simon's inhospitality!)

- The religious life needs minimal forgiveness. It's really just codified behavior – which generally one can accomplish. Minimal forgiveness is needed. It eliminates LOVE – the shortcomings of the heart before God – knowing, ministering the heart needs of those around us. ... “He who has been forgiven little, loves little!”

(ii) But this woman, who knows that she has been forgiven much, LOVES MUCH!”

A. Through Jesus she had learned that God forgives sinners. As a prostitute, she was a “classified sinner” in the society of her day. By everyone else’s standards – except Jesus, she was beyond hope. Who she was was unforgiveable! But Jesus told her that God loves & forgives her.

B. And she received that Word because in Jesus she met a real man. Prostitutes know men. They see the come-on, the cover-up. But in Jesus she met a man who LOVED HER – wouldn’t USE her – LOVED HER from the depths of his soul to the depths of hers

= clean, strong, selfless, courageous, holy love!

= the same love that would take Him later to the Cross!

(ii) THAT MAN is God’s forgiveness on earth – for you and me.

When He SAYS, “God forgives you”, you can believe it ...

when He DISPLAYS & ACCOMPLISHES it (Cross), you can believe it.

THIS WOMAN DID!

She received peace with God through Him.

More than that, she began to discover the FAVOR OF GOD on her life through Him!

= boundless grace FOR her, transforming her life!

So she WANTS TO worship; to give; to serve. It’s not just something she SHOULD DO. It’s something she LOVES to do.

He who has been forgiven much, loves much.

He who has been forgiven little, loves little.

III. SIMON'S NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

(To my knowledge, none of us have been prostitutes, drug addicts!)

SO HOW DO WE BECOME PEOPLE WHO DEEPLY KNOW GOD'S FORGIVENESS IN JESUS?

Let's shift attention to Jesus' ministry to Simon. That's where He leads him – to see his need for forgiveness– in 2 WAYS:

1. He tells him a PARABLE.

When Simon questions this woman's love to Jesus – and why He would allow a "sinner" to minister to Him so intimately, Jesus says:

(i) *Two men owed money to a certain money lender. One owed 500 denarii (day's wage - \$50,000); the other 50 denarii (\$5000).*

Neither of them had the money to pay them back

Both have their debts cancelled. Which loves the lender more?

A. BEGRUDGINGLY SIMON ANSWERS – The one who had the bigger debt will love more! "That explains the woman's love", Jesus says.

(ii) But DO RECOGNIZE THIS: – No matter how you see yourself, BOTH debtors couldn't pay! Both debtors need grace completely! Both need FORGIVENESS.

A. What difference does it make if you're drowning in 50 feet of water or drowning in 500 feet?

You'll sink to death either way! You need equally to be saved / forgiven.

BOTH DEBTS PUT YOU TO DEATH!

The wages of sin is death. We grow in appreciation for forgiveness by realizing the consequences for even the smallest sin – which we cannot pay!

(iii) With His death, Jesus paid those debts – 50 or 500 are the same when both result in the penalty of death.

So to whatever degree you can recognize your sin, thank Him for forgiveness in a life of worship & service.

2. The other thing that Jesus does is CONFRONT SIMON with his sin. Jesus is not shy about helping us to see our sin!

Simon's sin was IGNORING JESUS in his own house!

It was LOVELESSNESS – that's the key to growing in repentance – to see our hearts on the GRID OF LOVE – for God; for others for God's sake.

(i) Jesus says, "You didn't give me any water; you didn't give Me a kiss of greeting; you didn't give me any oil of anointing."

"I was an invited guest – but you treated me as if I wasn't here!"

This is the sin of a religious life – lived according to duty.

IT IGNORES JESUS – in worship, service, giving

3. It happens!

The purpose of reading our Bible is to fellowship with God in Jesus – to know God in spirit & truth ... respond to Him.

The purpose of coming here today is to worship God in Jesus – in His Spirit

The purpose of serving others is to serve Jesus – "in as much as you do it to one of the least of these ..."

BUT WE IGNORE HIM!

4. When that's the case, we need to recognize not only that sin, but deeper yet – WHY DO WE DO THOSE THINGS?

It's not as though there's NO MOTIVE when Jesus is ignored.

We always have motives and when it's not out of love for Jesus, we put other "idols" there.

(i) FOR EXAMPLE:

(i) Ever find yourself patting your SELF on the back after you've gone out of their way to help someone? It comes so naturally. That's worship - exalting SELF!

(We even in passing mention that good deed to others so that they can worship ME too!)

(ii) If we go to church only to keep peace at home, just to please the parents – not to welcome & love with Jesus, then REPENT of that.

Repent both of ignoring Jesus and the substitute god of “keeping family peace”.

(ii) FOR WHOSE LOVE DO YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE?

Simon “loved little” because his religious life wasn't about love – for God & others. It was for feeling good about himself. It was self-love. That's the religious life.

Consequently, he ignored Jesus in his own house!

5. Last November I attended a conferences where I was convicted to really grow in repentance – naming sin deep within. With that desire, the Lord blessed me with a book of PURITAN PRAYERS. Many of these prayers help in that spiritual cause. Here's one I read not too long ago. I hope you can relate to it – for the sake of knowing forgiveness in Jesus:

Read pp. 132-133

IV. CONCLUSION

1. That grace is in Jesus. He is the One who has authority to forgive sin - not only sins of adultery, fornication & prostitution ... but equally envy, pride, mercilessness, lust, grudge, self-love!

He is the One who says to the woman: YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN!

YOUR FAITH HAS HEALED YOU ... GO IN PEACE!

(i) To worship & serve & give like this woman is what faith looks like.

A. FAITH expresses thanks for forgiveness by worshiping Jesus PASSIONATELY.

B. FAITH expresses love for Jesus by washing the feet of others – serving them even in their ugliest places!

C. FAITH expresses love for Jesus by giving your best – your alabaster jar of perfume.

2. Religion is about duty ... Faith is about love.

Religion is about “have to” ... Faith is about “want to”

Religion is about ME ... Faith is about JESUS.

By the power of his forgiving love, Jesus changes our life with God from “have to” to “want to”.

(i) He is God’s forgiveness on earth.

AMEN.