

Luke 7:36-50 – A sinful woman forgiven

Last week we read Jesus saying that “wisdom is proved right by her children”. Now we meet one of those “children of wisdom”! We meet a woman who had led a life far away from God – a woman that religious people did not dare to touch. Yet, she was now a changed woman; she had met Jesus, and everything had become different.

1. In Simon the Pharisee's house (v36-38)

Simon (v40) the Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him. Many Pharisees were already planning to destroy Jesus (Mark 3:6). But Simon was still thinking. Not all people in all groups are the same! Before, Jesus ate with Matthew and other “sinners” (Luke 5:29-30). Here he ate with a strict Pharisee. He went where he was invited – not for pleasure, not to just “spend the time”, but to do good in serving God and the lost. In those times, homes were open. People lay down to eat, and anyone could come in and join them. Whilst they were there, a certain woman came in.

2. A woman who deeply loved Jesus (v37-47)

This woman came in as Jesus was lying near the table (which is how people then ate). She remained behind him, feeling unworthy. She wept as she saw him. His preaching had turned her from a life of sin to God. Everything had changed for her. She now loved him so much. Her tears fell on his feet; she wiped them with her hair. She had brought expensive perfume to anoint him with. Simon did not approve. She was unclean – how could he allow her to touch him, if he was a man of God? Jesus told him a story of two debtors who were both forgiven – but the one who was forgiven most loved most. This woman was the grateful one. She felt her great debt, caused by sin – do you? She felt such deep thankfulness to Jesus – do you? Nothing was too much for her; she loved him with the whole heart. All was because of him. Do you?

3. A man who was not worried (v39-47)

Simon looked at Jesus, and judged him. How could a prophet allow this woman near? Yet Jesus was more than a prophet – and he knew Simon's thoughts exactly! Simon's problem was that he was not looking for a Saviour. He did not see his own sin and lostness. He did not see his debts before God. Our sins have doomed us, unless God is gracious and merciful in Christ to us. Simon was serious about his religion. He was upright. But he was lost, and far from God, unable to recognise God's Son in his own house. He was so near to salvation; but so far. We can see he was lost, because he had no love to Christ. We know he had no love to Christ, because he remained at a distance from him – even while having him in his house. How about you? Do you keep Christ “at arm's length”? Or do you fall at his feet and give your all to him?

4. A Saviour who loves sinners (v48-50)

Jesus honoured this woman in front of everyone (v48). He was not concerned about what others thought, but that his dear one. Her love had been shown to all. He now gave her reassurance. This love proved that she had true faith and was saved. It is faith in Christ himself that brings salvation. All her hope was in him. Jesus' claim was amazing – that he had the power to forgive sins. Either he is the Son of God, or was telling blasphemy. The people understood this claim (v49). What about you? Do you need forgiveness? Do you know that he is the friend of sinners? Are you amazed at his mercy, and do you fall at his feet? Or like Simon, do you stand back in pride?