

## Meet Jesus and Be Forgiven

### Luke 7:36-50

I'm Andy, one of the members of the staff team here  
If this is your first time here, we want to welcome you to church  
We're really pleased that you're here today.

One of the things we say often at this church is **All of Life, All for Jesus**  
We believe that the best life anyone can ever live  
Has Jesus at the centre of it  
We believe that Jesus is the source of lasting love, peace and hope  
Jesus has changed our lives for the better,  
and we believe he can do the same for you  
And that's why we want to share him with others  
Thank you for the opportunity to do that with you today  
If you've never met Jesus before  
we want to help you to meet him  
Through recorded stories of people from our church like Lily's  
And others that you can watch from our website  
But also from the Bible that you've just heard read  
The best way to learn about Jesus is straight from the bible  
We're going to look closely at a passage from a book in the bible called Luke's gospel

But on the table in the foyer is the whole gospel of Luke,  
And you are welcome to take a copy of Luke and read it  
It won't take you long to read  
If you would prefer a complete bible instead  
We would be more than happy to give you one  
I want also to invite you to our Christianity Explored course starting in October  
This is an opportunity to explore Christianity over seven sessions with others  
You don't need any background knowledge to attend  
We meet Jesus as we read a gospel from the bible together  
We welcome your questions  
There's good food and you might make some new friends along the way

On Sundays we've been looking at the theme of "A meal with Jesus"  
Where Jesus is always eating with people in Luke's gospel  
And teaching things about what God's kingdom is like  
And people have these life changing encounters with Jesus over a meal  
And we're going to see one of those encounters today

Before we begin,  
If you would like a full transcript of this talk you can download it at our website  
Or you can get a hard copy from the table in the foyer  
We're going to do something we do before every bible talk here  
We pray and ask God for help

Have you ever had an awkward, embarrassing moment at a dinner party  
Before we were married,  
Emma and I were invited to her friend's dinner party  
And her friend had this reputation

for throwing these elaborate costume parties at her parents' house  
And so we were invited  
And the theme was "rumble in the jungle"  
Neither of us were really keen to go  
Because we knew our costumes would be lame compared to others  
And as it turned out because we were so reluctant  
We left our costumes to the last minute and we were making them that afternoon  
I was dressed as a tree and Emma was a monkey  
I generated that picture using AI but I assure you our costumes were worse than that  
And so we park our car  
And we notice that the street is unusually quiet  
We knock on the door of the house  
Her mum opens the door  
And a big smile appears on her mum's face along with a quiet snigger  
As she delivers the awkward news  
That the dinner party took place a week ago  
This mix of embarrassment and relief came flooding over us  
So we dashed back to the car  
Threw our lame costumes in the boot  
And went out for dinner and laughed at the whole situation  
Now that awkward moment was not life changing.  
But the awkward moment we're going to see in today's dinner party.  
Became life changing for one of the people we're going to meet.

We're going to look at the passage in three sections

### **A Tale of Two Loves**

### **Forgiveness is the difference**

### **And Finally Forgiveness, Faith then Love**

### **Firstly, a Tale of Two Loves**

Verse 36

<sup>36</sup> Then one of the Pharisees invited him to eat with him. He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

The thing about Jesus in Luke's gospel is that he is willing to eat with anyone  
From all backgrounds, all classes of society  
In fact, he would eat with people who would never eat with each other  
This particular dinner was taking place at a respectable address  
The house of a Pharisee, who we are later told is called Simon  
If you read the gospels, you might be quick to conclude that the Pharisees were villains  
The bad guys of the story  
Now it's true that they did conspire with other religious groups to have Jesus killed  
But by and large they were respected by the Jews of their day  
They were experts in the Law of the Bible  
And they committed themselves to religious righteousness  
They were law keepers in other words  
We're not told exactly why Simon invited Jesus to this dinner  
But it's quite possible that he's doing his own investigation  
About whether or not Jesus is a great prophet from God as many were saying.  
Simon might well be curious about Jesus

But as we're going to see  
He wasn't that warm to Jesus.

We're going to go to the first awkward moment at this dinner  
But keep in mind the cultural context of this scene  
This in an Honour/Shame culture  
One that is very much focussed on outward behaviour  
And doing what is expected of a person in society

Verse 37

<sup>37</sup> And a woman in the town who was a sinner found out that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house. She brought an alabaster jar of perfume <sup>38</sup> and stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with the perfume.

This woman is an uninvited guest with a reputation in town  
"What's she doing here?"  
That's what most in the room would have thought  
All eyes in the room are fixed on her  
But the woman only has eyes for Jesus  
She is drawn to him  
She kneels at his feet  
Tears are welling up in her eyes  
The awkward silence of the room is broken by her crying  
Everyone except Jesus is uncomfortable with what she's doing  
And then what she does next is unthinkable in the culture  
The way she relates to Jesus is sensual  
Sensual because it involves the senses – smell, touch, sound  
Sensual because it is intimate  
The people in the room gasp  
She opens a jar and the air is filled with a thick sweet aroma of perfume  
Her sobbing tears fall on Jesus' feet  
And she uses her long hair to wipe the grime and dust off Jesus' feet  
None of what she is doing is normal  
Low ranking servants would normally wash guests' feet with water and a towel  
But in this extravagant, embarrassing display  
This woman washes Jesus with her hair, tears and perfume  
She even puts her lips on Jesus' feet in tender kisses  
You shouldn't be looking but you can't look away  
Whatever else you say about what she is doing  
This is an incredible act of devotion to Jesus  
We're not told if she had already met Jesus before  
We assume that this might well be the case  
But what is clear is that she loves Jesus  
But clearly someone in the room is unimpressed.  
Our host Simon.

Verse 39

<sup>39</sup> When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—she's a sinner!"

Muttering under his breath, Simon has just concluded his investigation of Jesus  
Jesus is no prophet  
If he was a prophet he would understand that unclean sinners  
have no place mixing with the righteous  
Jesus should have kicked this woman out

Remember that old chestnut called social distancing  
It made us so wary of people didn't it?  
Were they unclean?  
Likely to infect us if they came too close.  
That's Simon's thinking in relation to this woman  
She is a publicly known sinner  
She should be practising social distancing  
This is Simon's house after all  
She was certainly not invited  
And his dinner is one where only righteous guests are invited  
Her presence would contaminate them  
And he shudders to think that Jesus indulges this woman to bathe his feet  
He should know better than to let a sinner touch him  
Simon thinks nothing of this woman  
And his assessment of Jesus is not much better  
So here you have two incredibly different people?  
Relating to Jesus in two contrasting ways  
One with extravagant love  
And another with critical judgement  
But what does Jesus think?  
But wait, there's a second awkward moment  
Jesus calls out the host's lack of hospitality

Verse 44

<sup>44</sup> Turning to 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, with her tears, has washed my feet and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You gave me no kiss, but she hasn't stopped kissing my feet since I came in. <sup>46</sup> You didn't anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfume.

Basic hospitality is to wash your guests' feet  
And put some oil on their head  
And Simon didn't do either for Jesus  
Maybe hinting at his attitude towards Jesus even before this dinner started  
There is not even basic love of neighbour shown by Simon  
Clearly he does not have a lot of warmth towards Jesus  
On the other hand, this woman loves Jesus with reckless abandon  
This according to Jesus is a tale of two loves  
One deep and devoted  
The other cold and closed

"What is your love like?"  
Is your love more like that of Simon's or more like that of the woman?  
Simon's love is cold and closed  
He's a score keeper

His love measures others against himself  
That's why he feels entitled to sit in judgement over others  
I'm sure you have people in your life who love like that  
It's not much fun is it?  
But let me ask you, Is that how you love?

The woman's love on the other hand  
Is the love that we all long for  
The freedom to love without fear  
This woman has so much love in her heart  
She doesn't care what anyone else thinks about her  
She just pours out that love for the one who matters to her  
How many people do you have in your life who love you like that?  
I bet very few  
And don't you want to love like this woman?  
To find someone so compelling in your life  
That you could love without fear  
Which love do you think will change the world?  
Simon's or this woman's?  
But this kind of love is hard to find isn't it?  
How do the words of the Queen song go?  
*I work hard every day of my life  
I work 'till I ache my bones  
At the end of the day I take home  
My hard-earned pay all on my own  
I go down on my knees and I start to pray Praise the Lord  
'Till the tears run down from my eyes, Lord  
Somebody please  
Can anybody find me somebody to love?*

### **This brings us to our second point - Forgiveness is the difference**

Jesus is now going to explain what brings about this kind of love

Verse 40

<sup>40</sup> Jesus replied to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

It's always a bit ominous when Jesus says that to you

He said, "Say it, teacher."

<sup>41</sup> "A creditor had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> Since they could not pay it back, he graciously forgave them both. So, which of them will love him more?"

Jesus knows the unspoken thoughts of Simon

And as he often does,

Jesus tells a story, a parable

A simple story

One man owes the creditor a debt of 50 denarii

50 days of wages for an average labourer

Another man owes the creditor 500 days of wages.

18 months wages

The creditor forgives both debts

The slate is wiped clean

One debt forgiven is a blessing

The other debt forgiven is life changing  
Jesus paints Simon into a corner and says, which one will love the creditor more?

<sup>43</sup> Simon answered, "I suppose the one he forgave more."  
Can you hear the reluctance to admit this in Simon's voice?

Jumping down to verse 47

<sup>47</sup> Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that's why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little."

I'm sure Simon picked up the thinly veiled parable  
Jesus is the creditor  
The woman with the greater debt of sin  
Knows the cost of having that debt forgiven  
She knows that she desperately needs the forgiveness that only Jesus can bring  
And that is why she responds with such extravagant love towards Jesus  
But here's the thing  
Simon also has a debt of sin, even if he doesn't realise it  
His sin might not be as publicly known as the woman's  
In fact, Simon is the only one sinning right now with his pride towards the woman  
His only thought is "I'm better"  
He doesn't see himself as a fellow sinner in debt to Jesus  
He never once looks at Jesus with thankfulness  
Because he doesn't think he has a debt that needs forgiving  
Forgiveness is the difference Jesus says  
That is the difference between these two loves

For the benefit of the engineers in the room  
I drew a graph of this  
On the Y-axis is how much you love others  
And on the X-axis is how much you've been forgiven  
So according to Jesus in verse 47  
These two things are directly proportional  
Forgiven much, love much  
Forgiven little, love little  
Forgiveness is the difference

So let me ask you, do you know your debt?  
Do you know how much you need forgiveness?  
If Jesus is right, all of us have a debt of sin before God  
It's very easy to be like Simon and think we're basically good people  
Especially when we compare ourselves to each other  
"I'm glad I'm not like him"  
"I can't believe what she did"  
"Nobody's perfect but hey I'm not too bad"  
"It's not like I've killed anyone"  
But what if the comparison is not against each other but against God

Romans 3 verse 23 says  
"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"  
Imagine standing before God  
For every debt of sin in your life recorded

Every lie.  
Every selfish thought.  
Every bitter word.  
Every impure desire.  
Every act of pride and selfishness.  
Every time you have ignored God.  
Every time you have put yourself in his place.  
What could you possibly offer God to pay for that debt?  
The answer is: nothing.

That is why forgiveness is so extraordinary.  
Jesus says the creditor "graciously forgave them both."  
The debt was real.  
But the debt was cancelled  
Because Jesus took the cost of that debt upon himself  
That is what Jesus offers to sinners like us  
Not merely a second chance.  
Not simply encouragement to try harder.  
He is willing to forgive our debt completely

The remarkable thing about this passage is that Jesus doesn't tell the woman to clean herself up before coming to him.  
She comes to him as a sinner.  
And Jesus receives her.  
But how can Jesus forgive sin?  
That is the question the passage ultimately forces us to ask.  
Because forgiveness is not God pretending that sin doesn't matter.  
God doesn't simply overlook evil.  
No forgiveness is costly.  
And the rest of Luke's Gospel will show us the answer.  
Jesus is heading toward the cross.  
At the cross, Jesus will bear the penalty that sinners deserve.  
He will take our debt upon himself.  
He will die on the cross in the place of sinners.  
So that people who cannot pay their debt can be forgiven.

But do you know your debt?  
Like the woman at this house.  
You will never properly appreciate forgiveness  
until you understand your debt that needs forgiveness  
You will never love without fear  
Until you realise how much it cost Jesus  
To offer you forgiveness for your sin.

Forgiveness is the sweetest gift in the world  
The times when my wife Emma has forgiven me for my stupid selfishness  
I can't tell you how much that means to me  
The forgiveness that Jesus offers me time and time again  
In spite of my awful sin that drove him to the cross  
I struggle to find the words to say what that means to me  
He carries all the guilt and shame for my sin

Who else would do that for me?  
And then he pays the penalty of my sin on the cross.  
What kind of love is this?  
Love that sees you at your very worst  
And is still willing to give you his very best  
There is no love in the world that is better than that

How good was it to watch Lily's story?  
Do you remember what Lily said,  
"His forgiveness has lightened my heart"  
"Jesus has forgiven me for everything I have done and will continue to do"  
"Therefore I have the power to forgive others"  
"It's a part of loving others, as we're called to do"

Forgiveness is the difference to loving without fear.  
But how do you get that forgiveness?

### **Our final point is Forgiveness, Faith then Love**

The order is really important

Verse 48

<sup>48</sup> Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

<sup>49</sup> Those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?"

<sup>50</sup> And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

I want you to see the order.

The woman's love did not purchase her forgiveness.

The perfume, tears and kisses did not pay for her sin.

Jesus says: "Your *faith* has saved you. Go in peace."

Faith saves.

Forgiveness is a gift paid for by Jesus and offered freely to us

The woman responds to that gift by putting her faith in Jesus

The woman's love is the response to the forgiveness she has received.

And this is the heart of the Christian message.

You cannot pay your own debt

So Jesus offers forgiveness to you.

If you come to Jesus in faith.

If you trust in his death and resurrection for your sin.

If you believe that what he has done is enough to save you.

And when you do, something changes

Guilt and shame is washed away

Anger and pride is laid aside

He frees you up to love

Think about the woman.

Her actions show what has happened in her heart.

Her life has been transformed by God's amazing grace.

And so she does the only thing she can do

She pours out her love for Jesus

And so Jesus says to her and everyone watching her

"Go in peace."

Peace with God.  
The debt is cancelled.  
The guilt is removed.  
The sinner is welcomed.

But the love and forgiveness of Jesus can drive us not only to love Jesus  
But to love and forgive others in ways we could never imagine.

On the first of February 2020  
Danny and Leila Abdallah lost three of their six children in a horrific crash  
Their son Antony, daughters Angelina and Sienna and their niece Veronique  
Were tragically killed when walking to the shops for ice cream  
Samuel Davidson - under the influence of drugs and alcohol  
And driving at high speed, lost control of his car and killed these precious children  
He is currently serving a 20-year jail sentence  
For causing the deaths of these kids.  
How would you respond to someone who caused the death of your children?  
Through a journey that has not been easy  
Working through anger and still carrying much grief  
Danny Abdallah has forgiven Samuel Davidson  
In fact he told channel seven in a documentary last year  
He loves Samuel like a family member  
And has become a spiritual mentor to him  
He calls him once a week on the phone  
In fact, Danny's surviving children pray for Samuel  
Samuel Davidson has owned his sin against the Abdallah family  
And the terrible impact it has had on so many  
He knows he cannot undo what he has done  
He has apologized and says the forgiveness he has received from their family  
Has given him hope and changed his life  
Samuel Davidson has also become a believer in Jesus  
Praying and reading the bible his own parents gave to him  
What an incredible gift for Samuel Davidson to receive  
That he doesn't need to be condemned by his worst choices  
But rather he can have peace and hope because of the grace offered to him  
By the Abdallahs and by Jesus

How is it possible to love and forgive like the Abdallahs?  
Two days after losing her kids  
Wearing her Team Jesus jumper and surrounded by hundreds of people  
She returned to the place where her children died  
This is what Leila Abdallah did in her own words:  
"I went back to the scene and I knelt down and upright like I used to do since I was a young child. I prayed *The Lord's Prayer* which says *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*. The more I prayed it and the more I walked on the scene, the heavier I felt. I saw Jesus on the cross. And I saw him saying. *Forgive them, Father, for they do not know what they do.*"  
Forgiven much, love much.  
This is what Jesus does.  
He gives us the freedom to love without fear  
And this is the love that changes the world.

There are really two ways you can leave this meal with Jesus.  
You can leave like Simon:  
Respectable and self-righteous  
Never really seeing why you need Jesus  
Or you can leave like this woman  
Knowing that you are a sinner  
Knowing that you cannot fix your debt before God  
And coming to Jesus because he alone can forgive you.

The question you have to answer is this:  
“Who is this who loves and forgives?  
What will you do with Jesus?  
If you want to know more about him  
Then take a gospel of Luke and read it

But today, if you’ve met Jesus  
And you’re ready to be forgiven  
And willing to love him and love like him  
Then it’s as simple as saying, Sorry, Thank you, please

Let me just read this simple prayer before I pray it

*Dear God,  
I’m sorry for my sin.  
Thank you for Jesus and his willingness to forgive my sins on the cross.  
Please help me to love Jesus and others with my life.  
Amen*

And if you pray a prayer like that  
You can have peace with God  
This is the start of a new life shaped by the forgiveness of Jesus  
We would love to help you continue in this new life with Jesus  
Speak to the friend who brought you

If you’re still exploring who Jesus is  
And whether his life, death and resurrection are real  
Why not come to Christianity Explored with your friend or family member  
Come see if Jesus is worthy of your trust.

I’m going to pray to finish  
And if you want to be forgiven by Jesus  
Pray the prayer on the screen with me quietly after each line.