

SO, WHO WILL LOVE HIM MORE?

Parable 5: The Two Debtors

Sermon 5

Luke 7:36-50

I. ILLUSTRATIONS

- **National Debt (2019)** = \$22 trillion [\$67,000 per person]—increasing \$1.5 trillion per year
- **Elizabeth Warren’s student debt relief plan** benefits mainly those with lower income—and lower balances. \$1.25 trillion over 10 years [\$4000 per person]—10% annual deficit.
- **1792BC—King Hammurabi** of Babylon forgave all citizens’ debts to the government, high-ranking officials, and dignitaries.

Code of Hammurabi—*If any one owe a debt for a loan, and a storm prostrates the grain, or the harvest fail, or the grain does not growth for lack of water, in that year he need not give his creditor any grain, he washes his debt-tablet in water and pays no rent for this year.*

- **Common ancient practice**—30 times nations did so—in the 1000 years preceding Exodus.
- **Jewish law**
 - **Dt 15**—debt forgiveness in **Sabbatical Year**
 - **Lev 25**—debt forgiveness and release from servitude in **Jubilee Year**
- **Lord’s Prayer**—*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*

II. INTRODUCTION

1. SCRIBES AND PHARISEES’ CRITICISMS OF JESUS—UP TO THIS POINT
 - **Forgives sin**—he blasphemes—**Lk 5**
 - **Eats and drinks** with sinners—**Lk 5**
 - **Heals on Sabbath**—filled them with rage—**Lk—6**
2. SETTING—GALILEE—EARLY IN JESUS’ MINISTRY
3. EVEN JOHN ASKS—ARE YOU THE ‘EXPECTED ONE’?

Lk 7:22-23—**Jesus answers**—*Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

4. YET MORE CRITICISM—AGAINST BOTH JOHN AND JESUS

Lk 7:33-35—*For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’*

5. BUT HE ATE WITH PHARISEES AS WELL!

III. BIBLICAL TEXT—Lk 7:36-50

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 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 him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." 41 "A 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. So which of them 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 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 Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." 49 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."

IV. THE BACK-STORY

A. SETTING

1. HOSTING TRAVELING RABBIS
 - It was an honor for local leaders to do so
 - Often teachers had an entourage
 - Huge crowds followed Jesus—on the fringe was this woman
2. SIMON'S HOME
 - Larger, nicer house than one-room hovels of poor
 - Eating in courtyard—open air—accommodated many people
 - Ritually clean—extreme caution to keep it kosher—for the 'separated' Pharisee
3. PROPRIETIES
 - Servants washed feet of guests—hot dusty and filthy roads
 - Servant sprinkled rose water on guest's head—or held burning incense over head
4. THE MEAL

- People visited while celebrity was eating
- Even approached table for leftovers

B. INVITATION AND RESPONSE

1. SIMON'S POSSIBLE MOTIVES

a. Honorable

- Hospitality and respect for visiting preacher
- Curiosity—desire to hear him face-to-face
- Simon *did* honor Jesus by calling Him 'Teacher'

b. Questionable

1. Celebrity-seeker—wanting to show off
2. Skeptical—a doubtful 'fence-sitter' looking for a reason to reject Jesus
 - Many people are like that today

c. Sinister

1. To put Jesus in His place
 - Some say he was rude and insulting—no kiss, foot-washing, anointing
 - But maybe this is too harsh—Simon was *not obliged* to kiss, wash, anoint
 - Only to provide water to wash own feet
2. To trap Him—like other Scribes and Pharisees
 - In collusion with friends—to prove Jesus a false prophet

2. JESUS' RESPONSE

- a. Some Pharisees were friendly and genuine seekers
 - **Nicodemus—Jn 3**
 - **Joseph of Arimathea—Mk 15**
 - **Pharisee warned Jesus that Herod wanted to kill him—Lk 13**
- b. Jesus' theology was closer to Pharisees' than anyone else
- c. He ate with Pharisees—[3 times in Luke]—not just 'sinners'
 - He cared for Pharisees too
 - Jesus is *the* 'equal opportunity' Savior
- d. But this also meant—He had to confront their hidden sin—to be redemptive
 - **Lk 7—'sinful woman'—condemns** self-righteousness
 - **Lk 11—*not cleansing* Himself—pronounces 'woes'** against hypocrisy
 - **Lk 14—healed man of dropsy on Sabbath—challenges legalism** and no mercy
- e. By accepting Simon's invitation—Jesus did two things
 - Showed grace of fellowship—eating together meant friendship!

- Accepted risk of confrontation—made Himself vulnerable

C. DISRUPTIVE INTERRUPTION

1. WHO WAS THIS WOMAN?

- Not just unclean—whom Pharisees shunned
- Not just a woman in public—whom Pharisees avoided
- Much worse—a ‘sinful woman’ at Simon’s home—a Pharisees’ worst nightmare!
 - **αμαρτολογος**—immoral—wicked
 - Prostitute—or known adulteress—with a shameful reputation

d. WHY DID SHE COME?

1. Had she heard his preaching?

- Basic message

Mt 3/Mk 1—Repent and believe the Good News

- His mission statement—like he reiterated to John’s disciples

Lk 4 and Is 61—*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.*

❖ **Year of Jubilee** has arrived!

❖ Slaves **set free**—and all **debt forgiven!**

2. Did she come . . .

- Under **conviction**—to repent?
- **Believing**—Jesus would forgive her sin?
- **Yearning**—to be set free from sin—shame—social oppression?

2. TWO PERSPECTIVES

a. The woman

- **Sense of purpose**—intent on anointing Him—brought perfume with her
- **Humble**—kissing feet = ultimate act of humility
- **Sorrowful** and repentant—unbinding hair in private—was a sign of mourning
- Overcome with **love and devotion**—tears and clinging
- Extravagantly **thankful**—costly perfume

b. What the Pharisee saw

- Actions were **shocking**—she broke all custom
- Contaminated** purity of his home and meal
- Out of control—**touching** Jesus made him ceremonially unclean

4. **Shameful** and **seductive**—unbinding hair in public
 - Talmud: unbinding hair in public—cause for divorce
5. **Offensive** and **wasteful**—anointing feet with perfume
 - If a prostitute—perfume was used in her trade—seductive/erotic

D. SELF-RIGHTEOUS REACTION

1. SIMON ARROGANTLY JUDGED—BOTH THE WOMAN—AND JESUS
 - Silently—in his heart—he sinned against God—without saying a word!
2. OFFENDED BY HER OUTRAGEOUS BEHAVIOIR
 - Thought of himself as better than the woman—and Jesus!
3. HE WAS EVEN MORE SHOCKED AT JESUS' RESPONSE
 - He could be **no prophet**—or He would have discerned she was a 'sinner'
 - How could He allow himself to be **contaminated**—disregarding purity laws
 - This **confirmed the gossip**—Jesus *does* consort with sinners and tax-collectors
 - He was **condoning her sin**—by association—[according to *Ecclesiasticus*]
 - 12:14—*So no one pities a person who associates with a sinner and becomes involved in the other's sins*
 - 13:17—*What does a wolf have in common with a lamb? No more has a sinner with the devout.*

E. JESUS' GRACIOUS RESPONSE

1. DID NOT LET MEN'S RULES STOP HIM DOING GOD'S WILL AND HELPING PEOPLE
2. WAS FEARLESS—UNAFRAID OF DEFILEMENT BY SINFUL PEOPLE
 - His holiness was too strong for that!
3. WAS NOT OFFENDED BY HER 'INAPPROPRIATE' BEHAVIOR
 - But—**affirmed** her good intentions
 - Because—she was **motivated by love** and gratitude
 - **Jesus never rejects** anyone who responds in true love—no matter how differently
4. IRONY—JESUS WAS A PROPHET
 - He not only knew who and what she was—He also read Simon's mind
5. GRACIOUS TO SIMON TOO
 - Jesus did not react harshly—and lash out at Simon
 - He used this as a learning moment—for everyone—gently teaching with a parable

V. THE PARABLE

A. PURPOSES

1. THIS TOLD SIMON—JESUS COULD DISCERN BOTH THEIR HEARTS
2. EXPLAINED THE WOMAN’S ACTIONS—AND EXPOSED SIMON’S SIN
3. TAUGHT ABOUT GOD’S FORGIVENESS AND OUR GRATITUDE
4. SHOWED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRACE—FAITH—AND LOVE
5. TWO MAIN POINTS
 - o **God forgives sin freely—by His grace—totally—all sin**
 - o **Whoever is forgiven more—will love more**

B. KEY POINTS

1. BOTH MEN OWED MORE THAN THEY COULD REPAY
 - o **500 dinarii** = a year and a half pay
 - o **50 dinarii** = two months’ pay—was just as impossible for him
2. MONEY-LENDER FORGAVE WHOLE DEBT—NOT JUST PART OF IT
3. HE ‘FORGAVE’ THE DEBT—DID NOT JUST ‘FORGET’ IT
 - a. **χαριζομαι** = ‘give graciously’—[rarely used for canceling debt]
 - b. Sacrificial grace
 1. He did not just ‘write it off’ the books
 - ✓ Which could be temporary—and written back in
 - ✓ But He ‘graciously **gave** the debt’—i.e. **He paid it Himself**—irrevocably
 2. Not prompted by any obligation to his workers—or desire to please them
 3. Unconditional—without ‘terms’ requiring them to defray the cost
 4. Without any hope of monetary gain—but at great personal cost

Rom 8:32—He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give **χαριζομαι us all things?**

4. CORRELATION

- o God = the creditor
- o Debts = sins
- o Cancelling debt = forgiveness of sin
- o The greater debtor = loves more

5. ANALOGY—IN SIMON’S MIND

- a. Simon sees the Woman
 - She is the greater sinner—greater debtor
 - So her extravagant behavior *might* be excusable

- b. Simon sees himself
 - He is the lesser sinner—lesser debtor—nearly perfect
 - So his cool attitude toward Jesus is justified—what does he owe Jesus?
- 6. SIMON’S RELUCTANT RESPONSE
 - Grudgingly concedes—“**I suppose**, the one whom he forgave more.”
 - This attitude shows that Simon still did not understand fully
 - So—Jesus explained clearly—and bluntly

VI. JESUS’ APPLICATION

1. JESUS HAD SILENTLY TOLERATED SIMON’S DISRESPECT
2. BUT HE WOULD NOT ALLOW SIMON TO DISRESPECT HER LOVE FOR JESUS
 - a. **Respect** this woman, Simon!
 - *Do you see this woman?*
 - Don’t dismiss her as a non-entity and ignore her—acknowledge her!
 - Don’t treat her as a stereotype—look at her for who she really is!
 - b. She did what *you* should have done, Simon!
 - c. She loved much—but what about you, Simon?
 - d. THIS WAS NOT JUST A STATEMENT OF FACT—BUT A POWERFUL INDICTMENT

v47—*For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but [YOU SIMON] who is forgiven little, loves little.*

 - Simon needed *much* forgiveness—but he did not realize it
 - He was so self-righteous—he did not see the great debt he owed God!
 - He trivialized his hidden sin—and magnified the woman’s sin
 - e. APPLICATION
 - If we are ungrateful to God—it is because we do not realize the magnitude of our sin!
 - **John Owen**—“**He who has slight thoughts of sin never has great thoughts of God!**”

VII. JESUS’ REDEMPTION

1. SOCIAL CONDEMNATION/OPPRESSION HAS CRUSHED THE WOMAN’S SELF-IMAGE
2. JESUS DID THREE THINGS—THAT CHANGED HER LIFE FOREVER
 - a. He **affirmed** her
 - His rebuke of Simon was necessary—to rescue Simon from his own hidden sin
 - But it also showed her—and everyone—that she had responded appropriately
 - Her actions gave evidence—that she already had been redeemed

- b. He **forgave** her
 - 1. The very reason she had come to Jesus
 - 2. The word ‘forgiven’ in **v48**—is different than in **v42**
 - **v42** = graciously give
 - **v48** = release—cancel—completely obliterate
 - 3. Jesus’ forgiveness—**liberated** her—finally and totally
 - 4. For the first time—see felt free—from sin and society’s condemnation
- c. He **assured** her
 - 1. He gave her His peace—total peace of heart and mind
 - 2. She *knew* she was forgiven—and saved
 - Don’t let the world tell you—that you are not forgiven
 - Don’t let Satan rob you of God’s peace!

VIII. TWO SHOCKING PROCLAMATIONS

v48—Your sins have been forgiven

- 1. JESUS SAID THIS TWICE
 - Also—to the paralytic lowered through the roof—**Mk 2**
 - Scribes accused Him of blasphemy—God alone can forgive sin
- 2. JESUS UNVEILED HIS DEITY—AS THE SON OF MAN
 - He far exceeded Simon’s paltry expectations
 - He was much *more* than a prophet

v50—Your faith has saved you

- 1. THREE SIMILAR PASSAGES
 - *Your faith has healed you*—**bleeding woman**—**Mk 5**
 - *Your faith has saved you*—**here**
 - *Your faith has saved you*—**healed leper [of ten]**—**Lk 17**
- 2. JESUS DOES NOT MEAN SHE WAS SAVED **BY** HER FAITH
 - We are saved **by grace through faith**
 - We are **not** saved **because** we believe
 - Though we cannot be saved *without* believing
 - We do not produce this **faith**—it is **God’s gift** to us
 - He gives us **Christ’s faith**—that enables us to believe

- So our faith is **not a work** we produce—it is a **response** empowered by God
3. JESUS WAS SAYING THIS TO HER
 - You are saved—**not because** you kissed Me, anointed Me, and washed My feet
 - You are saved—**not because** you love Me—and demonstrated it with these actions
 - You are saved—**because I love you**—and you received My love by trusting Me
 4. NEITHER HER FAITH NOR LOVE CAUSED JESUS TO FORGIVE HER
 - His **forgiveness caused** her to believe and love Him
 5. SUMMARY
 - Forgiveness is the cause—love is the response—gratitude is the result
 - For God the Forgiver—love comes before forgiveness—love is His motive
 - For human debtors—forgiveness comes before love—that produces gratitude

IX. APPLICATION

1. GOD’S PERSPECTIVE
 - God is the money-lender who does not care about money
 - He cares only about the debtor—and setting the debtor free
2. HIDDEN AND SMALL SIN
 - Watch out for self-righteousness—the hidden sin that destroys
 - None of us is a ‘lesser’ debtor—Paul himself was the greatest of sinners!
 - There is no little sin and no little forgiveness
 - It cost God everything to forgive us anything
3. MINISTRY
 - Jesus never let legalism get in the way of helping people—nor should we
 - We need to ‘see’ people as God values them
 - Do not look through or past people—or see them as mere stereotypes
4. LOVE AND GRATITUDE
 - Our thankfulness is directly proportional to our awareness of forgiveness
 - Our love for Jesus is directly proportional to our conviction about canceled sin
 - Sin Christ forgives all our sin when we repent
 - So we should be supremely grateful—and give Him all our love

X. INVITATION

YOU WALK ALONG OUR SHORELINE

**You walk along our shoreline
When land meets unknown sea.
We hear your voice of power,
“Now come and follow me.
And if you still will follow
Through storm and wave and shoal,
Then I will make you fishers
But of the human soul.”**

**You call us, Christ, to gather
The people of the earth.
We cannot fish for only
Those lives we think have worth.
We spread your net of gospel
Across the water’s face,
Our boat a common shelter
For all found by your grace.**

**We cast our net, O Jesus;
We cry the kingdom’s name;
We work for love and justice;
We learn to hope through pain.
You call us, Lord, to gather
God’s daughters and God’s sons,
To let your judgment heal us
So that all may be one.**