

## **Jesus between the Seasons: *HIS AFFECT*** **Luke 7:36-50**

We continue this morning our consideration of Jesus as we find Him in the Gospel of Luke. We're not looking at the Christmas passages nor the Lenten/Easter texts, only the Scriptures found between those two most prominent seasons of the church year. Our focus is on "Jesus...between the Seasons."

Today, we turn again to Luke 7 as we consider how Jesus Christ affects our lives. We've looked at His Purpose and His Power—now, Jesus' AFFECT. I chose this topic because it seems to me that the main characters we find in our text for today are being affected by Jesus in strikingly different ways.

Now, to "affect" something is to influence it, to produce change within it. So the ultimate question that we'll try to answer for ourselves is "How is Jesus Christ affecting you and me? What kinds of changes is this relationship producing in us?"

Please keep these questions in mind as we turn now to our text, Luke 7:36-50:

<sup>36</sup>Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup>When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, <sup>38</sup>and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

<sup>39</sup>When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." <sup>40</sup>Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.

<sup>41</sup>"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup>Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" <sup>43</sup>Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

<sup>44</sup>Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup>You did

not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup>You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. <sup>47</sup>Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

<sup>48</sup>Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." <sup>49</sup>The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" <sup>50</sup>Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Jesus affects different people in different ways—have you noticed? Some people who choose to follow Him seem very serious about their commitment, while others—not so much.

Some are faithful, while others, from all appearances, are faith-less. One Christ follower becomes a "pillar of the church," while the other is more like a "pad on the pew."

Why is this? Maybe we can learn something from this story before us today. Let's begin by taking a look at the various characters we find in it.

**1. First, there's **the woman**.** I guess you could say that she's the "surprise character" in the story. She wasn't supposed to be here at all if everything had gone as planned.

But then, without her, there wouldn't have much of a story to tell. The Bible doesn't tell us about every meal Jesus enjoyed, only the ones where something unusual happened. This happened to be one of those special meals.

A Pharisee had invited Jesus to join him for dinner in his home. This was still early in Jesus' ministry. Not all the Pharisees had turned against him, so here was Jesus dining in this Pharisee's home, reclining at the table in the customary way for that day.

Then she shows up--the uninvited guest. She crashes the party! She learns that Jesus is there, so she goes too.

Keep in mind she was definitely not the kind of person the Pharisee wanted at his dinner party. Luke describes her in vs. 37 as "a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town." She was probably a prostitute.

Picture this scene: Jesus is having dinner with this respected member of the community, and in walks this unnamed woman of the streets. She goes straight over to Jesus and begins to cry.

Her tears cover Jesus' feet. This must have seemed awkward to the other guests, but Jesus allows her to continue.

She lets down her long hair. In those days, it was unacceptable for a woman to unbind her hair in public—that was taboo--only loose women would do such a thing. Well, this woman qualified.

She lets her hair down and uses it as a towel to dry Jesus' feet. Then she kisses his feet...over and over again. And as if this were not enough, she completes the disruption of the dinner party by anointing Jesus' feet with a fragrant ointment, a fine perfume.

She has distracted everyone's attention away from the meal. She has embarrassed the host, risking some kind of harsh response from him; and, of course, there was the possibility that Jesus might reject her, too.

I think the boldness of her actions requires us to make an assumption: this was not her first encounter with Jesus. Either she had heard from others about him--she had heard of his marvelous, forgiving love--or more likely, she had previously been in his presence, receiving from him mercy and kindness, forgiveness and acceptance.

Otherwise, why would she have taken such a great risk? And why would she have come prepared to anoint Jesus' feet with such a precious perfume?

Directly or indirectly, his forgiving love had surely already touched her sinful heart. She crashed the party to pour out her soul in penitence and gratitude to Jesus in the most obvious way that she knew how.

**2.** But now let's consider another character in this story: **the unhappy host**--the alarmed and embarrassed and distraught host. His dinner party was ruined, so he thought, even scandalized by this woman of ill repute. He had at least been open to Jesus so far--considered him to be a teacher, perhaps even a prophet—but no more! Jesus had allowed this sinful woman to touch him!

Jesus knew what he was thinking, and as if to show the Pharisee that he really was a prophet, he let him know that he knew:

"Simon," he said. He uses the Pharisee's name to make it very personal. "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," Simon replies.

So Jesus proceeds to tell Simon this pointed parable of the two debtors: One debtor owed a large amount of money--five hundred denarii--almost two year's wages.

The other debtor owed a much smaller amount--just fifty denarii. But neither of them could pay his debt, according to the parable, so the moneylender simply forgives both debts.

Then Jesus asked Simon a question: a) Which debtor would be more grateful, which one would have more love in his heart for the moneylender who showed mercy and forgave their debts?

It was not a tough question, and Simon answered correctly. The one who was forgiven more would love more. I wonder: do you think Simon could sense what was coming?

**3.** Now let's consider the third character in the story. It's **Jesus**. Jesus seizes upon this moment to make an unforgettable point. He turns toward the woman, but addresses Simon: "Do you see this woman?"

Well, of course, he does. She's about the only thing he can see at the moment. He's probably glaring at her with a most unpleasant expression on his face. He sees her all right!

Then Jesus talks about the affect the two of them had on him. Simon had offered no water for Jesus to wash his feet when he came to dinner—which was a glaring omission of a common courtesy—but the woman washed Jesus feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. How could Jesus not be affected?

Simon did not give his guest the customary welcoming kiss, but the woman covered his feet with kisses. Simon offered no oil for Jesus' head—another custom of the day—while the woman anointed Jesus' feet with a rare and precious ointment!

Jesus sums up how this affected him with this thunderbolt: "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Would you call that honesty or courage or what...for Jesus to talk to his host like that? He didn't pull any punches, did he?

This woman evidently had many sins, and she knew it. But there's evidence here that she had repented of those sins and was trying to live a new life.

Simon may well have had just as many sins, but they were of a different nature, if you know what I mean. Self-righteousness is much better

accepted than promiscuity. Judgmentalism may go unnoticed for a long time, except when in the presence of the One who is able to look into our hearts.

Even if sin could be quantified in some way, and Simon was deemed to have fewer sins, he was seemingly unaware of any personal sin. No need for him to repent, right? And he certainly wouldn't be looking to the likes of Jesus to forgive him—someone else he no doubt saw as inferior to himself.

So here we have Jesus affecting the lives of two remarkably different people: a teary-eyed penitent prostitute and a proud, holier-than-thou Pharisee. He attempts to teach them both a profound truth.

The truth goes something like this: the greater our sense of having been forgiven through no merit of our own but only because of God's undeserved gift, the more gratitude we'll have in our hearts for God—the kind of gratitude that eventually shows up in things like worship, and service, and giving.

The woman felt her debt of sin to be 500 denarii and hopeless. The Pharisee saw his debt as 50 denarii at most, an amount he could certainly manage on his own.

The woman believed Jesus had cured her from a spiritual disease so severe that it carried with it a mortality rate of 100%. The Pharisee, on the other hand, would not own up to the spiritual equivalent of the common cold.

The woman was affected deeply by Jesus. Simon really wasn't—at least not enough to produce any kind of real and lasting change. Jesus had nothing more to say to Simon; but to the humble, grateful prostitute, Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven."

**4.** Okay, so where do we show up in this story? Which character more closely represents the affect Jesus Christ has had on **us**?

Our answer will reveal a lot about our commitment to Christ and our love for Him.

- 1) How much sin has Jesus forgiven us?
- 2) How costly a rescue did He accomplish to save us?
- 3) How big a price did He pay to reconcile us to God?

Honest answers, coming from what we truly feel in our hearts about this—these answers matter, friends. They're a clear indication of whether Jesus has had any affect upon our lives.

The woman in our story realized her sinfulness, she felt the full load of her sin, she wept tears of remorse, and bowed down in grateful service to her Lord. She was profoundly affected!

Simon stood tall and hard-hearted, oblivious to his own sin, aware only of the sins of this woman who had dared to disrupt his party. He remained essentially unaffected by Jesus.

This is the Gospel: God sent His one-and-only Son into the hopelessness of our lost condition to die on a cruel cross to save us from sin, death, and hell.

If we believe this Good News and embrace Christ Jesus as Savior, our lives are filled with such love and gratitude that we live, and serve, and give as committed followers of Christ.

If we don't believe it--if we've never been convinced by the truth that we are died-for because this was the only way for us to be set free from power of sin and death--then we may claim otherwise, our names may appear on some church roll...and we may even show-up occasionally, but there will be no evidence of true commitment to Christ in our lives, because we've never really let Him affect us—not enough to make a difference.

The woman who anointed Jesus loved Him so much because she knew how much she had been forgiven. Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven....Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

In your heart of hearts, do you know Jesus has said the same to you? Has He affected your life this much? How do we know?