

emotion that she cared nothing for the conventions of the day. She only saw her Lord, and she wanted to show her love for him as she had shown it to no other man before.

- Secondly she kisses his feet: *'this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet'* (Luke 7:45) She was too humble to kiss his head, so she showered kisses upon his feet; this was in place of the kisses which Simon had not placed upon his face.
- Thirdly, she pours perfume on his feet: *'she has poured perfume on my feet.'* (Luke 7:46) This was not like the cheap olive oil which Simon would normally have poured on the head of his guests. The perfume used by the sinful woman was a very expensive liquid. It was a perfumed ointment which she would have kept in an alabaster jar hung around her neck.
- Mary of Bethany later on was to perform a similar act, just before the crucifixion of Jesus (John 12:3). By breaking the neck of the jar and pouring the perfume on him the sinful woman showed very great love to her wonderful Lord and Saviour. This act of love showed her complete allegiance to Jesus because once opened, the thin neck of the bottle could not be stopped up again; it had to be broken. She was forced to pour the complete contents of this expensive liquid on Jesus' feet.
- When we interact with Jesus do we do so like this sinful woman with tears of joy, in humility, with unbridled love in our hearts for all Jesus has done for us?

2.5 They LEAVE with different RESULTS

- *'The other guests began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?'* (Luke 7:49) Simon and his fellow Pharisees believed that only God himself could forgive sins. They had of course met God in the form of Jesus that day. Jesus had politely told them in his amazing parable that they were still in debt to the tune of 50 denarii. They leave unchanged, their sins unforgiven. Unforgiven because they thought their religious acts made them 'right' with God.
- The sinful woman however leaves with her sins forgiven: *'Your sins are forgiven.'* (Luke 7:48). No longer was she bound by the guilt and shame of her past. No longer did she have to wrestle with the secret hidden things of her former life. No longer did she have to hide in the shadows of previous sin and the darkness of despair. She left, freed from the bondage of sin, and walks into a new life through Jesus Christ.

2.6 Conclusion

- How would you describe your relationship with God at the moment?
- As we approach Jesus this week, seeking to encounter him, will you do so as a Simon or like this sinful woman?

3. Questions to consider at home

- 3.1 Why is this passage unique? Why does Luke include it in his Gospel?
- 3.2 How would you describe sin to a confused friend?
- 3.3 What do we learn about the Pharisees from this passage?
- 3.4 What do we learn about sin and forgiveness from this passage?
- 3.5 What do we learn about Jesus from this passage?
- 3.6 Why do people today attend church regularly?
- 3.7 Do our church services need to change in order for us to encounter God in a new way?



The St J's Group

Luke 7:36 50— Feet of Jesus

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage – Luke 7:36-50

36 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. **37** A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. **38** 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.

39 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.'

40 Jesus answered him, 'Simon, I have something to tell you.'

'Tell me, teacher,' he said.

41 'Two people owed money to a certain money-lender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.'

42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?'

43 Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.'

'You have judged correctly,' Jesus said.

44 Then he turned towards 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. **45** You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. **46** You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. **47** Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.'

48 Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'

49 The other guests began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?'

50 Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'



2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction

- How would you describe your relationship with God at the moment?

Loving or Distant

Strong or Weak

Warm or Cold

Routine or Real

Formal or Free

- Two people encounter Jesus at a dinner: Simon the Pharisee and a sinful woman: *'When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume.'* (Luke 7:36-37).
- They APPROACH Jesus with different MOTIVES
- They INTERACT with Jesus with different ATTITUDES
- They LEAVE with different RESULTS
- How do we approach our daily encounters with Jesus? What are our motives? How do we interact with Jesus when we meet him? How do our encounters end? Do we leave Jesus as we approached him or as changed people?

2.2. Background and Context

- Each Gospel has a story of an anointing of Jesus by a woman (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). There are good reasons for thinking that the other three are describing one and the same incident, but Luke a different one. They refer to an incident in the last week of Jesus' life, Luke to one much earlier.
- Luke's unique account is probably set in Capernaum on the shore of Lake Galilee which was where Jesus had made his home.
- Unlike us who tend to have dinners with our friends or family in a dining room it was perfectly normal in Jesus' day for people to be eating outside or in more open conditions. Peoples homes were more accessible then and it would have been customary for complete strangers to wander in.
- People did not sit at table, but reclined on low couches, leaning on the left arm with the head towards the table and the body stretched away from it. The sandals were removed before reclining. The woman was thus able to approach Jesus' feet without difficulty.

2.3 They APPROACH Jesus with different MOTIVES

- Why has Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner? What were his motives for seeking an audience with Jesus? The text does not tell us the answer but our actions often reveal our motives. Jesus points out to Simon three things: *'I came into your house'*:
 - *'You did not give me any water for my feet'* (Luke 7:44) It was customary for a servant to wash dinner guests feet.
 - *'You did not give me a kiss'* (Luke 7:45) It was customary to greet an honoured guest with a kiss.
 - *'You did not put oil on my head'* (Luke 7:46) It was customary as a sign of welcome to refresh dinner guests heads with oil.
- Simon may have invited Jesus to dinner out of curiosity but it is far more likely that he invited Jesus to dinner to trap him into saying or doing something which would give Simon and his fellow Pharisees just the ammunition he needed to condemn Jesus as a charlatan.

- How do we approach Jesus? I doubt any of us approach Jesus as Simon did with such callous motives. But can our approach sometimes be just as a cold. Why do we come to church Sunday by Sunday? Why do we have a daily time of quiet with Jesus? How do we approach these times? Out of routine or because we enjoy being with Jesus.
- Why has the sinful woman sought an audience with Jesus? What are her motives? Again the text does not tell us the definite answer but certainly points us in the right direction. *'Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are (past tense) forgiven.'* (Luke 7:48) and *'Your faith has (past tense) saved you; go in peace.'* (Luke 7:50) suggesting this woman and Jesus have encountered each other previously.
- She approaches Jesus with gratitude in her heart. She is well aware of her sinful lifestyle and yet she has experienced that freedom which comes when our sins are forgiven. It would have cost her a great deal to go to Simon's house. Men and woman dined separately and some may have thought she was approaching Jesus for immoral purposes.
- The apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 3:23 *'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'*. None of us deserve God's love, we have not earned it, we are not worthy of it, except for this one reason: God has chosen to love us through Jesus Christ and freely offered us His great gift of grace to each and every one of us.
- When we approach Jesus do we do so like this sinful woman full of gratitude for all Jesus has done for us?

2.4 They INTERACT with Jesus with different ATTITUDES

- Jesus brilliantly captures both Simon and the sinful woman's different attitudes with another of his outstanding stories or parables: *'Two people owed money to a certain money-lender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?'* (Luke 7:41-2)
- *'Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.'* *'You have judged correctly,' Jesus said.'* (Luke 7:43) and in this answer Simon gives more away about himself.
- Simon and his fellow Pharisees considered themselves *'righteous'* or right with God. They believed that because they regularly attended the synagogue and fulfilled a myriad of dietary and religious rules that they were right with God. They did not regard themselves as sinners and even if they did they thought their religious acts were more important. How many of us think similarly today? How many of us think that because we come to church and take communion that we are right with God?
- Jesus' parable reminds us again that we are all sinners and that some of us are more sinful than others.
- Simon interacts with Jesus as though he is *'more right with God'* than him: *'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.'* (Luke 7:39)
- The sinful woman firstly interacts with Jesus with tears of joy having had her sins washed away. She provides the water for his feet that Simon had failed to do: *'she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.'* (Luke 7:44)
- She also let down her hair to wipe his feet. In those days no self-respecting Jewish woman would let down her hair in public, but she was so overcome with joyful