

The Gospel According to
Luke

***“The Half-hearted Hospitality
of the Hesitant Host”***

Chapter 7:36 – Chapter 8:3

Introduction

I want you to think about Leonardo DiVinci's famous painting of *The Last Supper*. With the image in your mind, and apologies to Leonardo, I want you to edit a few of its features:

1. First, pull-out the chairs that Jesus and His disciples are sitting on, and replace them with low couches or cushions.
2. Next, cut the table legs shorter, so that the table is the appropriate height for the new seating.
3. Now take the single rectangular table and make it into three tables that are in more of a u-shape.

Got the picture? Jesus and His disciples did not eat sitting on chairs, around a waist-high table. They ate reclining around a low table, leaning on their left elbows on low-lying couches or pillows, using their right hands to eat with.

Everyone ate that way... And that is the way Jesus ate while He was a guest at Simon's house.

There are a few other things you need to know about the customs in their culture. There were several common acts of hospitality by which the host would greet his invited guests:

1. Upon arrival, the host would place his hand on the guest's shoulder and give him a formal kiss of peace.
2. The guest's sandals would be removed and his feet washed when he entered, so that they would be clean as he reclined at the table.
3. Dinner guests were also anointed with a refreshing touch of olive oil.

Simon wanted to dine with Jesus, but he had performed none of these customary acts of hospitality. Was he just trying to insult Jesus?

I don't think so. You see, even though he omitted certain customs, he did eat with the Lord. If you ate with someone, it indicated a certain degree of intimacy and fellowship. As each person broke off a piece of bread from the loaf and dipped it in the common bowl, they were each being nourished by the same food. You would not invite someone to eat with you unless you were willing to be identified with them at some level.

Simon wanted to have fellowship with Jesus, but he was hesitant to go all-out. The sinful woman never hesitated for a moment as she showered her love upon the Lord.

Jesus explained what made the difference. The woman knew she had been forgiven much. Simon, by comparison, was judging the woman, overlooking God's forgiveness.

We want to be more like the sinful woman and not like Simon. We want to *maximize*, rather than *minimize*, God's forgiveness of our sin. When we do, we won't hesitate, and our love for Jesus will pour forth as ointment upon His feet.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Maximize God's Forgiveness And You Won't Hesitate To Show Your Love For The Lord, and #2 Minimize God's Forgiveness And You Will Hesitate To Show Your Love For The Lord.

#1 Maximize God's Forgiveness
 And You Won't Hesitate To Show Your Love For The Lord
 (7:36-39)

We don't know why Simon invited Jesus to dine with him, but he seemed sincere. He reminds me a little of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was interested in having fellowship with Jesus and in hearing what the Lord had to say. But he came somewhat secretly, at night, to talk with the Lord. He, too, was hesitant towards Jesus – not wanting to go all-out.

Jesus accepted the invitation. Simon's house became a stage upon which a spiritual drama was about to be performed.

Luke 7:36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat.

Luke 7:37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil,

The homes of well-to-do people (like Simon the Pharisee) were built around central courtyards in which formal meals were served. On such occasions the gates of the courtyard were kept open, and the uninvited townspeople were free to wander in to observe the conversation.

The **woman** was described as **a sinner**. It's been suggested that she was a prostitute or an adulterous. We're not told the nature of her sin – only its severity and the fact it was common knowledge in their small community.

Luke 7:38 and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil.

When she saw Jesus, her love for Him overcame her. Without hesitation, she crashed the party. Women just didn't do things like that; especially notoriously sinful women. They never, *ever*, let down their hair in public; they only did so in private, for their husbands.

It's possible she had been following the Lord and had witnessed Simon's horrible, half-hearted hospitality. It was more than she could take – that anyone would refuse to give Jesus the common courtesies of your household. She stepped forward and, for a time, just **stood at His feet behind Him weeping**. Perhaps she intended to wash His feet; but she had no basin filled with water, and no towel. She improvised. Her tears would suffice for water; her **hair** for the towel.

Now she was full-on into it. Jesus had not received the common kiss of peace, so she kissed His feet. The Lord had not been anointed

with olive oil – so she would break the neck of her flask and use the **fragrant oil** upon Him.

There would have been gasps from the guests and gawkers. Everyone was thinking something similar to what Simon was thinking:

Luke 7:39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, “This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.”

A **prophet** ought to have spiritual discernment. Simon thought Jesus had failed the discernment test; but the test was for Simon, not Jesus.

Everyone knew the woman was **a sinner**. Most importantly: ***She knew she was a sinner!*** Her own awareness of personal sin is what maximized God’s forgiveness in her heart.

We want to be more like this woman and not like Simon. It’s at least possible that we minimize, rather than maximize, God’s forgiveness of our sin. Maybe you don’t have a great testimony, like the ones you hear at evangelistic meetings. Or maybe you think that your sins are only conditions, or addictions, or in some other manner, not entirely your fault.

You and I need to maximize God’s forgiveness of our sin!

Whatever your testimony, you were miserable, poor, wretched, naked, and blind. All of your attempts to be good, or to do good, amounted to a pile of filth. Whatever sins you did not actually commit were made up for by the things you omitted doing. The sins you still commit are your fault – not your parents, or society’s. Yet God is faithful to forgive them, and to cleanse you from them.

Keep this in mind as we look more closely at Simon.

#2 Minimize God’s Forgiveness

And You Will Hesitate To Show Your Love For The Lord

(7:40-8:3)

Jesus knew about the sinful woman; *but He also knew about sinful Simon!* The woman may have committed sins well-known to others.

Simon's actions toward the Lord exposed sins of omission – secret sins, sins of the Spirit – that were, in some ways, worse.

It was a good time to tell a story!

Luke 7:40 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” So he said, “Teacher, say it.”

Luke 7:41 “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

Luke 7:42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?”

Luke 7:43 Simon answered and said, “I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.”

A **denarii** was about a day's wage. **Five hundred denarii** would be impossible to **repay**. **Fifty denarii** seemed more doable. In this case, however, it is key to realize that neither debtor had *anything* with which to repay. **Fifty denarii** might as well be **five hundred** if you have **nothing**!

Jesus said, “**You have rightly judged.**” In other words, a person who believes they have been forgiven **more** will love **more**.

Luke 7:44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head.

Luke 7:45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.

Luke 7:46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.

Luke 7:47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are many*, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little.”

We need to be clear on one thing: The forgiveness of her sins was the *cause* of her love; her love was the *consequence* of God's forgiveness. She was not forgiven because she loved, but just the opposite.

To put it in the context of Jesus' story: The woman had been forgiven **five hundred denarii** worth of sin. Simon didn't really think much of himself as a sinner; but, if he did, he'd probably be the **fifty denarii** sinner. Remember, though – **neither debtor had anything by**

which to repay! Thus, both were **forgiven much**, and both should show much **love** as a consequence.

It was because Simon thought little of his sin that he thought little of God's forgiveness. As a result, he hesitated to show love.

Luke 7:48 Then He said to her, "**Your sins are forgiven.**"

Her sins were forgiven the moment she believed. If you compare and harmonize all the Gospels, it seems that this dinner occurred right after Jesus' famous invitation in Matthew 11:28-30, **Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**

She'd been saved by grace through faith. Her sins had been forgiven. The fruit of it was love.

By the way, let me ask you something: How do you know your sins are forgiven? **You know because God says they are!** You have the assurance of God's Word. It's never a matter of feelings, but of the facts of the Word of God.

Luke 7:49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

He was and is God, Who alone can forgive sins. We can announce that God can forgive sins; but it is God who forgives them because of what Jesus has done.

Luke 7:50 Then He said to the woman, "**Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.**"

You are saved by **faith**, the moment you believe. Good works, motivated by love, follow *after* your salvation.

Go in peace is literally, **Go into peace**. The forgiveness of your sins gives you peace with God; and then you can experience the peace of God.

The first three verses of Chapter Eight belong with our story:

Luke 8:1 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve *were* with Him,

Luke 8:2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities - Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,

Luke 8:3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

A group of godly gals ministered to the physical needs of the traveling evangelists. Three are mentioned by name:

1. **Mary called Magdalene** had been possessed by **seven demons**. There is absolutely zero evidence in Scripture to indicate Mary was an immoral woman; and she was not Jesus' girlfriend, or His wife.
2. One of the women, **Joanna**, was the **wife** of **Herod's steward**. God has His believers in every strata of society.
3. Nothing is known of **Susanna**, or **many others**, except that they **provided for Jesus from their substance**.

In light of these verses, it's possible the sinful woman was coming to join the women who were ministering to Jesus out of their substance. It could be that she was bringing the very costly **alabaster flask of fragrant oil** as an offering – not to be *broken*, but to be *brokered* – to be sold for cash to help support Jesus and His followers. Instead, motivated by love, she literally poured-out her offering upon Jesus.

I would never suggest that you respond emotionally to an appeal for money or property; or that you give your substance without some discernment. But I would suggest that often our offerings are too calculated; that we don't give ourselves room for expressions of spontaneous love for the Lord.

There will be times when the Holy Spirit is prompting you to give yourself or your substance to the Lord:

1. If you minimize God's forgiveness, for any reason, you will hesitate to show or shower yourself or your substance upon the Lord.

2. If you maximize God's forgiveness, you will not hesitate. All that you are, and all that you have, will be poured-out upon Jesus.

Conclusion

The woman in our story let down her hair to wipe her tears and wash Jesus' feet. I mentioned that women only let down their hair for their husbands.

Do you see the symbolism? The New Testament portrays a relationship with Jesus Christ as a spiritual romance. He is the Bridegroom; His Church is the Bride.

God is romantic! The Bible is full of romantic manuscripts and metaphors. All of us need more romance in our walk with the Lord.

Maybe you're a five hundred denarii sinner... Or a fifty denarii sinner... Or, maybe you think you're only a five denarii sinner! It matters little, because you had and have **nothing** by which to repay the debt.

Jesus paid it for you; He paid it in full. He did it for love. We'll recapture romance and return to our first love for the Lord to the extent we understand how great is the forgiveness of our sins.