

Series: God & Our Culture #1520

Title: Luke 7.36-50

Jesus Comes to Dinner

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. In response to people within our culture who embrace the transgender ideology, that is there are more than two genders and gender is detached from one's sex, in response we are searching the Scripture to equip ourselves with passages from the Word of God that can help us refute this. We want to season our mind and heart and our language with the Bible. And to do this we have now come to Jesus Christ. I have four insights I want to point you towards. (I think it will be four, I might I have time to sneak in more.)

So far we have looked at the first one. Jesus' message to these sinners is to repent and believe the gospel. This is also our message. And we dug into the second insight last time. It's this: contrary to what is so often thought about Jesus, and said about Jesus, He did *not* equate receiving sinners with affirmation of their sin. Let me repeat that: Jesus did *not* equate receiving sinners with affirmation of their sin. I will show you what I mean in the Bible. I invite you to turn with me to Luke chapter 7, if you have your Bible nearby. Luke 7. We will have a lengthy reading today, verses 36-50. I will read from the New American Standard Bible (the NASB). Please give ear to God's Word in Luke chapter 7, verses 36-50.

"Now one of the Pharisees was requesting [Jesus] to dine with him, and [Jesus] 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 [Jesus] 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 [Jesus'] 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 [Jesus] 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 [Simon] 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 [Jesus] said to him, 'You have judged correctly.'

⁴⁴ Turning toward the woman, [Jesus] 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 [Jesus] said to her, 'Your sins have been forgiven.'⁴⁹ Those who were reclining *at the table* with [the Lord] began to say to themselves, 'Who is this *man* who even forgives sins?'⁵⁰ And [Jesus] said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'" (That was Luke 7, verses 36-50.)

This is a remarkable episode in the many remarkable episodes in the life of Christ. Ah, as usual so much can be said here, but let me try and draw out what is now pertinent for us. The Pharisee, Simon, requested for Jesus to dine with him at his house. The Lord attends. And, in typical style for that day, people reclined on low couches, leaning on their left arm with their heads pointed towards the table and their feet moving away from the table. The dirty and dusty footwear (sandals) were removed. That culture was similar to what we experience today in Asia where our footwear is not worn inside the house. I got used to that living in Hong Kong and now I am thoroughly disturbed that many Americans wear their shoes or sneakers inside. Do you know how many germs are on the soles of your shoes? Ugh!

Anyway, Jesus is reclining at the table and in comes a woman and she has access to Jesus' feet. This was not a private dinner. People could come and go and watch what was taking place. But it was surprising,

even shocking that a woman who was a sinner came into a Pharisee's home. Verse 37, this introduces a key character in the narrative, "And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner..." The word sinner there means an immoral woman, likely a prostitute. Her sins were sexual sins and Jesus tells us they were many.

Please capture how deep was the love this woman had for Jesus. Her attitude towards Him was one of love. She has with her an alabaster vial of perfume and she uses this to anoint Jesus. Leon Morris in his very readable commentary on Luke's Gospel shares this insight. I am quoting him now, "[This was a] globular container for perfumes. It had no handles and was furnished with a long neck which was broken off when the contents were needed. Despite the name the container was not always made of alabaster but [the ancient historian] Pliny says that containers made of [alabaster] were best.

We may fairly deduce that this perfume was costly. Jewish ladies commonly wore a perfume flask suspended from a cord around the neck, and it was so much a part of them that they were allowed to wear it on the sabbath (*Luke*, 166)." Close quote.

Verse 38 tells us how, as the emotions poured out of her heart, she anoints the Lord. She stands behind Jesus and weeps. In fact, Luke says she cried so many tears that her tears began to wet Jesus' feet. Then, she lowers her hair (which is significant because Jewish women did not unbind their hair in public), she lowers her hair and wipes Jesus' feet with her hair. And she kisses Christ's feet and anoints them with the perfume. Cleaning or washing the feet, this was a menial task for the lowest of slaves, and yet here she is humbly and lovingly doing all this for Jesus!

We do not know, but I think it is certainly possible that Jesus has had an unrecorded encounter with this woman before this meal; that He has already forgiven the woman her sin. At least she was among the people in the crowds who followed Jesus and heard Him teach and watched Him forgive sins and heal and everything He did for those with whom He showed great compassion and mercy. Clearly the life of Christ has had a great impact in her life. And Jesus both receives her and welcomes the way she treats Him.

But Simon the Pharisee felt differently about this woman. And under his breath, speaking to himself (he assumes) Simon says, "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." The implication of what he said was this: Jesus was *not* a prophet and that Jesus did not know what kind of dirty, rotten, lowdown sinner was touching Him. If He had known, surely the woman would be rejected. That is how negatively Pharisees felt about immoral women, prostitutes.

Applying what we have learned so far to the claim that Jesus received sinners *and* affirmed them in their sin, we can certainly say that yes, Jesus received sinners in the sense He welcomed them to come to Him. This woman was a sinner and she was well received. The Lord did not deny that she come right up to him, break open that jar of expensive perfume, and wipe it over Him. Just as Jesus does not deny sinners come to Him *today*. Oh friend, Jesus welcomes sinners. He wants us to come to Him. In Matthew 11 Jesus specifically invites us, "**Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.**" And by rest He means rest from our sins.

Now the Pharisee, the Jewish religious ruler, that was a different story. The Pharisees would not receive, would not welcome sinners. Certainly not an immoral woman! They rejected them. And, sad to say, we have many modern day Pharisees in our churches. They want to keep separate from sinners, and they elevate themselves above the sexually perverse and immoral. Lessening or ignoring their own sin, they claim others sin far worse than they do. This is, in itself, *sin*! It is hypocrisy and Jesus condemns the Pharisees (ancient *and* modern) for it.

But does Jesus *affirm* the sinner? He receives, but does He affirm? We will answer that next time. So, do not miss this, because it is *very, very* important to see the full picture, to get the full story, and the complete truth. Be here next time for God Is.

To see for yourself, to review, and to be prepared for what is coming, go and read Luke chapter 7, verses 36-50. That's Luke 7, verses 36-50. What do you observe? What is Jesus teaching you? Do this and join us as we continue to discover, together, who God Is.

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