

The Parables of Jesus #19
The Parable of the Two Debtors
(Lk. 7:36-50)
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INTRODUCTION

A. What do you think about people who are self-righteous?

1. I've never met anyone who described themselves by that term
2. They are people who think they are above common sinfulness
3. They believe they are good people without the same needs as others
4. They often display an attitude of disdain toward others

B. Tonight we meet a man who fits this description

1. He was a Pharisee named Simon
2. He was wealthy and had invited Jesus to dine at his home
3. He was part of an exchange with Jesus that still leaves us stunned today when we realize the impact of the Lord's teaching

C. Tonight we'll study the parable of the two debtors

1. Must look at the context
2. Lk 7:36-50 (read)

I. THE SUPPER AT SIMON'S HOUSE (Lk 7:36-39)

A. The meal setting

1. We do not know why Jesus is dining with Simon
 - a. he does not appear to be a follower of Jesus
 - b. he does not appear to be particularly respectful of Jesus (note absence of water for Jesus' feet)
 - c. perhaps he was just curious about Jesus
 - d. perhaps he loved contact with "celebrities"
2. The public sometimes had access to such occasions
 - a. houses of the rich often were built around a courtyard
 - b. the public would be allowed to stand there and listen to the discussions of important or popular guests
 - c. perhaps this is why the woman involved was there

B. The meal was interrupted by an unusual event

1. A woman becomes part of the day's events
 - a. she was from the city (of Galilee - maybe Nain or Capernaum)
 - b. she was a sinner (harmartalos -- most common word for sinner)
 - c. many think she was a prostitute
 - d. she was not the kind of person who was welcome at Simon's house

2. She drew attention by her actions
 - a. she brought an alabaster box of ointment (an extravagant luxury of the rich originally for a much different purpose)
 - b. she stood at his feet, crying, and washed Jesus' feet with her tears
 - c. she dried his feet with her hair (not appropriate for women to loose their hair in public)
 - d. she kissed his feet
 - e. she anointed them with the ointment

C. Simon had a predictable response to the woman's actions

1. He condemns both Jesus and the woman
2. The woman
 - a. because she was a sinner
 - b. her behavior was considered shameless because of the ostentatious display of inappropriate behavior and social custom
 - c. her behavior was considered shameful because of the fact that this publicly known sinner approached this holy man
3. Jesus
 - a. because he should have known better
 - b. what kind of prophet would have been ignorant of sinners?
 - c. how could a holy man allow a sinner to touch him like that?

II. THE PARABLE (Lk 7:40-43)

A. The parable is told specifically to Simon in response to his thinking about both Jesus and the woman

1. This is the key to understanding the story
2. The story describes the difference between Simon and the woman

B. The two debtors

1. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other owed 50
2. Neither man could pay the debt, so the one to whom the money was owed simply forgave the debts
3. This is the entire story, but think about the implications

C. The question of Jesus to Simon

1. Which of the two debtors loved the man who forgave the debt most?
 - a. the one who owed 500 denarii
 - b. the one who owed 50 denarii
2. Luke 7:43 -- Simon answered and said, ""I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, ""You have rightly judged." (NKJ)

D. Jesus then made the direct application of the story to Simon

1. Jesus compared how Simon and the woman had responded to him
 - a. Simon gave no water to wash his feet -- the woman washed his feet with her tears
 - b. Simon gave him no kiss of greeting -- the woman kissed his feet displaying great love and affection
 - c. Simon did not anoint his head with oil -- the woman anointed his head with expensive ointment
2. Jesus made another comparison much less obvious
 - a. this woman had many sins, which seems to be her motive for loving the Lord (seeking his understanding and forgiveness)
 - b. Simon did not have such a great number of sins (Jesus could acknowledge his good life, but also knew his sins)
 - c. Jesus knew the one who was forgiven the most would love the most
 - d. The problem here is not that Simon is such a good man, but that he does not recognize the problem created by his sins

E. To the woman

1. Jesus forgave her sins
2. The basis of that forgiveness was her faith
 - a. note the principle of belief and action in the woman
 - b. her trust was displayed in her tears and anointing of Jesus feet
3. The crowd -- Who is this that forgives sins also?
 - a. vital -- who is Jesus? God in the flesh
 - b. how much greater is the point made regarding forgiveness of sin

III. LESSONS TO LEARN

A. Simon teaches us a lot about people who are self-righteous

1. He thought his religion was acceptable
 - a. he was a Jew, God's chosen people
 - b. he was a Pharisee -- the cream of the crop
 - c. how much better can you get?
2. He thought his behavior was acceptable
 - a. get into a comparison game with sinners and he came out looking pretty good
 - b. he may have actually had fewer sins than others, but it is not the number of sins that count
3. He thought his distance from sinners was acceptable
 - a. he prided himself on not associating with sinners
 - b. the "touch" of the sinful woman was repulsive

4. None of these cause us to be acceptable to God
 - a. not that religion is bad, but religion without relationship is empty
 - b. not that good behavior is undesired, but behavior without an acknowledgement of failure is unrealistic and dangerous
 - c. not that staying away from sin is bad, but if we feel that way about others, how must God feel about us
 - d. the fact is, this whole picture is wrong

B. The woman teaches us a lot about faith

1. Her tears reveal her sorrow because of her sins
2. Her washing and drying Jesus feet with her tears and hair show and tremendous humility and submission
3. Her anointing of his feet evidences an attitude of worship as she sacrifices the costly ointment in an act of adoration
4. Her faith is shown in some important elements
 - a. her honest admission of a need for forgiveness
 - b. her willingness to seek the Lord
 - c. her silent trust in his goodness
 - d. the total lack of pride

C. The story illustrates the purpose of God through Jesus Christ

1. Isa 44:22 -- I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you. (NKJ)
2. Isa 55:6-7 -- Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (NKJ)
3. John 3:16-17 -- For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (NKJ)
4. 1 Tim 1:15 -- This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. (NKJ)

D. The story illustrates how we may mistreat the very ones that Jesus came to die for

1. What's your attitude toward sinners
 - a. are you better than they are?
 - b. if so, they may love the Lord more than you do
2. How do you treat them
 - a. do you condemn them and avoid them
 - b. if so, you may not be aware of your own need of forgiveness

3. Who do you have more in common with -- Simon or the woman?
 - a. look closely at which one is closer to Jesus
 - b. It is not an easy lesson to learn

CONCLUSION

A. Matt 5:4 -- Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

1. This woman who expressed her mourning so publicly is a wonderful example to us
2. How great her comfort at Jesus' words -- "your sins are forgiven"

B. How do you think about your debt of sin?

1. If you can't pay it, does it really matter how big it is?
2. The point is we all have much to be thankful for -- to love God for

C. If you were at that dinner tonight, where, at the table would you be?

1. In Simon's place -- proud, self-righteous, condescending
2. In the woman's place -- sorrowing, tearful, in great need
3. I think you understand the difference between the two

D. Invitation