



Loving Much Because You Are Forgiven Much

Series: *The Wonder of Worship*

Luke 7:36-50

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Last week we watched as Jesus pursued, redeemed, and made a worshipper of an immoral Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar. What followed was one of the most insightful conversations on the nature of true worship found anywhere in the Bible. John 4:21-24 reads: ***“Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.””*** (John 4:21–24, ESV) he made three very important statements. The day was here when true worship, Jesus said, would not be centered in the temple in Jerusalem or anywhere else for that matter, but on Him. No man comes to the Father but by the Son. If you want to know and worship the True God, there is only One Way and that One Way is Jesus. Worship must be centered in Him. The second thing that Jesus said was that true worship comes from those whom the Father has sought with His redeeming grace, those whom God has pursued to transform them from rebels to worshippers. And then last, He told us that true worshippers must worship God in spirit and in truth. And today, we are going to look at a scene in the Word of God that illustrates these truths beautifully. Read Luke 7:36-50.

Wow. What a picture from the Bible of extravagant love and heartfelt worship to Jesus Christ. This scene is breathtaking in its beauty, its authenticity, and its honesty. Let me set the scene for you. This story takes place at a formal dinner party in ancient Israel. That is important to know because in those days, formal dinner parties often took place in an open courtyard that was connected to the house. These dinners were in reality public events in which the neighbors felt free to stand around the sides of the courtyard to observe the dinner party as it took place. There would be the table that at which the guests who had actually been invited and who would be fed would recline and then there was room for

interested observers to watch and to listen to the conversation and discussion that was taking place. That may seem odd to us, but in the days before TV, it was a form of entertainment, and many times a forum for theological instruction as guests often engaged in religious discussion. So these dinners were public events and that helps us to understand how this unnamed woman in our story is able to have such access to Jesus.

There were also certain formalities and protocols that were to be followed at these dinners. It was expected for the host to greet his invited guests with three things: 1) a kiss of welcome, 2) water for their feet, and 3) oil to anoint their head. The kiss was a mark of affection – in fact, it was customary for everyone at one of these parties to kiss the hand of a visiting rabbi as a sign of honor. The water allowed the guests to wash the dust from their feet before they reclined at the table, and the oil, usually some kind of fragrant oil was rubbed on the forehead of the guest as a kind of sweet-smelling perfume. They were common courtesies and to omit them would send a message to the person that you had invited to dinner and also to the people who were gathered to watch the festivities. That very thing happened here. Simon ignored the proper customs with Jesus. Jesus was an invited guest, but not an honored one, at least not by Simon. Simon had invited Jesus to dinner to examine Him, to evaluate Him, perhaps even to expose Jesus in some way. The Pharisees, as a whole were already convinced that Jesus was a blasphemer. Whether Simon held to the majority opinion is unclear, but what is clear is that he had no particular reverence and certainly no love for Christ. But despite his best efforts to avoid it, his home would become:

The Scene of Unrestrained Love and Worship (36-38) Pick it up in verse 36: ***One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment... (Luke 7:36-37)*** Jesus is reclining around the table, lying on His side, propped up on his left elbow with His feet facing away from the table as was the custom, with all of the other dinner guests of Simon, when a woman of the city, one who was a sinner, all of a sudden shows up in their midst. Luke is delicate in referring to her as a “sinner.” That is tactful way of saying that she was a prostitute. The word that is used to describe her, “hamartolos,” meaning sinner, is a word that can be applied to everyone who has ever lived, but in particular it was used by the Pharisees as a term of derision and contempt for men who were tax collectors or women who were sold their bodies for money. This woman had a reputation, a reputation as a great sinner.

But, having learned that Jesus was at Simon's house, she took a flask of ointment, a flask of perfume, and she came to Simon's house specifically to see Jesus. I am not sure that there is any way for us to fully appreciate the commotion this caused or the moral offense that she was to Simon and all of the other self-respecting people who were gathered around the table or around the courtyard to watch the meal. As soon as this woman would have been noticed in the courtyard, the heads would have turned; the tongues would have started to wag. Without question there were harsh words, gawking and stares of disapproval, disdain and disgust. As the murmuring continues and as the meal is being served, this "sinner" walks up behind Jesus and stands at his feet. What follows is one of the purest expressions of love for Christ and of worship in spirit driven by truth that is found anywhere in the Bible. Watch this.

And standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. (Luke 7:38) Simon looks on, stunned along with everyone else, as this woman does something completely unrehearsed, something that rises spontaneously from the depths of her heart, something so overwhelmingly raw and real and genuine and tender and affectionate and loving to Christ, ***and*** at the same time, something shocking and scandalous to everyone who is watching. Apparently, intending to honor Him by simply anointing Jesus' feet with expensive perfume, instead, as she stands at His feet, she looks upon Christ and her heart is so moved that she begins to cry uncontrollably.

Why does she begin to cry like this? We can only surmise from what we read later and from our own experience with Christ, if we are believers, that her tears are flowing forth from a complexity of emotions that are stirring in her soul. As she stood there, looking at Jesus with adoring eyes, she was overcome with emotion. She, no doubt thought about her past, what she had been, how she had been enslaved by sin, how she had used her body for wickedness – they are tears of contrition, ***but*** they are also tears of gratitude and love. This One upon whom she was gazing had showed her grace, forgiveness, mercy, and love like she had never known before. These were tears of joy and relief and gratitude. She was overwhelmed by Jesus, but also by the dirt on His feet, feet that should have been washed. She could not bear the dishonor being shown to Him whom she loved. There she was at the feet of the one who is "the friend of sinners" and her heart was laid bare. She is overcome

with emotion and begins to cry and the word here is the idea of sobbing, of open and vocal crying.

As these great teardrops well up and flow from her eyes, they splash on Jesus' feet – literally the word there for wet is a word that is used to describe a shower, rivers of tears washing away the dirt and the dust on Christ's feet. Seeing this and being overwhelmed with love, seeing how her tears had made the feet of her Savior wet, without thinking, she lets down her hair to dry his feet. For a woman to let her hair down in public was considered a grave act of immodesty. That was exclusively reserved for the bedroom and was never to be done in public but she had lost sight of everyone in the courtyard and around the courtyard but Jesus. She just did it. What she had once done in the service of sin, she now does out of pure love and affection for her Savior. Then she begins to smother his feet with kisses, that is the idea of the verb that is used here, she kisses his feet profusely, over and over again, oblivious to anyone or anything else but Jesus.

Finally she anoints His feet with the oil. She takes her alabaster flask of ointment and opens it and pours it out upon Jesus. Something she had once used to seduce, she now uses to worship her Savior. She is generous, impulsive, demonstrative, passionate, adoring, uninhibited, unreserved, and extravagant in her expression of love to Jesus and she doesn't care who sees. Listen, she didn't plan all of this in advance. She had come to anoint Jesus' feet, but as she wept and the tears began to flow, all the rest just happens. What an amazing expression of love. What a picture of pure, unrehearsed and un-coaxed worship. She didn't need outward inducement to love Jesus like that. She didn't need certain lighting, a certain worship set by a band; she didn't need to have the right mood set by external influences – this was about as far from an ideal worship service as you could imagine, with all of these Pharisees looking on. She just needed Jesus.

Do you see it beloved? This expression of love, this outpouring of love – it was real. She was real in her love for Christ. She was unconcerned with appearances or what other people might say about the extravagance of her devotion. This woman, the “sinner” who worshipped at Jesus' feet was preoccupied with Him and Him alone. The fact that there were those present that disdained her and held her in contempt, the fact that there were those there who disbelieved, who privately mocked Christ, and Simon, who openly dishonored Him, did not matter to her. She only cared about blessing Jesus and expressing her love to Him. The fact that she was in a room full of hypocrites starting with Simon the

Pharisee did not prevent her from expressing her love to Christ. It is beautiful and compelling.

This was no dry, dead, dutiful sort of “thank you.” She wept, she caressed his feet, she kissed them profusely, she anointed them with her best gift. This is no half-hearted overture; she holds nothing back as she expresses her feelings for the Lord. She was not tentative in her approach, but whole-hearted. She was not doing this to draw attention to herself. That is not her motive. Jesus would have rejected her had that been the case. Instead, she expressed her love in the best way that she could to the Lover of her soul, and she did it with abandon. She expressed her love for Jesus from the depth of her soul – that is the soul of worship.

The room was filled with the smell of the fragrant oil—and with the sense of shock over all that was happening. This was scandalous—the way this sinful woman was touching Jesus! Her actions toward Him were so intimate and personal; and they were making everyone else in at the table, who did not see Jesus for who He is, the truth about Jesus, feel very uncomfortable. If we are honest, for most of us, if we were in that courtyard as she was crying and washing and drying with her hair and kissing and anointing Jesus’ feet – we would have thought to ourselves how undignified, how inappropriate her spontaneous, uninhibited expression of love to be and yet, in truth, it was the only appropriate response to Christ in the whole place.

Where does that kind of love come from? What is the source of that overwhelming love? We are about to find out. Simon of course was clueless. He observes this entire scene happening and Luke describes

The Coldness of the Self-Righteous (39-46) Verse 39: *Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."* (Luke 7:39) In Simon’s mind what is taking place is all very simple. Jesus cannot be a prophet because he has no idea about the kind of woman this is, for if He did, He would have recoiled from her and asked for her removal from His presence. Jesus should have been offended, in Simon’s mind, because Simon would have been offended. Simon would never let a woman like that touch him and especially to touch Him like that, in such an intimate and affectionate sort of

way. To Simon, she was disgusting, revolting, and vulgar and yet Jesus was allowing her to do this. He didn't pull His feet away from her. He didn't attempt to restrain her at all. He doesn't stop her kisses or push her away or try to tone down her expression of love. No, Jesus receives it all and does so willingly. He does not recoil from her at all. Instead Jesus receives her worship readily and gladly. Simon cannot understand it and he is offended. Simon has no room for grace in his theology. Being more than a prophet and knowing Simon's heart better than Simon knows it himself, Jesus answers Simon's thoughts – don't miss that – He answers his **thoughts**, telling him a story.

And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." (Luke 7:40-43) Simon, revealing the hypocrisy of his heart, calls Jesus teacher and Jesus begins to tell him an exceedingly simple story, one that would have seemed almost too easy, too simple for Simon, who as a Pharisee would have been accustomed to far more intricate and complex teaching. This is a parable, which quite honestly, would have been beneath someone like Simon. It is obvious that the one who has been forgiven the greater amount will be most grateful, most loving to the one who has forgiven him. It's obvious he is a little put out by this story in the way that he answers, **"The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt."** It is a simple, easy to understand parable because Jesus wants to make sure that Simon gets the point. Turning His back to Simon, Jesus explains

The Perspective of the Savior (44-47) Starting in verse 44, **Then turning toward the woman he 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. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. (Luke 7:44-46)** Jesus asks Simon, "Do you see this woman?" It's almost humorous if it wasn't so serious. Did he see her? She was the only thing – and that's how he regarded her, as a thing – that he had been staring at since she came into the room. The truth is that he saw her outward appearance but had no clue about her heart. In truth, he did not see her at all. He saw her as one defined by her past sins, as one, in his own mind, irrevocably lost and forever marked and marred by her obvious and open transgressions, but Simon was blind. In his own little word of outward appearances and carefully crafted religiosity, of hierarchical sins and merit-based worth, he

was a stranger to the power of grace to change a human heart and soul. He saw her as she once was but Jesus sees her as she is – a new woman, a worshipper redeemed by the grace of God.

Simon is blind to her and he is blind to his own sin, blind to his own need for forgiveness – blind to his pride, to his hypocrisy, to his nauseating self-righteousness. But Jesus reveals the hardness of Simon's unredeemed heart by comparing he and this woman to one another. Simon did not show Jesus even the minimum courtesy of washing His feet. This woman not only washed His feet, she did it with her tears and her hair. Simon did not bestow a kiss on Jesus' face; the woman did not cease to kiss the feet of Jesus, which, at first, were dirty feet. Simon did not anoint the head of Jesus with oil; the woman anointed His feet with expensive perfume. The woman far, far, far outdid Simon in showing love to the Lord. Instinctively and self-forgetfully, she outdid what Simon had deliberately refused to do. This unnamed woman in Simon's mind was the greatest of sinners, but she was in reality a great lover of Christ and Jesus makes clear the reason why. He says to Simon...

Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven--for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." (Luke 7:47) Here is the source of the love poured out by this woman on Jesus. Here is the source for such a lavish display of affection and gratitude. Essentially, what Jesus is saying here is: "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven, and the evidence of this is that she loves much..." This is so important to understand. You may not be able to see it clearly in the English, but the grammar and the tense used here by Jesus means that this woman had been forgiven by Him sometime in the past and would continue to remain forgiven. The love that she poured on Christ was the outflow of her being forgiven of her sins. At some other time, that Luke does not record for us, this woman who had been sexually impure, whose life had become synonymous with sin, whose sins were many, had come to Jesus. She had heard him preach the gospel of the Kingdom and had she believed in Him as the Messiah, as the Savior, as the Redeemer of lost sinners. She had heard the gospel and repented of her sins and placed her faith in Christ and she had been forgiven. The crushing load of her debt before God, her guilt, had been lifted, the bondage of her sin removed, her shame, before the Lord, taken away. She who was once known as a sinner had been forgiven, made pure and whole, and she had come into this courtyard to this dinner determined to pour out her love and worship to the One who had forgiven her. Jesus is saying in effect, "Simon, you cannot understand what just took place and the reason you cannot understand that kind of love is because you do not know who I am, you do not believe that you need to be forgiven and so you ***are not forgiven*** and

that is why you do not love me like she does.” She loves Me much because I have forgiven her much.

The one who is forgiven much, loves much. Don’t miss this. She worshipped and loved Jesus and magnified Him like that, because she knew the depth of her forgiveness, she knew the depth of the freedom and new life Christ had given to her. She didn’t need to be begged or cajoled or coaxed to love Jesus and worship Jesus because she knew all that she had been delivered from. She was no longer what she once had been, a woman weighed down with the burden of sin. By His grace, she was not what she once was and would be apart from His saving love. The heavy debt that was hers had been forgiven, her life had been renewed and the proof of that forgiveness was demonstrated in her act of loving worship toward the Lord. Mark this down. You will have love and gratitude; you will find joy in worshipping and loving Jesus Christ in exact proportion with your sense of your own forgiveness, the sense of your own need. When you are aware that you have been greatly forgiven, you will greatly love Christ. But when you forget or if you think you have only been forgiven a very little, if you begin to think that you can relate to God on the basis of your merit, your love for Christ will wane, your worship will falter or you will not love him at all.

Don’t overanalyze this parable, beloved. Jesus is not saying that there are various levels of love that people have for him based upon the amount of sin that they have committed and have had forgiven and that those various levels of love are appropriate and acceptable with Him. That is not it. If we are saved, we all are the prostitute in this story. It may seem like some of us are bigger sinners than others. The outward sins of sexual immorality, drunkenness, debauchery, corruption – those are sins that command a lot of attention. Maybe your sins are not as outward, maybe not as obvious to the human eye, maybe more easily hidden. Maybe its envy, covetousness, idolatry, pride, deceit, hatred – sins easily disguised. It doesn’t matter. We are, all of us, the respectable and the repulsive – we are all equally sinners before God, all desperately in need of forgiveness, all desperately in need of Christ’s deliverance. That is the simple truth. It is a dangerous thing when like Simon we start thinking that the sin of someone else is far greater than our own, when we view the unforgiven homosexual, the sexually immoral, the drunkard, corrupt and debase as far worse than ourselves, as more needful of forgiveness than we are. They aren’t. We need forgiveness as much as they do. We need to see that.

Spurgeon said, **“He who has stood before his God, convicted and condemned, with the rope around his neck, is the man to weep for joy when he is pardoned, to hate the evil which has been forgiven him, and to live to the honor of the Redeemer by whose blood he has been cleansed.”** That is the heart of this woman. He deserves passionate love from all of us. Beloved, do you see it? If we have been saved, if we have been forgiven, if we have been delivered from the grip of sin and hell and death, we ought to desperately love Christ. If we find our love to Christ fading, if this lavish expression of love by this woman seems to be extravagant and inappropriate, if this kind of love and adoration is foreign to us or fading in us, if we find our worship growing cold, we simply don’t love Christ as she did and the reason is because we have forgotten what we were and what we would have been if Christ had not found us. We have forgotten the greatness of Christ’s forgiveness. When our sinfulness seems small, our love will be too. This is no small thing. This is serious.

For the woman, this forgiven sinner, love and worship were personal. They have to be. I know this. I had nothing to offer Christ, nothing to give Him, nothing and yet he saved me, he forgave my wickedness, He freed me from the shackles of my Sin, He redeemed me from my pitiful life, cleansed me from my sinfulness, graced me, blessed me, matures me in the midst of my failures, disciplines me when I go astray, delivers me from evil, renews a right Spirit in me. He has forgiven me... all out of His grace. That is why I love Him and it is why I want to love Him more deeply. The more I see this, the more I see Him with eyes of faith, the more I want to love and worship Jesus in a deeper, more overwhelming, and more personal way. As I continue to understand more deeply, by faith, how much He has loved me and continues to love me, how much He has forgiven me and continues to forgive me, I feel my heart drawn to love Him and worship Him even that much more. But when I forget my need, when I fail to consider my sinfulness, when I fail to feel the truth of Christ’s love for me as deeply as I should, it is because I have forgotten who I was, who I am, and who I still would be apart from Christ. This woman loved much because she was forgiven much. And it is then that this dear woman hears

The Affirmation and Declaration of the Adored Christ (48-50) Jesus speaks to the woman for the first time. Luke tells us: **“And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.””** (Luke 7:48–50) Jesus looks at this woman, who loves Him so deeply, and he affirms her love and tells her, **“Your sins are forgiven.”** Again the tense means, “Your sins have been forgiven and they continue to be forgiven.” Jesus was not at that moment imparting forgiveness to her for

the first time; He was affirming her "forgiven" condition. This is clear because throughout the story, Jesus consistently regarded the woman as a forgiven person. Her acts of love sprang from her sense of gratitude for having received forgiveness. He says this for a couple of reasons. First, Christ says this to affirm her publically, before all of the tongue waggles – that's part of it. Just as she could not bear to see Jesus dishonored as He was, He cannot bear to see her – His bride whom He had forgiven and for whom He would die to wash her with His blood – treated with such contempt for an act of pure and honest worship and so He makes an authoritative declaration in front of them all. It is a gracious act to her and to the tongue waggles. In fact, Sam and I were talking about this passage when we were riding back from Jake's first baseball game in Martinsville on Monday, and he brought up something I had not thought about. He said that when he thought about this passage, he was amazed at Jesus' restraint, how great a temptation it would have been to strike Simon and the others down because of their contemptible response to the love and worship of the redeemed. I can certainly see that. Instead, He is gracious to her but also to Simon and the rest.

But not only to vindicate her, Jesus also says this to fill her soul with confidence, assurance and joy. He says this to remind her, that though her sin was great, her Savior is greater. It is to guard her heart from despair when she may sin again and to instead increase her delight in Him – the forgiving One. "You remain forgiven." Jesus knew the extent of her sin. He also knew that sometimes, just like us, she would struggle with believing that Christ could really forgive her. We have all been there. You are saved and then you sin, sometimes exceedingly grievously, and you are certain that there can be no more forgiveness for you, that you have somehow sinned beyond the reach of God's grace. But you cannot. If you are truly forgiven, you are forgiven truly. That is why the Spirit of God had John write the words of 1 John 1:7-9, ***"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*** (1 John 1:7–9, ESV)

Those that are gathered around, watching this scene, are amazed and confused and remain confounded by Christ. ***"Who is this, who even forgives sins?"*** They don't know, but she does. He is the Christ. While this woman, who has been saved by faith in Jesus, and who loves Him deeply having been forgiven all her sin, goes in peace, satisfied in Christ her Lord. ***"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*** The crowd is at a loss to explain what just happened. It is because they are blind. Notice something, when Jesus sends her away, He doesn't say,

“Don’t sell your body.” He doesn’t have to. He has her heart. If Christ has our hearts, He will have everything else. If our hearts belong to Him, so will our hands, mouth, feet, eyes, ears, emotions and will. If Christ has our love he has our all. She loved much because she was forgiven much. Beloved, the application this morning is very simple. Here is the abiding and unavoidable truth from this story: Your love for the Lord is directly related to your understanding of how greatly you have been forgiven by Jesus Christ. The question we must ask ourselves in light of this text is:

How Are My Heart and Worship Before Christ?

How is your love to Christ? Do you love Him the way that we have heard it described this morning? What does your faith, your praise, your delight in Him, your personal sacrifice, your obedience to His commands, your devotion to His worship, your faithfulness in giving, your faithfulness to His church, your love for lost sinners and your speaking to them of the salvation that can be found only in Christ – what does it say about your love? Are you deeply and passionately in love with Him? Do you show it? Are you a worshipper who loves Christ and is unafraid to show it? How is your love to Christ this morning?

Beloved, I know that I do not love Christ as much as I want to. I know my love for Him needs to deepen and grow and I believe we all want that. I hate the fickleness of my heart, the way that my love can wax and wane so easily, the way in which I am prone to wander and leave the God I love, the way that when I want to protect my reputation, want to be thought highly of, and cause myself to forget my need – how that all short circuits real worship and real love in my heart. I have to agree with Charles Spurgeon when he writes: **“If you and I felt more deeply the guilt of our past lives, we would love Jesus Christ better. If we have but a clearer sense that our sins deserve the deepest Hell, that Christ suffered what we ought to have suffered in order to redeem us from our iniquities, we should not be such cold-hearted creatures as we are. We are perfectly monstrous in our lack of love to Christ, but the true secret of it is a forgetfulness of our ruined, and lost natural estate, and a forgetfulness of the sufferings by which we have been redeemed from that condition. O, that our love might feed itself this day, and find a renewal of its strength in remembering what Sovereign Grace has done.”**

So in light of this text this morning, how do we shepherd our hearts to love Christ more deeply? I believe that this woman offers to us a pattern worth repeating. Look at yourself and then gaze upon your Savior. Look at what you were, at what your sinful flesh still desires to be, at how you still stumble and fall sometimes. You have not kept God's law. You have given yourself to idols. You have not loved God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. You have not loved your neighbor as yourself. You have lied. You have stolen. You have murdered and lusted in your heart. You have gossiped. You have torn down the reputation of another. You have coveted. You have been proud. You have been unrighteously angry. You would have been far worse had it not been for the restraining grace of God. When we examine ourselves in the mirror of God's Word... this is what we know we are by nature – sinful men and sinful women. By nature, this is who we are. And what do we deserve? Hell, wrath, death.

Look at yourself but then gaze upon Jesus, gaze upon your Savior. Take a good long look at your beautiful Savior, Jesus Christ. He came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to seek you! He is the only Savior, the One who set His love upon you in eternity past and who gave His blood to deliver you from the penalty that your sins deserved. It was His love despite your sin that caused Jesus to humble Himself and lay aside His rights as God, shroud His glory in flesh and make Himself of no reputation. It was His love despite your sin that made Him suffer the opposition and hatred of sinners against Himself. It was His love despite your sin that drove Christ to sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane, love despite your sin that drove him offered His back to be flayed in scourging, love despite your sin that offered His brow for the crown of thorns to be driven deep, love despite your sin that took the nails deep into His wrists and feet, love despite your sin that endured His Father's face to be turned from Him and which drove Him to suffer the wrath of the Father and the agony that your sin deserved in your place. Gaze in awe at Jesus dying on the cross, His body broken, His blood shed for you--the sinless one in the sinners' stead--to pay off the debt you could never pay. You are forgiven because of Christ. Alive from the dead, your Savior can tell you, "Your sins are forgiven." Just as he forgave that sinful woman when she trusted in Him, so He has forgiven you.

It is the realization of our great sinfulness and the greater love and grace of God in Christ that fuels our love for Him to a white-hot flame. Look at yourself and you're your eyes to look at Him and you will love Him, you will worship.

How can we show more love to Christ – not by wiping His feet with our hair, kissing them profusely and anointing them with oil, but there are other ways. We can do it by singing His praise with passion, by engaging His Word with gladness, by worshipping Him with unrestrained love and affection, by abiding in Him and speaking words of affection and gratitude to Him in prayer, by confessing and repenting of our sins, by living lives of obedience and faithfulness, by reaching out to other sinners that need His grace – people no one else would touch, by pouring our lives out for our brothers and sisters whom He has loved – all of these things together – that’s what love looks like. Forgiven much, love much.

If you are like the prostitute, before she was forgiven, keenly aware of your own sin and desiring a new life and forgiveness of your past, then I have good news for you. It doesn’t matter who you are or what you have done. It doesn’t matter how “bad” or “unpopular” your sin may be. It doesn’t matter how far down in the pit you find yourself at this moment. If you will come to Christ, he will not turn you away. He was and is the “friend of sinners.”

And if you are like Simon, there is good news for you as well. But you first must understand that your religion and your self-righteousness will not save you. If and when you are ready to humble yourself, you will discover that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. Even self-righteous people can be saved if they will come to Christ by faith.

Beloved, how is your love to Christ? If you know you have been forgiven much, you will love much.

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