

Jesus, the Friend of Sinners

In scripture, there are many names Jesus is called.

He is called:

- The lamb of God (John 1:29)
- The Prince of Peace
- The Messiah
- The Prophet
- The Son of Man
- The Son of God
- Savior
- Mighty God
- The Good Shepherd
- The salvation from God

But one of the names that is mentioned that sheds incredible light on who Jesus is and the heart He has for fallen humanity is the title, “A friend of sinners!”

- There is unfathomable hope in that name!
- There is incalculable glory in that name!
- There is unparalleled peace in that name!

“A friend of sinners!”

It is because Jesus is a friend of sinners that we can be friends with God.

Now, of course, to the tough and stringent theological type might fuss and say, “God? A friend of sinners? No, God is master and we are slaves! God is shepherd and we are sheep!”

Yes, those things are equally true!

But what you must not fail to realize is that Christ has befriended us and has welcomed us into a close and intimate relationship where we truly know Him!

Here what the Lord says to His disciples, John 15:12-15

¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you.¹⁵ No longer do I call you slaves, for the slaves does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Jesus, in a way that shocks the mind and inspires awe, came as a “friend of sinners!”

It is this tender hearted Savior, who came as a friend of sinners, that I want to put before you this morning!

(So, if you have your copy of God’s Word, turn with me to Luke 7:36, we are going to read through v. 50.) READ.

Now before we get to our text, I must inform you of the context of Chapter 7, because it is in the context where we get this most often neglected name of Jesus, “friend of sinners.”

In Chapter 7 John the Baptist had messengers sent to Jesus to ask whether or not He is the Christ.

In v. 22 Jesus responds in the affirmative by pointing to the fact that extraordinary things are happening that gives proof to His Messiahship!

Then after this Jesus tells the folks that John the Baptist was indeed a prophet sent by God.

After saying this, in v. 31 Jesus talks about how people received John and Himself.

The people of Jesus’ time would not be satisfied with the people God sent to

minister to them.

Jesus says, John the Baptist came, he didn't eat bread or drink wine, you said, "He has a demon!"

Jesus came eating and drinking, they called Him, "a glutton and a drunkard [now listen to this], a friend of tax collectors and sinners."

So, in their description of Jesus, they saw Him as a "friend of sinners!"

This description was supposed to be a slanderous charge, but this description of our Lord Jesus is the hope of our salvation!

Because Jesus is a friend of sinners, we who were once strangers and enemies of God, we can be lovingly welcomed in and embraced as friends!!

And why was Jesus accused of being a friend of sinners, because He had no problem with interacting and being with and among them!

Jesus was not ashamed to associate Himself with the needy, broken and the most destitute of sinners!

In reality, Jesus had no choice but to be friends of sinners!

He certainly couldn't not have come down and be "friends of the righteous" for known are righteous, no not one!

He came and was a friend of sinners!

(I know this isn't the central point of the text, but the Lord demonstrates to us that we need to be careful of unintentionally adopting an unbiblical stance of **not** associating with sinners!

In other words, Jesus' example stands as rebuke to us who would have this attitude of, "Oh no, I can not associate with sinners!"

Of course, do not do what sinners do, but please be careful not to adopt an attitude that is contrary to the attitude and actions of Christ!

He came down and ministered to the sinner!

He came down and associated with sinners!

Yes, we must use wisdom on how to do it, but be very careful of adopting the attitude of the Pharisees where you have a negative, and almost out right rejection of having any association with sinners! Be careful!)

But what we see in the life of Jesus is Him being a friend of sinners!

And it is here that Luke gives us a story that reinforces the idea of Jesus being a friend of sinners.

In v. 36, we find that Jesus has been invited to have a meal with a certain Pharisee.

We know from the unfolding of the story that this Pharisee is named Simon (we see this in v. 40.) and in addition to that, we come to find out that there are other people at this banquet or dinner, because they respond to something that said (v. 49).

So, what we have, in terms of the setting, is a meal.

Now, what makes this situation an interesting one is the fact that Jesus was given an invitation to have a meal by a Pharisee.

Pharisees were the religious elite of their day, many of whom declared themselves to be right with God.

But in reality, they were wicked and corrupt men, who unintentionally made themselves enemies of God because they made themselves enemies of Jesus!

They were the worst kind of sinner! They thought they were right with God but they were not!

They thought that they were citizens of the kingdom of God but they were not!

They were enemies of God and they taught a false message of the Kingdom, which was very oppressive people.

And if we would have read the gospel of Luke up to this point we would have read of hatred for Jesus.

So, for this Pharisee to invite Jesus to a meal is a controversial thing.

Because to have table fellowship was an expression of closeness!

It was the expression of giving someone a warm reception; you are welcoming them with a sense of affection and welcome!

And Jesus, with no hesitation, accepts this invitation to dine with a Pharisee.

Now, all things being considered, (v. 36), the meal is going well, everyone is enjoying their meal until then a woman walks in!

A woman appears...(v. 37)

Notice how she is described:

1. She a woman of the city
2. She is a known sinner

So great is the reputation of this woman because of her sin, that Simon says in v. 39 (read)

What is her sin? We do not know.

But what we do know is that if there was anything this woman was known for it was her sin!

But this woman makes her way to Jesus!

Please note: She was not invited!

Many had been invited to this meal but she was not one of them!

She came simply because she heard that Jesus was there! (v. 37 says that she, “learned” that Jesus was there.”)

She received word that Jesus was there and invited herself to the meal!

She was not there for the Pharisee.

She was not there for the friends of the Pharisee!

She was there for Jesus!

So, when she learned that Jesus was there, she made up her mind to interrupt the meal to show her desire to bless and love Jesus!

Point of application:

This woman knew where to go with her brokenness!

She knew where to go with her sin!

What we see in this woman is the exact opposite of what we see in Eve!

Eve ran from God with her sin, this woman ran to God with her!

What this tells us is that it is never inappropriate to take your sin to Jesus!

He is always the appropriate person to take our sin to, as we shall see why in a moment!

v. 37 tells us several things of importance to note about this woman's intrusion to the meal:

1. Firstly, we note that this woman did not come empty handed!

She brought with her something of great significance; an alabaster flask of ointment!

The significance of this is seen in the sheer cost of the ointment itself.

It is estimated that this oil was worth a year's salary!

SO, WE ARE TALKING ABOUT A COSTLY GIFT THAT SHE BRINGS TO JESUS; A COSTLY SACRIFICE! A COSTLY EXPRESSION OF HER LOVE FOR CHRIST!

Her expression of love was costly!

2. Secondly, we note that this woman is a very, very, very, very, very broken woman!

This reality is painted for us by Luke.

Notice the movement of the text!

v. 38, the woman is "standing behind Jesus", then she is at His feet weeping!

She has gone from standing to kneeling at the feet of the Lord!

And in the process of going from standing to kneeling, she is weeping (notice the text, v. 38)!

This is not your occasional tear rolling down the cheek!

She is weeping! The word here describes someone wailing loudly!

And so great was her weeping that Luke says that she “wet” the Lord's feet with tears!

The word “wet” is a word used to describe rain when it falls!

So, literally she is showering Jesus’ feet with her tears!

Can imagine how broken this woman was!

Can you imagine weeping so hard that your tears are described in terms of rain!

But this was this woman, ***broken***, weeping at the feet of Jesus!

Luke then tells us that she then wipes Jesus’ feet with her, and kissed His feet and anointed them with ointment!

She is displaying heart contrition and love for the Lord!

But, Simon, the Pharisee, who welcomed Jesus to the meal, is not too keen on what He is seeing, so the Lord allows us to get insight to what he is thinking. (v. 39, read)

Notice, again, how Simon speaks of Christ and this woman!

Regarding Jesus, Simon is casting suspicion on the Lord’s character and calling!

Simon, says in effect “If Jesus was *truly* a prophet; if He was *really* sent by God, then He would know *for certain* who was touching Him!”

But did it ever occur to anyone that it was because Jesus was a *true prophet sent from God* that He allowed her to touch Him!

It fits the reason for which He came, to save and reconcile sinners to God!

Regarding this woman, notice the disdain and the disapproval with which Simon speaks.

“...*who and what sort of woman this is...she is a sinner*”

- There is no compassion!
- There is no care!
- There is no concern!

Simon is cold!

- He does not see a sinner who needs **forgiveness**, he just sees a sinner!
- He does not see a sinner who needs **redemption**, he just sees a sinner!
- He does not see a sinner who needs **mercy**, he just sees a sinner!
- He does not see a sinner who needs **grace**, he just sees a sinner!
- He does not see a sinner who needs **salvation**, he just sees a sinner!

(Beloved, be careful how you see people! *We must learn to see people for the Christ they need and not the sin they commit!*)

But Jesus perceiving that Simon is thinking this, said to Simon (v. 40)

And so Jesus masterfully tells a short parable (vv. 41–42, crucial question v. 42.)

Simon answers, v. 43.

Jesus affirms Simon’s correct response! (v. 43)

Then notice the shift in the text to Jesus rebuking Simon *by* exalting the woman.

He begins with a question, “Do you see this woman?”

“No, no...I know you can see this woman, but do you really see this woman!”

And we know he did not because if he did, not only would Simon have compassion on her, but he would have been rebuked by his lack of care for Jesus, which Jesus points out! (v. 44)

In other words, “Simon, she has loved, cared for and welcomed me more than you did and I am your guest!”

So, instead of Simon being cold-hearted, he should have been convicted!

Jesus, then makes a connection between her expression of care and contrition and His compassion by saying, in v. 47, “Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven”

Notice that Jesus doesn't give her a pass on her sins! He calls a spade a spade!

Her sins were many, and He declares!

Jesus, doesn't go soft on sin.

He does not pretend as if it does not exist or that it is no big deal!

But He doesn't expose her many sins to leave her in it, but to forgive her of it!

And in all this Jesus gets the heart of matter! (reread v. 47.) **“for she loved much!”**

And what Jesus makes abundantly clear (and please do not miss this point): You will love God in direct proportion to the forgiveness you have received!

To say it another way: Your love for Jesus will be directly connected to your understanding of how much He has forgiven you!

If you have been forgiven little, you will love little!

But what you are meant to understand is that there is no such thing as “little forgiveness”!

There is only “great forgiveness!”

No one has ever been forgiven for little!

All sin is great before God, because every sin is committed against the thrice holiness!

Do you realize that the world is the way it is because a couple decided they would eat a piece of fruit!

Let your mind settle on this: **Sin entered the world and death through sin, because one man took one bite from one fruit!**

Some may say, “Really! I mean, it's not that deep is it?”

Yes, it is that deep!

It's that deep because Adam defied and sinned against God!

And a single sin is worth an eternity in Hell!

So, when it comes to the forgiveness you receive, the only category that exists is, “Sinned Much!”

There is not category of “Sinned Little”

We all like Paul should say, “I am the chief or foremost of sinners!”

Jesus, then, in v. 48, declares to this woman, one of the the most blessed things she had ever heard!

“Your sins are forgiven!” (3x)

Imagine this woman, who was a known sinner, perhaps only identified with and by her sin, is not forgiven!

She walked into the house as a sinner!

She walked out the house forgiven!

And this is the same pronouncement the Lord has made over you!

If you are in Christ, this is one of the most loveliest statements you have ever heard:

“Your sins are forgiven!”

Some of your sins?

No, all of your sins are forgiven!!

For how long?

Forever!

Jesus says to her, in v. 50 (read.)

Salvation is always the same!

Faith in Christ!

She was not saved because she cried!

- She was not saved because she wiped Jesus’ feet with her tears!
- She was not saved because she anointed Jesus’ feet with expensive ointment!

- SHE WAS SAVED BECAUSE SHE HAD FAITH!!

Now, all the things she did was an expression of her faith, but at the bottom line her faith it was her faith that saved!

At this reality of Jesus granting forgiveness, many were perplexed and asked a very important question! (v. 49)

What a wonderful question:

- The one who forgives sins is the same one who died to purchase forgiveness!
- The one who forgives sins is the same one who declared that He lays down His life on His own accord!
- The one who forgives sins is the same one who declared that He has all authority in heaven and earth!
- The one who forgives sins is the same one who became sin so that through Him we might become the righteousness of God!

So, who is this that forgives sins?

It is no one other than the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, **who is the friend of sinners!**

By Jesus forgiving this woman, He is declaring that He is God and has the power, *authority* and *right* to forgive sin!

This was the point being made when He forgave the man brought down through the roof, in Luke 5!

Remember Jesus said to the man, “man, your sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees said, ““Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?””

That’s the point Jesus can forgive sins because He is God!

And he displays that He is God by forgiving this woman's sin!

I want to put a single point of application before you, because this is the point of the text.

Point of application:

1. Does your love for Christ reflect your forgiveness in Christ?

Another way to ask it is this way: Do your love Christ reflect the fact that you understand you have been forgiven much!

Does the expression of your love for Jesus reflect that you love much because you have been forgiven much!

- This woman's love was costly! Is yours?
- This woman's love was sacrificial! Is yours?
- This woman's love was public! Is yours?

It was because Jesus was a friend of sinners that this woman came to Him!

May we, by the power of God, remember that this is who Jesus is!

And may the Lord allow us to love Him much, because we have been forgiven much!

Let's pray!