

# A disturbing dinner party

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning and a warm welcome to the service this morning.

Those who are watching online, those who are listening in on the telephone, it's good for us to come together again to worship God. Intimation is one or two things before we move on. First to say that the service this evening will be online just before six o'clock and both the morning and the evening service today will be taken by the Reverend Andrew Longway. This would have been our communion weekend as you'll remember and Andy was due to come to Harris to preach and to take the services over the weekend so he is not able to do that obviously but we're very happy that he sent some messages on, some sermons on for us. So we have God's word coming through Andy but it's not physically but it's virtually and I'm thankful to him for that. Maybe I should just say that although we're not able to gather and to take the bread and take the wine over this weekend as we would do normally on a communion weekend, although there's not the opportunity to come to the table for the first time, let me just say to those who may have come to faith whether it's in past months or in past years but who have never actually professed their faith. Can I encourage you, can I challenge you not to wait until the time that we're able to meet back together, we don't know when that's going to be but there is the opportunity every day to come forward and to profess that our faith is in Christ. So if there's any in that position who are trusting in Jesus but have not yet come forward to profess faith, be encouraged to come and speak to me or to one of the elders and to make that profession. It's such an encouragement when we hear people coming forward to profess faith in Christ and it's something which we're commanded to do in obedience to the words of Jesus, we're to profess that our faith is in him.

The youth fellowship will meet tonight at half past seven on Zoom as normal and the prayer meeting will meet on Wednesday on Zoom as normal also. So these I think are all the intimations and we'll begin our time of worship now, we'll sing to God's praise from Psalm 130, Andy has chosen the praises this weekend and the first praise of Psalm 130, Lord from the depths to thee I cried, my voice Lord do thou hear and to my supplications voice give an attentive ear, Lord who shall stand if thou O Lord shist mark iniquity but yet with thee forgivenesses that feared thou mayest be. And so on, we sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise. Lord from the depths to thee I cried, my voice Lord do thou hear, unto my supplications voice give an attentive ear, Lord who shall stand if thou O Lord shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgivenesses that fear thou mayest be. I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in it.

more than they that for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord. I say more than they that do watch, the morning light, to see. Let Israel open the Lord, for with him mercies be. And plenteous redemption is ever found with him. And from all his iniquities, he Israel shall redeem.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you once more for the privilege, for the joy that we have to come into your presence and to be able to draw near to you in prayer.

[6 : 18] We thank you for who you are. We thank you for who you are. We thank you for who you are. We thank you for who you are, that you are the God who is almighty. You are the God who is our creator, our sustainer, our maker. ■■■■■■■■■■s for our government. We thank you for who work, our one of our believer. We thank you certainly accuse. We thank you for Whatever God is, our wunderbar. We thank you for the work that we thank you for everything.

in Christ. We thank you Lord that there is the promise of forgiveness of our sins, our iniquities are removed, our transgressions are dealt with through the blood of Jesus when we look in faith to him. And Lord we praise you for who you are and what you have done for us in Christ. We're conscious that this is the weekend that normally we would have been gathered around the Lord's table. This is normally the occasion on which we would be remembering the Lord Jesus' death in that special way. And although we are not able to gather at the table, although we cannot take the bread and the wine in our hands, we pray that these symbols that we remember would cause us to look to and to remember the death of our Lord Jesus until he comes. We thank you that when we were still sinners, when we had no hope, Jesus came into this world with that salvation plan. We thank you that he lived for us. We thank you that he died for us. We thank you that he rose from the dead and promises that there is forgiveness, that there is redemption, that there is everlasting life for all who believe in him. We thank you for the grace of Jesus, which is freely offered to us, but which came at such great price. How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that he should give his only son to make a wretch his treasure. So help us, Lord, to see and to take hold of by faith the grace of Jesus. And help us never to lose sight of or to underestimate the vastness of your love for us and the cost of our salvation. Help us, we pray to live our lives with that constant thankfulness and gratitude for what you have done for us and what you are doing for us and what you promised to do for us in Christ.

We look around at a world that is so broken. We know that in ourselves. We see it around us as we open our newspapers, as we listen to news headlines. The world groans under the weight of sin. But we thank you that you are the God who is sovereign. You are still on your throne.

We thank you that the promise that we have is that there is a day coming when the Lord Jesus will return and all who are trusting in him will be taken to that place that he has prepared for us, where we live with him eternally. So help us, we pray, to keep focused on that death, on that resurrection and on that impending return of the Lord Jesus. We pray for any who are trusting in Christ at this time and who may have been willing to come forward at the communion season to profess faith in Christ but who have not been able to come to the table this weekend. We ask, Lord, that such who are secret believers would remain secret no more but would come forward and profess to each other, Lord, that we would profess that our faith is in Christ. We pray, Lord, for any whose faith is not yet in Christ, for those who are still in sin, for those who have not yet turned in faith to

Jesus, who have not yet repented. And we ask, Lord, that you would be working in their lives, that you would be working in such a way as to cause each one to realize the need to repent and believe and receive the eternal life offered in Jesus. We thank you for your word open before us today.

[11:03] We thank you for your servant, Andy, and we ask that you would bless him, Lord, as he reads your word and as he preaches it both in the morning and in the evening. We pray that you would speak powerfully through him, both here and in Cumbernauld, where he ministers week by week. Be at work, Lord, we pray, building your church, adding to the number of those who believe. We pray for those who are struggling at this time as well, for those who are sick, Lord, and going through treatments. We see them in our minds, I, we bring them to you in prayer. For those who are struggling with addictions, Lord, we, we pray also for them and ask that you would give them the strength to break free from these addictions and from the power of sin. We thank you that Christ has, has broken the power of cancelled sin.

He sets the prisoner free. We pray for those who feel low in their minds, who struggle with depression and anxiety, and we ask that you would minister to them, Lord. We thank you that you're the God who understands when no one else does. We pray for those who may have worries, who may face redundancy, who may have concerns through this period where things have been so difficult. We thank you that we have a friend in Jesus and we can bring everything to the Lord in prayer. So hear our prayers. Help us, meet us, we pray at the point of our need. Help us to keep our eyes on Jesus. May he be lifted up and may each of us be drawn in faith to him.

And we ask all these things in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Morning boys and girls. I hope you're all well behind that screen there and you've had a good week. Well I've got something to show you and I wonder if any of you have any idea what this thing is.

So it's a bit of metal, funny kind of a shape, wee bit thinner one bit, a little bit fatter on the other end. It's got a hole there and it's got a couple of wee holes there and it's got some scratches across.

I'll take it a little bit closer just for a second so you can see it. Maybe you can maybe see that. Well, I wouldn't have had a clue what this is to be honest until just a couple of days ago and I'll tell you the story of how I got this in my hand.

[ 13 : 38 ] I've got a mountain bike and I bought the mountain bike maybe a couple of years ago and I'd never really properly been on the mountain bike. I'd taken it for a couple of short spins but the gears felt funny and the brakes were very soft and so I thought this thing needs to get serviced.

So I phoned the people in Stornoway and I asked if they would look at the bike and they would tell me what it needs for the service. So I went into Stornoway and I phoned them a few days later and I said, how did you get on with the bike?

They said, well, there's some bits and pieces that need to be done on the bike. The brakes are very soft and they need to be bled so they'll work properly.

The gears are all over the place and they said something about a cassette that needed to be changed and the gears had to be tightened up so they could work properly. And they said, it needs a new part as well, a new derailleur hanger.

I said, sorry? Oh, it needs a new derailleur hanger. I said, I've never heard of that, I'm sorry. They said, oh, well, don't worry about it. It's a sacrificial part.

[ 14 : 47 ] And I said, it's a what? They said, it's a sacrificial part. I said, what does that mean? Well, the boy said, he said, you know, when you're driving your bike and you're going along fast and you hit a bump and the bike takes a good knock.

He says, well, this derailleur hanger part, it takes some of the impact. It takes some of the hardness of the bump and it causes the bike not to break.

It protects the frame and it protects some other bit so that the bike doesn't break. It's a sacrificial part, he says. It's kind of designed, when it goes on, we know that it's going to take quite a beating to protect the rest of the bike.

So when I heard that, I said, well, once you've taken it off, put it to one side. And I've got some boys and girls I want to show this part.

So here it is. It's the derailer hanger. The sacrificial part. Now, why am I showing you this? Well, I'm showing you this because it made me think about Jesus.

[ 15 : 59 ] When I heard the words sacrificial, it made me think about Jesus. In Romans chapter 3 and verse 25, this is in the New Living Translation to help us understand.

It says this, For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.

So what did Jesus come to this world to do? Well, he came to be the sacrifice for our sin.

He came to take the hits on the cross that our sins deserved. He came to take these hits for us so that we could be forgiven.

And you know, boys and girls, if it wasn't for lockdown and COVID and all these things that we're having to put up with just now, this would be a communion weekend.

[ 17 : 04 ] And this would be the weekend where we'd be coming to the Lord's table and we'd be remembering the Lord's death for us in a special way. We'd be remembering that he was the one who was the sacrifice for our sins.

He took the punishment. He took the hits for our sin. So that we wouldn't have to, so that we could be protected. And what I want to say to you is, let's keep remembering today and every day, even though we don't have the bread and we don't have the wine with us today, let's keep remembering today and every day that Jesus, he lived for us, he died for us.

It's a sacrifice. And he rose for us so that we could be forgiven, so that we could be saved, so that we could have eternal life if we believe in him.

We'll pray about that. Lord God, we thank you for the wonderful truth that you, Lord Jesus, came to be the sacrifice for our sins.

We know that we are sinners and we know that sin deserves to be punished. But we thank you that when we're trusting in Jesus, we have the promise that we won't have to take the punishment for our sin because Jesus took it for us.

[ 18 : 33 ] He was the sacrifice. So help us, we pray, to be trusting in Jesus. Help us to know that we are safe, that our sins are forgiven because we are looking to Jesus.

And if there's any of the boys and girls, or if there's any of the adults who are listening into this just now and who haven't yet asked Jesus to take their sin away, we pray that even now each one of us would do that.

And we would ask, Lord, that you would be the one who would stand in our place and take the punishment for our sins so that we would know that we are safe in this world and forever.

And we ask all these things in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Good morning, North Harris Free Church. What a joy it is to be with you this morning and to have the privilege of opening up God's Word.

I want to thank your minister, Dave, for the very warm invitation. I'm only disappointed that I can't be with you in person and that we can't be celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But we are grateful, aren't we, for the gift of technology and for the fact that the Word of God is not in lockdown, but that we can gather around it this morning to hear what God has to say to us.

[ 19 : 53 ] I bring with me also the prayers and the love of Cumbernauld Free Church. And as we gather this morning, they will be praying for us. If you've got a Bible there, I'd love it if you could turn with me to Luke chapter 7.

We're going to be looking at the story of Jesus anointed by a sinful woman. So if you've got a Bible, turn to Luke chapter 7 and verse 36 and I'm going to read from verse 36 down to the end of the chapter.

This is the Word of God. One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him. So Jesus went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eaten at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume.

And as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them.

When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know who's touching him and what kind of woman she is, that she is a sinner.

[ 21 : 06 ] Jesus answered him, Simon, I have something to tell you. Tell me, teacher, he said. Two men owed money to a certain moneylender.

One owed him 500 denarii, the other 50. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?

Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled? You've judged correctly, Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, Do you see this woman?

I came into your house, you did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing my feet.

You did not put oil in my head, but she's poured perfume on my feet. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved much.

[ 22 : 15 ] But he who has been forgiven little, loves little. And then Jesus said to her, Your sins are forgiven. The other guests began to say among themselves, Who is this who even forgives sins?

And Jesus said to the woman, Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Amen, and may God bless this reading to us from his holy word.

God, let's bow our heads and let's join our hearts together in prayer. God, as we open up your word before us this morning, we pray that you would now open up our lives and our hearts, so that we may receive the truth of your word.

We pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit, you may apply the truth of your word to our lives, that you would open up our eyes, that we would see Jesus, and you'd open up our eyes, that we would see ourselves, and that you would convict us.

In the areas that we fall so far short of your glory. And then you would lead us in the way everlasting. And we pray this in your son's precious and powerful name. Amen.

[ 23 : 22 ] So if you get your Bibles there in Luke 7, we're looking at Jesus at a dinner party. Now all four gospel writers deliberately fashion their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry in such a way that we can enter into most of the major episodes of his life.

And each gospel writer in their own unique way, under the influence and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is able to capture in words the key moments of Jesus' life in powerful ways.

So powerful are the ways they capture them that it feels that we can relive them. We can enter into their experience. And in this passage before us today, we have an account of Jesus at a dinner party in a Pharisee's home.

And we're going to discover that this was a dinner party that wasn't remembered for what they had to eat, but a dinner party that was remembered for what happened. I've entitled this sermon, A Disturbing Dinner Party.

Now before we dive in, I want to highlight one thing. In verse 34, Jesus is aware of the gossip, the word on the street regarding himself.

[ 24 : 32 ] And people are saying of Jesus that he is a drunkard and a glutton, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. You see, in Luke's gospel, we find Jesus on 10 different occasions wining and dining with different people.

His mission was to come and seek and save the lost, as Luke reminds us, and part of Jesus accomplishing that mission was spending time with lost people in order that they may be saved.

But the Pharisees, who really disliked Jesus, when they saw Jesus wining and dining with people, they began to say, no, no, he's a drunkard. He's a glutton. Look at the people he associates, unholy crooks and criminals, prostitutes and the like.

And so they despised him and shunned him. Well, the ironic thing is, as we pick up the story in verse 36, we find Jesus being invited to a Pharisee's home for a meal.

And it's ironic because why would the people who are slandering Jesus for being a drunkard and a glutton and keeping the wrong company want to have Jesus in their home?

[ 25 : 40 ] We don't know the reason. Perhaps this Pharisee actually set this up because he wanted to trap Jesus and pin something on him that would bring about his downfall.

Perhaps this Pharisee wanted to invite Jesus for a meal because he wanted Jesus to experience having a meal with, a decent meal with decent people and perhaps this would influence him and change his thinking.

Or perhaps he just cared about outward appearances. Jesus was a popular preacher in the day. Everyone wanted to hear Jesus, be with Jesus. And so perhaps this Pharisee, for the sake of outward appearances, he invited Jesus to have a meal at his home.

Whatever the reason, we know that Jesus obliged. He agreed. He accepted the invitation and he came to the Pharisee's house and he reclined at the table. See, the thing about Jesus is he'll never turn anyone down.

He'll never turn a person away. He's a friend of tax collectors and sinners and religious leaders and anyone and everyone who will welcome him into their lives. Now, as we pick things up in verse 36, I want us just to give our attention to the details of the dinner party.

[ 26 : 47 ] You see, in the ancient Middle Eastern culture, dinner parties really were the life and soul of that culture. People loved sharing life over food, inviting friends and families to talk, to catch up.

And dinner parties were made all the more better if there was a significant person to come along and make it special. Now, in the first century, when people ate a meal, they didn't do it like around a table with chairs around it, the way we do.

No, they ate a meal at a low-lying table and they would often be lying on the ground, on a mat, with a cushion behind them, the sort of way you would sit in a chaise longue with your head propped up with your left elbow, using your right hand to eat and your feet tucked in behind you because in that culture, your feet were the most unhygienic part of your body.

You wanted them as far away as possible from the food. Now, another important little detail to highlight about dinner parties in the first century was it wasn't unusual if you threw one and there was a notable guess that your neighbours would pop in.

You see, it was customary if anybody in the local area wanted to come and see the visiting guest, they were allowed. There would be no bouncers to prevent them coming in. The only social etiquette was that you loitered behind the couches and you weren't allowed to intrude in on the conversation.

[ 28 : 15 ] You see, back then, a dinner party would have been a real source of entertainment and amusement not just for the host but for the entire community.

So if you want to picture this dinner party, you've got Jesus and the Pharisees seated around a low-lying table eating food. I don't know what was on the menu that day.

Perhaps it was fat and calf. And you've got a house full of visitors. So far, so normal. Well, if we look down at verse 37, we see our disturbing visitor.

When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume. Now, actually, in some other translations, it will say, behold, when a woman who lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was there, she came.

And the behold, the look is because look is indicating that this is something startling. This is something shocking that took place. A woman, not just any woman, who'd lived a sinful life came to this dinner party.

[ 29 : 31 ] What a description to have. What a way to be branded sinful life. Now, we're almost certain that that refers to the fact that this woman was a prostitute. So, a prostitute, if you like, gate crashes this party.

And you can imagine that when she came in, people started to feel a little uncomfortable. If we were to put this in 21st century terms, imagine a woman walking into this house in high heels, fishnet stockings, mini skirt, low-cut top, red lipstick, smell of perfume.

Imagine a woman like that walking into this Pharisee's home. Now, she knew the protocol. She knew the home would be open for the community to come in and there was no one there to keep her out.

So, you see how this is setting itself up to be a disturbing dinner party? Here we're in the home of a respectable Pharisee and we have a prostitute gate crashing the party. Now, imagine the reaction on the guest's face who are seated around the table when they watch this woman come and stand behind Jesus' feet.

You can imagine eyebrows being raised. You can imagine red faces, eye-popping, jaws dropping as they spot this woman.

[ 31 : 03 ] And what's really fascinating is this woman stands behind Jesus' feet. She makes her move. He's the most distinguished guest in the house. All eyes are on him and this woman stands right behind him and she very quickly becomes guilty of breaking all the social etiquette of the day because she intrudes on the conversation.

You see, she doesn't stand quietly. She ends up making a loud noise. We read, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and the idea of weeping here is loud sobbing. She started to make a noise.

She was overwhelmed with emotion that her eyes began to well up and they began to rain water. Martin Luther, the great reformer, says she let loose heart water her.

So picture the scene. This woman's at Jesus' feet and she starts weeping. If they hadn't seen her come in they know they can't miss her.

They can hear her. Things are getting uncomfortable but they get even more uncomfortable because look what happens next.

[ 32 : 20 ] She began to wet Jesus' feet with her tears. So as she's weeping her tears wet Jesus' feet. And literally the idea in this verse is that her eyes rained tears.

Then we read that she wiped them with her hair. That means this woman had to unfurl her hair. Now in that culture a woman would never let her hair down in public.

It was only for the privacy of the bedroom because to let your hair down in public was provocative and sensual behaviour. But we might not be surprised this is a prostitute after all. But she's been scandalous.

Now next we read that she kissed Jesus' feet. The word for kiss here means intense, passionate kissing. It's the same word used in Luke's account of the father and the prodigal son when he welcomed him home.

He kissed him intensely. So everyone's watching on and what we have is this woman, this prostitute flaunting herself over Jesus, throwing herself on Jesus and she's not holding back and she starts kissing his feet.

[ 33 : 43 ] Passionately. And then she takes a tool of her trade and she pours perfume on his feet. Now can you imagine what the atmosphere in that room must have been like?

Can you imagine the look on everyone's faces? All prostitutes had perfume. They would perfume their beds.

We read about that in Proverbs chapter 7. This woman takes the perfume and she pours it on Jesus' feet and if that room was full with the aromas of the food that day it was now full of the smell of this woman's perfume.

Now think about this whole scene. This woman has come in by looking at her you can tell what her background is. She's rudely interrupted the party.

She's let out a cry. She's thoroughly wedded Jesus' feet. She's shamefully let down her hair. She's had the audacity to dry his feet with her hair and she's passionately kissed Jesus' feet and then she's extravagantly poured her perfume upon them.

[ 34 : 50 ] This is the sort of thing you'd expect a prostitute to do with a punter not a prostitute to do with a prominent preacher. And the disturbing thing is Jesus does absolutely nothing about it.

He just lets it happen as if he's enjoying it. So it would be a complete understatement to say everyone in that room, especially the pious Pharisees gathered around the table, must have been struggling within.

Imagine the shock, the anger, the outrage. First at the woman and then the utter disappointment at Jesus, what a letdown he's proved to be as a man of God. We know that's what they were thinking.

Look down at verse 39. When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this he said to himself, and otherwise he didn't verbalise this thought, if this man were a prophet he would know who's touching him and what kind of woman she is, that she is a sinner.

Inside he's furious, he's seething. If this man were a prophet, meaning he can't possibly be a prophet because prophets can read the hearts and minds of people and hears Jesus and he's letting this woman who's a prostitute drape herself all over him.

[ 36 : 00 ] This is scandalous, this is disturbing. How can this man claim to be a holy spokesman on God's behalf and not stop this woman doing what she's doing? But here we come to the first dramatic twist of this dinner party.

Look at verse 40. Jesus answered him. Now what's fascinating about this is when the Pharisee had that thought, he didn't verbalize it, he thought to himself.

But now we have Jesus answering him. In other words, Luke is informing us Jesus is a prophet. He does read the hearts and minds of people and he's just read the heart and mind of this Pharisee.

And that reminds us, listen, Jesus reads your heart and my heart. He understands what's going on in our hearts and minds right now as we're listening to this passage.

Now Jesus answering this Pharisee must have set this up for a rather unnatural conversation. Look at what he says, Simon, and that's fascinating, Simon. He doesn't call this Pharisee with a title teacher, he says Simon, he calls him with his personal name, he peels off the rank, he peels off the status and he speaks to the real person.

[ 37 : 15 ] Simon, I have something to tell you. Now, all of these guys have just watched a prostitute come into this party and fling herself on Jesus, kiss his feet passionately, unfurl her hair.

You can imagine that their minds have jumped to sordid conclusions. Jesus, he's not just a friend of tax collectors and sinners, it seems that he's this prostitute's punter.

And now Jesus says, Simon, I have something to tell you. And no doubt Simon was expecting some sort of confession from Jesus.



And so he says, tell me teacher. Notice what he says, tell me teacher. He doesn't say, tell me Jesus, he doesn't want to speak to Jesus in personal terms, he wants to speak to Jesus on these sort of professional terms.

Okay, teacher, I'm not going to call you by your first name. You shouldn't call me by my first name. I'm not going to see you. Tell me teacher. And I bet you Simon lived to regret saying that because Jesus now teaches Simon a lesson.

[ 38 : 23 ] He gives him a little dinner party story. Two men owed money to a certain money lender. One owed him 500 denarii, the other 50. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both.

Now which of them will love him more? Jesus tells a story and then asks a question. He's teaching Simon and he's about to teach Simon a very big lesson.

Now Simon must have been thinking, what in the world has a story got to do with this woman who's standing at your feet? But Jesus asked him a question, which of these two men will love him more? And so Simon answers this simple question which has a really simple answer but he doesn't answer it in a way that you would expect.

He hesitates. Look at verse 43. Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled. He sends a hesitation in his voice.

It's as if Simon's worried about where all this is going. It's not the story that bothers him, it's the follow up question. Simon's sitting there thinking, come on Jesus, tell me about what's going on with this woman and you.

[ 39 : 37 ] And the answer is this story's got everything to do with this woman and Simon. Jesus says you've judged correctly.

Because the man with the bigger debt will love the money lender more. But for Simon, the penny hasn't dropped. He remains a stranger to the facts of this story.

See, he doesn't get what the story's all about. See, when we read one owed 50 denarii, the other owed 500 denarii, one denarii was one day's wages. So 50 denarii is a big debt and impossible for many people to pay.

500 denarii is huge debt and really impossible for people in that day to pay back. But Jesus says that the money lender chose to cancel their debts.

Now in other translations it will say forgive their debts. The Greek word literally means graciously forgive. It's both a business term and a theological term.

[ 40 : 39 ] It's a term that Paul will use in his letters when he speaks about God and Christ forgiving us. Jesus came to cancel, forgive the debts of sinners.

Simon doesn't get it but. Because he's leapt to sordid conclusions. That's what self righteous people are really good at doing. jumping to the wrong conclusions, being judgmental, pointing the finger, throwing stones, trying to take the speck out of another person's eye whilst missing the log in their own eye.

I wonder is there a Pharisee within you? Are you someone who's guilty of standing in judgment over people, of pointing the finger, of jumping to the wrong conclusions?

Simon didn't get this story because he didn't get what this story pointed to, the larger story of who Jesus is and what Jesus came to do as the Messiah, forgive his people of their sins.

So we've had one dramatic twist in this story. We've now got the second one. Look at verse 44. Then Jesus turned toward the woman and said to Simon, do you see this woman?

[ 41 : 53 ] Now think about it. All eyes are on Jesus. He's the special guest. And now Jesus says, now Jesus, first of all, he turns and he looks at the woman and he says, Simon, do you see this woman?

No doubt Simon didn't want to look up from the table. He was so embarrassed. He was so mortified. He wouldn't look at this sinful woman in the eye. Jesus turned to this woman and says to Simon, do you see this woman?

Now when Jesus says woman there, he doesn't say the sinful woman. And when Jesus often uses the word woman, it's used as a term of endearment. That's how he even calls his mother upon the cross.

And so you've got all eyes now on this woman and now we get to the heart of this story. Now what Jesus does next would be absolutely shocking and scandalous.

Disturbing. Because in that culture, you would never criticize a host for their hospitality. In ancient Middle Eastern culture, you'd never ever criticize a host. Even if they served disgusting food, you'd never criticize them.

[ 43 : 05 ] But look at what Jesus does next. He says, do you see this woman? And Simon's now having a look at this woman. He says, I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet.

But she wet my feet. with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss. But this woman from the time I've entered has not stopped kissing my feet.

You did not put oil in my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. And what we learn from this is that all is not as it seems.

You see, when Jesus came to Simon's house for this meal, Simon didn't treat Jesus with the proper social etiquette. Jesus should have been welcomed with a kiss.

He should have had his feet washed. He should have had oil poured upon his head. But Simon didn't treat Jesus like that. And so in comes this woman and she cries tears and she uses that as a water to wash Jesus' feet.

[ 44 : 14 ] She unfurls her hair because she's got no towel and so she uses her hair to dry Jesus' feet. She's got no oil so she uses the tool of her trade, her perfume, to perfume Jesus' feet.

All of these actions stem from a purer love than anything Simon has in his heart for Jesus. For this woman was distraught at seeing her saviour Jesus slighted like this.

She was determined to show at least one person in this room valued Jesus, loved him, him, and so she did it publicly and unashamedly. She showed herself to be a grateful, saved sinner, not a stingy, stuck, self-righteous person.

Now I want to suggest to you that in every way this woman acted, it was a demonstration that she'd already placed her faith in Jesus Christ. Her actions aren't what make her a Christian.

Right? So you read verse 47 and the temptation is that we misunderstand it. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven for she loved much. So we think she's been forgiven because of the way she behaved.

[ 45 : 22 ] That's not the case. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven. Past tense, implying that perhaps Jesus had a previous encounter with this prostitute elsewhere and there he'd forgiven her.

And now in this room she shows the fruit of her faith in Christ and the fact that she's received forgiveness by showing and demonstrating her love for him.

And so what we see is Christ has graciously forgiven her and because she's had her sins forgiven she responds in such a way that she shows that she loves him.

Remember, none of us become Christians by what we do. We become Christians on the basis of what God has done for us in Christ. The grace of God met her.

It changed her. It worked in her heart. And it's clear that the grace of God has never entered Simon's heart because of the way that he treated Jesus. But it's worked in her heart.

[ 46 : 31 ] You know, I remember when I was a young Christian I once went out into the red light district of Glasgow with a Christian organization called Teen Challenge. And we're on a bus and we're serving tea, coffee and soup to those in the city of Glasgow.

And I'll never forget the cold and distrusting look in the eyes of the female prostitutes who came upon the bus. Especially towards men. No doubt because the men abused them and used them.

But here's a prostitute and she's got a complete absence of any fear in Jesus' presence. She's captured by the one who's a friend of sinners and she loves him with a holy love because she's experienced his holy love for her.

And so she displays her great love for him. And Jesus affirms this fact that her sins have been forgiven. Verse 48, your sins are forgiven.

The other guests began to say among themselves, who is this who even forgives sins? That's a big question. Who is Jesus that he would do such a thing? And the answer is he's the son of God. This was the fact that they were blind to.

[ 47 : 47 ] They called him a drunkard, a glutton. They were jumping to sordid conclusions that he was a fornicator. But they missed the point. And so Jesus turns to this woman and he says to her, your faith has saved me.

Jesus, your faith has saved me. Listen, this is justification by faith alone. She was made right because she placed her faith in Jesus. Here, Jesus publicly assures and approves of this woman.

She's at peace with God. She's at peace with God and so she's free to take her place in society again. That's why he says go in peace. You see, when we experience God and we experience his forgiveness and we start a relationship with him, it transforms us, it renews us, we get a new life.

It's evident that Simon and his friends had never experienced the grace of God at work in their lives because God's grace brings with it a whole new way of thinking and they hadn't got it. They looked at this situation and they thought there was something scandalous about it.

but they didn't think anything about treating Jesus with complete and utter indifference. This passage causes us to ask this face up to this big question.

[ 49 : 06 ] Who are we in the story? How do we treat Jesus like the Pharisee or like the prostitute? Do we love like the Pharisee, which is no love at all, indifference?

Or do we love like the prostitute? Overflowing, public, unashamed love for Christ. The Pharisee rejected Jesus, barely welcomed him into his home. And that's the very heart of sin, isn't it?

Is to reject Jesus. The prostitute welcomed Jesus. And at the very heart of the gospel, that's what we're asked to do. Accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

And so she became his friend. You know, as we look at this story, we're challenged, who are we? Are we more like the Pharisee or the prostitute?

Do you see the contrast between the Pharisee and the prostitute? It was, in a strange way, her sin that brought her to Christ. He was a friend of sinners. In a tragic way, it was the Pharisee's sin, his pride and his self-righteousness that kept him from Christ.

[ 50 : 12 ] This prostitute gave her everything to Christ. She was willing to go public with her love for Christ. This Pharisee struggled to give anything to Christ and he kept his thoughts very private.

This passage begs us to make a great choice. Who are we going to live like? The Pharisee or the prostitute? Which one are we? Now, the amazing thing about Jesus is, if you're listening to this and you feel like there's more of a Pharisee inside, Jesus is a friend of everyone and anyone who will come to him and receive him and love him.

Jesus will forgive those of us who are self-righteous, full of pride, who often fail to see our sin, who often fail to see the significance of the work that Jesus Christ did upon the cross.

You know, the problem with those of us who are Pharisees is that we often, we don't see our sin, we play them down, we think we're better than we actually are. It doesn't occur to us how the depth and the reality of our fallen state.

It's tragic, this Pharisee, he wouldn't associate with this prostitute, but he was very much still in bed with his own pride. And so, if you're a Pharisee, listening to this message, the invitation comes to Christ that we need to look at Christ our Savior, and in his pure and holy presence, we see how sinful we are.

[ 51 : 53 ] But we need to pray, God, show me myself, show me my sin, so that I may turn and cling to my Savior. And if you're someone who's lived a life full of sin, you feel like you can identify with this prostitute, you know, the encouragement, the challenge of her story to her, is she went public with her love for Christ.

You know what I love about this passage? It's a wordless testimony. She doesn't speak, she just acts. And in all her actions, she shows how the grace of God has changed and transformed her.

I wonder, in all of your actions, do people see that you love the Savior. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we pray that you would show us ourselves, show us our sin, and then bring us to your feet, the feet of the Savior. We pray that with our lives we would and our lips proclaim our great love for you, publicly and unashamedly.

Lord Jesus, you see right into who we are. You see the Pharisee within some of us, the judgmental spirit, the hard-heartedness, you see the pride, you see the indifference and the coldness.

[ 53 : 25 ] We pray that you would show us that and show us how much of a debtor we are to your grace. Forgive us, Lord.

In your precious and powerful name we ask this. Amen. We're going to conclude our time together and we're going to sing to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. God could remember no wrongs we have done Omnipotent until knowing He counts not their sum Thrown into all sea with that bottom or shore Our sins they are many His mercy is more Praise the Lord His mercy is more Stronger than darkness new every morn Our sins they are many His mercy is more What patience would wait as we constantly roam

What Father so tender is calling us home He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor Our sins they are many His mercy is more Praise the Lord His mercy is more Stronger than darkness new every morn Our sins they are many His mercy is more What riches of kindness He lavished on us

[ 56 : 07 ] His blood was the payment His life was the cost We stood He's a debt we could never afford Our sins they are many His mercy is more Praise the Lord His mercy is more Praise the Lord His mercy is more His mercy is more His mercy is more His mercy is more For sins they are many, His mercy is more.

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more.

Stronger than darkness you have reborn. For sins they are many, His mercy is more.

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more.

Stronger than darkness you have reborn. For sins they are many, His mercy is more.

[ 57 : 43 ] For sins they are many, His mercy is more.

Amen. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all both now and forevermore. Amen.