

**Subject:** *Christ is the Friend of Sinners*

**Scripture:** *Luke 7:31-50*

Everyone in the world needs a friend, but few people find the best friend of all. People are often looking for the wrong kind of friend. It is ironic that the Pharisees criticized Jesus by calling him “a friend of sinners.” Their criticism was actually a perfect description and one of the highest honors ever bestowed on Him. Christ is the friend of sinners for many reasons.

- **His contact with sinners**

He was approachable. He associated with sinners, ate with them, and spoke with them. The Pharisees and religious leaders had nothing but contempt for sinners. They believed in staying separate from all sinners, but Jesus drew near.

**Luke 19:10** *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

**1 Timothy 1:15** *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

- **His concern for sinners**

Jesus preached that sinners must repent. He told them that they must be born again. He warned people of everlasting punishment in hell. A true friend tells you what you need to hear and not what you want to hear. A true friend speaks the truth in love.

- **His compassion for sinners**

He loved sinners and met their needs. He gave them what they needed most—forgiveness. Someone said that a friend is someone who only gets in your way when you’re on the way down. That is certainly true of Jesus. In every friendship someone must take the initiative or the first step. This is true of Jesus. The Bible says, “We love him because he first loved us.”

- **His commitment for sinners**

**John 15:13-14** <sup>13</sup> *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* <sup>14</sup> *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

In the last half of Luke 7, we find three different responses to Christ as the friend of sinners.

### **1. Some people reject Christ as the friend of sinners**

In verses 31-34, Jesus gave a word picture to describe the way most people rejected John the Baptist and His own ministry. Jesus compared the people to children who wanted to play, but nothing would suit them. Some kids wanted to play “wedding” and some wanted to play “funeral.” Jesus is making the point that the people rejected the ministry of John the Baptist saying, “He’s too strict.” And they rejected the ministry of Jesus saying, “He’s too soft on sin and He compromises by hanging out with sinners.”

The problem was not the ministry of John the Baptist or the ministry of Jesus, but the problem was their attitude toward God and their message of repentance and forgiveness. At the end of

the story Jesus said (vs. 35) *But wisdom is justified of her children.* One modern translation says, *Wisdom is shown to be right by the lives of those who follow it.*

## **2. Some people resent Christ as the friend of sinners**

In verses 36-39, Jesus went to have a meal in the house of a Pharisee. At this meal a sinful woman made an appearance. This was probably someone who had a bad reputation in the community. Some believe that she was a prostitute. Whatever her sin was, she came to Jesus to show her love and respect. She doesn't say a word, but her actions speak volumes. This woman shows how Jesus should be treated as the friend of sinners.

This meal begs a few questions. Why did the Pharisee invite Jesus home for a meal? Maybe he wanted to trap him and put him on the spot with some theological questions. Maybe he was just curious about Jesus. Maybe he wanted to make a good impression on his neighbors and the people in town by having the traveling rabbi in his home. It certainly would have been the talk of the town.

Another question is why she was allowed in the house. What was she doing there? According to the custom of that time it was common for others to stand around the wall as spectators when a special meal was given to an important person. No one was shocked that the woman was present. But it was unusual that this woman made contact with Jesus.

The woman used expensive perfume to anoint Jesus. She kept crying and washed His feet with her tears. These were probably tears of shame and brokenness for her sin, and they were tears of gratitude because she knew Jesus forgave her sin. She let her hair down. Jewish women didn't do that in public. The kissing of Jesus' feet expressed a love and devotion that was not shown in public. She used the most expensive thing she had.

It was more than the Pharisee could take. He thought to himself that a prophet surely would not allow a woman like her to touch him. In his opinion, a holy man of God would have nothing to do with sinners. Self-righteous people have a problem getting close to sinners. They think that being spiritual means being isolated sinners. There is a difference between separation from sin and isolation from sinners. Luke recorded another visit like this in the home of Matthew (Levi), the tax collector.

***Luke 5:29-32*** *And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

## **3. Some people receive Christ as the friend of sinners**

Jesus told a parable about two men who owed some money. One man owed ten times more than the other man. The point was clear. Then Jesus pointed out that the woman did what the Pharisee failed to do. She washed His feet with her tears and her hair. The Pharisee did not show the common courtesy of washing Jesus' feet. She kissed His feet, but the Pharisee failed to give him the customary kiss of greeting and welcome. She anointed His feet with precious ointment, but the host did not anoint His head with olive oil, a common act of courtesy and respect. The sinful woman went above and beyond a sense of duty, while the Pharisee didn't even show common decency.

The Pharisee was outraged by the woman's actions, and he was even more outraged when Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven." Then Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Her faith saved her because she put her faith in Him. Jesus revealed that her love was an evidence of her faith. At the same time Jesus showed that He will forgive all sinners who come to Him in humility.

Many people don't ever come to Jesus because they're afraid of what He will do to them. It's not the sin you confess that will get you in trouble with the Lord. It's the sin you try to hide and the sin you pretend you don't have.

*What a friend we have in Jesus  
All our sins and griefs to bear  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer.*

Jesus is still the friend of sinners. He loves sinners, welcomes sinners, and forgives sinners. Jesus told the woman: "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." Could He say the same thing to you?