

## He Who Loves Much

Jesus was a master at bringing men and women to the gut issues of life using illustrative stories and parables. By this means he cut through much of the religious rationalizing of his day and put men face to face with God's own heart and mind. He could also make his parables very close to the character of the people with whom he was dealing.

Perhaps a consideration of one of the life situation parables will help us.

Luke records such a situation in chapter 7:36

<sup>36</sup> When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table

A peep inside a wealthy Jewish Pharisee's home will help us get a better picture of the event. The homes of the well to do often had a special room set aside for banquets. . People usually ate slightly reclining on their left side on a low couch at a low table while eating with the right hand. The room typically had one side open to the street so guest could enter easily. Thus people passing by could see who was the guest being entertained and they could stop, talk and enter. A number of such incidents are recorded about Jesus.

Luke records in one such event in Luke 7:36-50. Here is the gist of that incident.

One day Jesus was invited to dinner at the home of a Pharisee named "Simeon." He graciously accepted the invitation. But when he arrived at Simeon's house, no one greeted him or even showed him the "facilities." Jesus was primarily an unwelcomed guest. Simeon probably considered Jesus beneath his social level. As a result, he snubbed Jesus and by social neglects showed him his utter disdain.

Simeon actually had a wrong motive for inviting Jesus to dinner. He hoped to discredit Jesus in front of his guests. To Simeon's dismay, while Jesus was reclining at the table, a woman known for her loose morals came into the house. She stood silently at Jesus' feet and then tears began to course down her cheeks and fall on Jesus' feet. Loosing her hair, she fell on her knees and began to wipe his dusty,

now damp feet, with her hair. She even broke a bottle of perfume and poured it on his feet.

This went on for some time. Jesus remained calm – waiting. Simeon was muttering to himself about Jesus and the woman. If he were a prophet he should know this woman was bad company – and if he knew and still put up with this behavior, then Jesus couldn't be much!

Jesus read Simeon's thoughts like an open book. At this point Jesus spoke directly to his host, "Simeon, I have something to say to you."

"Tell me, teacher, " he said.

"Two men owed money to a certain money lender. One owed him 500 days' wages and the other 50. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simeon answered quickly, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." Then Jesus zeroed in on him. "You've judge correctly."

Turning to the woman, Jesus said to Simeon, "Do you see this woman here?" Obviously Simeon had seen her – he had not ceased to be agitated since she walked into his house.

What Jesus said to Simeon was that he had not been the perfect host. But this woman had acted like the host should have acted.

Then he drove home his lesson here. The woman's affection was not prompted by sensual passions but by her sense of gratitude to God for forgiving her of all her sin. What Simeon had failed to see was that he was indebted to God also. He thought he only owed God a little debt for minor infractions of the law. Simeon's own failure to see his sin debt to God and the Savior's gracious forgiveness blocked his spiritual insight.

The woman realized what a great sinner she was. She came to Jesus with her debt and in mercy and grace he canceled it. Meanwhile Simeon, thinking he only occasionally did a little wrong, felt that he could handle his own debt.

Jesus pointed out to Simeon and to all who will listen that our understanding of the debt we owe God and his forgiveness of all our sins determines the depth of our love for him.

How much do you love God? How precious is Jesus to you? You love God in proportion to your understanding by faith and experiencing in your heart your just damnation and his great mercy in giving you a new life.

What Jesus wants us to do is to apply God's mercy and grace in our lives to our relationship with other people. If we ever grasp the depth of our previous indebtedness to God and his total cancellation of all that we owed, then we could never again look down on another sinful, needy person.

Jesus gave to the woman the assurance of her forgiveness and he gave her freedom to live for God. She loved him because he first loved her. She was gloriously free to pour out her heart's affection before him.

There is no way to measure what would happen in our lives as Christians if we could ever grasp the measure of our forgiveness, or the magnitude of the debt Jesus assumed for us. Just a glimpse of it should inspire a deeper worship and a fuller life of loving service to the Master, as well as compassion on others.

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