

LOVE - IT'S THE DIFFERENCE SAVING FAITH MAKES

I. Starting with Our Debts

II. Finishing with Christ's Absolution

Luke 7:36–50

SUNDAY, JULY 7, 2019 | PENTECOST

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

YEAR C

<i>Old Testament</i>	2 Samuel 11:26–12:10, 12:13–15
<i>Psalms</i>	Psalms 32
<i>New Testament</i>	Galatians 2:11–21
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 7:36–50

COMMUNION

GRANTS PASS

The Entrance Hymn or Introit – ELH 12 Come, Thou Almighty King

Chief Hymn – ELH 429 Chief of Sinners Though I Be

Distribution Hymn – ELH 313 I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table

Closing Hymn – ELH 327 v. 1 O Lord, We Praise Thee

MEDFORD

Psalms 32, p. 78

Opening Hymn - CW 193 Come, Now, Almighty King

Hymn of the Day – CW 385 Chief of Sinners Though I Be

Distribution Hymn - CW 310 I Come, O Savior, to Your Table

Closing Hymn - CW 317 O Lord, We Praise You

Revision of Pentecost 4 2007

Luke 7:36-50

³⁶Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷When 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, ³⁸and 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.

³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

41“Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

43Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

44Then 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. 45You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”

48Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

49The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

50Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Dear fellow redeemed sinners, indebted to our saving Lord far beyond any ability to repay: Over the years there are some attitudes that have been particularly striking to me. They have been too common to ignore, so let me give you examples of people you will never know. (Just to emphasize that, this sermon was first written in the mid 90's)

A man married a woman who had nothing to do with the church. He was a member, but only showed up occasionally. On one occasion she came too. She heard that God's love and forgiveness is for her, too, and she was overcome with the comfort and assurance of the Gospel. Now he is angry with the church because she wants to come to worship every Sunday. She came to appreciate her forgiveness, he thought he wasn't so much in need of it.

Someone who had recently started coming to church asked when the next Bible class was to be held. Next September. "You mean I have to wait that long?" he replied. He wanted to hear the good news.

A lifelong member was approached to help out with a project at the church. "Absolutely not," he said. "My time is my own, and nobody has a right to ask me to spend it at church." Eventually a new Christian leaped at the chance, and literally had tears in his eyes that he would be thought worthy to help out.

A man (a blue-collar guy) who had recently come to know Christ and the gospel of salvation showed up one December 15th. He asked if I knew anybody in a bad way financially, and I said I knew a couple of young families who were struggling. "Good! I was hoping you did," he said. He then peeled off 10 \$100 bills and said, "I keep reading what Jesus said about the poor, and I was hoping to find some."

These attitudes I have been talking about are striking – on one hand is the attitude of indifference, on the other the attitude of love toward a person we can't see, but who speaks words of peace and forgiveness to us through the gospel, namely Christ

As Peter wrote, (1 Peter 1:8-9) **8Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

Why do these attitudes exist side by side in families, among friends, and in the society at large?

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I. Starting with Our Debts

The difference that saving faith makes starts with an acceptance of our situation in the world. Jesus described it this way: **41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back,...**

One man owed about two year's wages, and one about two months. But the difference in their debt was no help - neither could pay back the debt even though one might think he could. The woman in our text knew her shame, and the hopelessness of finding any perfection and righteousness on her own. She was a woman who had lived an openly sinful life. There is a sexual implication here. She was known to have slept with someone to whom she was not married.

She knew how great a transgression that is. To engage in any sexual activity outside of marriage is shameful, wrong, and an offense against God, but before we get to complacent, remember that so are drunkenness, gossip & slander, crooked dealing and any number of things people excuse. How bad are they? **1CO 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And how should we treat those who continue in such a sinful life? 1CO 5:11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.**

Those are strong words. Could it be that we don't realize that we have been forgiven MUCH?

Saving faith makes a difference in our lives, even as we grasp the greatness of our debts and therefore the cost of our forgiveness.. The Pharisee counted her debt as huge. So did she. That wasn't wrong. The Pharisee's error consisted in thinking that his debt was different, that it was small and manageable. Therefore this Jesus had nothing to offer him. Do you see how impenitence is a sign of unbelief? We know this man is an unbeliever because he says, "If this man were a prophet...." To the impenitent, to the self-righteous, Jesus never has anything to offer.

But to this woman, Jesus offered grace and forgiveness and eternal life. So also to Paul. **1TI 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.**

How about you? What do you think of your own sins? Even if "only" gossip or drinking too much, our sins are more than we can atone for. Starting with a real comprehension of the immensity of our debts, an immensity of debt paid by the life and suffering and death of Jesus,

faith moves us to love Him who is our rescuer and our salvation. And when we look at how impossible it is to pay our debts, we must say with Paul. "I am the worst - the chief of sinners!"

II. Finishing with Christ's Absolution

I say that our love for Christ **begins** with our debt, for if we do not know how great is our need, we do not know how great is our salvation. That is why if you look at the Small Catechism on p 31 of your hymnal, you will notice that Luther put the commandments first. They are our schoolmaster to show us how great is our need.

But if that is all there were, there would be no love. Perhaps there would be, as with the early Luther, only a hatred of God who would demand what cannot be paid. But Saving Faith does not lie in mere sorrow and anguish over sin. Faith rests in the promise that we are forgiven - that was the faith of this woman who loved so much.

This woman knew the immensity of Christ's work of salvation: His humiliation as the Lord of the Universe, the great I AM, the Angel of the Lord who came to sinful people through all time, but has now assumed the nature of one of His own creatures. Bearing the results of sin, even while living righteousness, bearing guilt, though guiltless, He purchased our forgiveness by paying what our sin deserves.

Having established that this woman DID owe much - far more than she could pay, Jesus reaffirmed her faith by declaring to her, **LUK 7:48 "Your sins are forgiven."**

It is unbelief that rejects such grace: HEY! WHO'S LETTING HER OFF THE HOOK!? WHO CAN FORGIVE? That is what people ask. Jesus reassures her, and us, again, **LUK 7:50 "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."**

She knew the greatness of her sin. She knew the greatness and wonder of her salvation. So she showed great love and devotion to her Savior. Her love didn't save her, Jesus did. Her love was the response.

Do you know who has the opportunity to continually teach such a lesson to the world? Our Christian families, and particularly fathers. When we take God's order for the family seriously, we end up living a wonderful picture of this great forgiving love. As a man loves his wife unconditionally and as she respects and obeys him, they mirror the unconditional forgiving love of God for us because of Christ and the love we hold for Him in return.

In our day, in which breaking God's commandments is trivialized; it is easy to love little, thinking our guilt is small. And besides, as Christians we get used to being forgiven, and forget the price. So again, it is easy to love little. When we think our debt of sin is manageable, it is easy to become lukewarm and indifferent toward our Savior. Then let us take stock of our great debt as an indicator of the immensity of Christ's sacrifice.

And when we ponder that, what we most want to hear is no comment on our own work or worth. Much sweeter are the words spoken to this woman. The sweetest words in all the world, and I assure you they ARE for you,

YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN.
YOUR FAITH HAS SAVED YOU.
GO IN PEACE.

AMEN.