

The Two Debtors | Luke 7:41–43

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[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ.! I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and each week I share sermons that balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.

Together, we'll explore Scripture using observation, interpretation, and application. This helps us discover practical ways to live out our faith every single day.

Let's dive in together into God's Word. Good morning, everyone. Today, we are going over a very unusual parable.

We've actually had the opportunity and the blessing to go over the parables of Christ, who spoke in these very simplistic parables. We recently did the children in the marketplace.

We've done the seeds and the soil. We've talked about the ten virgins. We've gone over so many different simplistic messages that are full of such great spiritual and biblical depth.

[1:07] And here, we find something that is a bit different. When we focus on this specific parable, you have, well, verses 41 through 43.

But in order to understand this specific parable, you have to understand the scene that is happening. Which is why I had Sam read the entirety of this about a sinful woman.

You have this scene where Jesus is being invited. He's being invited by Simon, a Pharisee, into his house for a meal.

And you have this language where he's, well, he goes into the Pharisee's house and he reclines at the table. And what's interesting is that there is this, as the text says, a woman of the city who was a sinner.

Now, it's kind of interesting you see that kind of language. A lot of scholars, biblical scholars and commentaries, they seem to be very consistent that this woman was a prostitute.

[2:21] Now, we don't know with 100% certainty, but that seems to be the typical agreement on that. That this woman was, you've probably heard, a person of the streets, right?

Very similar language in that. So someone that wasn't viewed upon very highly back then, or someone that's not very viewed upon highly in culture even today.

And so what happens, she brings this alabaster jar. Or in the ESV, it's saying an alabaster flask of ointment.

And it says that she weeps. Now, what's very interesting in this is that typically when there was going to be the washing of feet, you would use water, not tears.

And so this woman is in such grieving, such sorrow of this idea of who Christ is.

[3:21] That she is weeping towards Christ. And when we read this language, it seems very strange to us. Because, of course, there is a cultural difference that exists back then that we may not understand.

Like, example is, if you go, if you can put this on the screen, the verse 46. If you could put that up there real quick. I want to show you something here. Because when you're reading this, and it's talking about the woman, she's weeping.

She wet his feet with her tears, wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment. You actually see within the text what was more accustomed back then.

I entered your house. This is what Christ is saying. I entered your house, and you gave me no water for my feet. But she has wet my feet with her tears.

So it's important to know what was customary and how this woman is going above and beyond, having this sense of mourning and grieving in front of Christ.

[4:34] Now, again, when you read this, you're like, I don't understand what is going on because of our own modern context. You think of someone crying and cleaning someone's fink.

You think, what a weirdo. But we got to understand back then that this was more of a sense of reverence. She has wept my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You, Simon, gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet.

Some of you may have seen, I'll give you an example.

There are a lot of films out there. I can think of Robin Hood, other films. Kiss my ring, right? You've probably seen or heard that expression.

Or if you have kissed the ring of a king, that goes to show the amount of reverence that you have to do in front of an authority figure. And in other cultures, there's bowing.

[5:30] There's many different ways that someone shows reverence to someone in authority. And to kiss someone's feet is, again, not something that we would think of.

But it's this sense of showing regret and sorrow for the Lord. Now, this is not really common, at least that I know of in America.

Do you greet one another with a kiss? Now, some cultures do that, but it's not as common nowadays. I think of Italian families, right? They give hugs and kisses and whatnot.

And certainly there are some families that do that. So this is one of those times in Scripture where we read it and we may not understand. But here we can see what was more common.

You gave me no kiss, which would indicate you didn't greet me with a kiss, perhaps. But from the time I came, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

[6:35] And it's showing for a second, okay, Simon is inviting Christ to this party, but there's no... Christ being the honored guest.

There's nothing that's happening beyond them. But yet this woman who is a sinner, someone who is viewed upon as scum of the earth, the misfit of society, is going above and beyond in reverence to the Lord.

That is what is very important that we can see within this text. And you could... It has been debated that while Simon... Well, we could actually see this in the text that Simon is judging Jesus for allowing a sinner to touch him.

If you go back to the text, it is... Let's see here. In verse 39, when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him.

She is a sinner. Talking about cleanliness and uncleanliness, which was very common with the Jewish understanding. You didn't want someone who was unclean, as it were, to be touching that which was important or that which was clean.

[7:54] And so, what's very similar... Before I go into the parable, there's actually a very similar connection with another parable.

If you remember the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, you had this scene where the Pharisee felt that he was giving 10% of everything that he owned.

He went to the temple, he lifted his hands, and he went home. And you had this other person who was the tax collector, more of the misfit of society, who would not lift his head before the Lord.

And he would bang on his chest saying, God, forgive me. Have mercy on me, a sinner, essentially. Very similar to the language that we find here with the two debtors.

That this woman was showing sorrow and grief for her sin. And so, we go then into the parable of the two debtors, where two people owe money.

[9:02] And I had Sam ask this question. How many of you have ever had a debt that was paid off before? Maybe, maybe not. Maybe you have experienced where someone paid it forward.

Or maybe you've had an experience where someone cut a check, and whatever it is. In those moments where, even if it's a small, you know, your cup of coffee that someone covered for you.

I remember one time, my wife and I, we went into Boise. We had breakfast. It was a Saturday. And someone paid for our entire meal. And I'm telling you, when you take an entire family of seven out, that can go, that can be a very expensive check.

And I remember, I thought, I asked the cashier there, I said, do you know who this person was? They do not want to tell you. I'm like, well, excuse me.

I want to know who gave this. I can thank them. And the bill was like \$60, \$70. I mean, going out for breakfast is expensive. And I just thought, well, gosh, what am I going to do? So we ended up paying for someone's meal to continue that.

[10:09] And that's in those moments, you appreciate when someone pays off a debt. Now, this is just an everyday example that you can think of. And in the text here, you have that there are two people who owe money.

One owes 500 denarii and the other owes 50. So there's a 10 times difference. It's important to note that both of them were unable to pay the debt.

And the lender cancels the debts for both of the debtors. And so Jesus is asking Simon the question. Jesus is telling Simon this parable.

He asks the question, now, which of them, when they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Which of them will love him more? And Simon answered, the one, I suppose, for whom he canceled the larger debt.

And Christ said, you have judged rightly. And so we see that there is this parallel with recognizing the significance of Christ, but also recognizing the debt that is owed.

[11:15] And we can think as Christians, how we have a debt that we cannot pay. Now, at the end of the day, you might owe 50 denarii.

You might owe 500 denarii. But at the end of the day, both debtors could not pay off the debt. And when we think of how we are sinners that are in need of a savior, it is Christ who redeems us, who pays the debt by his death, burial, and resurrection.

By his very life, his ministry. And so that's remarkable that we can see within the text that this woman, this sinner, this person you would not expect to show such humility to Christ, she is showing great humility and gratitude for the Lord and this sense of, much like the other parable, recognizing the need for Christ.

And Jesus, later on in verse 50, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Now, I don't know about you, but to hear that from Christ would be the most wonderful thing to hear and to be in Christ's presence.

And so what's interesting about this specific parable, it's only a few verses. It's not commonly seen. And for those of you who maybe have grown up with a lectionary, it only shows up once out of all three-year cycles, which that's very interesting.

[12:57] And so there's a controversy that exists in this text because it's very, I guess the word intimate can be used.

But see, unfortunately, we live in a culture where the word intimate, we automatically think something else. And that's not what is happening here. It was showing, the woman was showing with intentionality the amount of sorrow that she had for her sin.

It's nothing sinister in there. It's showing that she is showing reverence to the Lord. And so I think that's a big reason why that scripture is not really preached on or mentioned a lot of times.

We then go into, let's go into the symbolism that we can, that slide. Oh, is it stuck?

That's okay. With all of this in mind, we can now go into, well, what can we learn then from the text here?

[14:01] The first thing that we can learn, you can follow along in your notes, is that we all owe a spiritual debt to the Lord. It's a debt that we cannot pay on our own.

And I know we live in a culture where we like to work and work harder and work even more, right? Get a second or third job to pay off a, you know, a financial debt. Well, why can't we do that with spirituality?

But that's not how the Lord works. It's about believing in him. It's about believing in the risen Christ. Everyone owes a spiritual debt that we cannot pay on our own.

And like the debtors, we depend entirely on God's grace and his mercy for us. We can think of so many scriptures, right?

For by grace you have been saved, not by works. It goes on in Ephesians, talking about that we are made so that we can do good in the name of Christ.

[15:01] We're not saved by what we can do. We are saved by what has been done for us. And because of this, we do good in God's name.

Is that song Sherry, by the way? It sounded like, I was like, that's all right. No, we could have gone off into song, but no, that's okay.

That's all right. That's all right. With that, you got to have a little humor, right? The second thing then is the woman saw the debt clearly.

And because of the amount of debt that she owed, she recognized having the sense of gratitude and sorrow for the Lord, recognizing that she needs Christ.

Well, we can think for us and how important it is for us to know Christ to begin with. We have the symbolism up here. The money lender representing God and the two debtors, us all in spiritual debt.

[16:13] And what is the debt? It is sin. And that awareness is understanding, well, how much debt do you actually have? Some of us are more sensitive, as it were, to the amount of sin that we have.

But in being aware, it should point us to how much we need the Lord and how much we appreciate in gratitude our Lord and our God.

And the forgiven debt, when you believe in Jesus Christ, it's showing God's grace and mercy to know that you are going to be saved, saved by grace through faith and recognizing that I am secure in the arms of the Father.

And so the second thing, yeah, is to how the woman recognized the amount of sin. And because of this, there was action.

There was faith and there was action. And that's so important, right? When we believe in Christ, right, we're saved. And that's the foundation. That is the beginning.

[17:18] Because of that, there is continued growing and action. In other words, we can think of how as we grow, as we believe in Christ, and how many of you have met a brand new Christian and you see how excited they are about how Jesus saved them.

And sometimes it makes you wish, man, I wish I was on fire for the Lord like that when, like how this Christian is first began. But we continue to grow in the Lord. we continue in the words that we speak, us being present with other people and the actions that we do should be a reflection of Christ's love, grace, and mercy.

And so the woman, her actions were reflecting appreciation and need for the Lord. which then leads us into the application and what do we do about this?

All right, pastor, you're talking about this woman who is basically a prostitute who's coming to the Lord and she's letting down her hair and she's cleaning his feet. What does that have to do with me?

When we think about it, it's so important for us. We have Scripture as our source, the divine inspiration from the Lord. And when we go into the interpretation, that is the lessons that we can learn on our spiritual walk, which leads us to how we live this out.

[18:54] The first thing for us is to recognize the debt that we cannot pay on our own. Understand that, well, try doing life on your own.

I know I have. It didn't turn out very well. And it's recognizing we need God's grace. We need His forgiveness and His love. And it's important for us to recognize what God has done for us.

It's just like when we take of communion, that we are to examine our hearts and we are to focus on what Christ has done for us. And remember that you were once in debt and that Christ, it's just like that song, Jesus paid it all.

Right? It's very important for us to never forget that. The gravity, the amount that God has done for us. So recognize the debt and respond to Christ in faith.

Now, for some of us, we already know the Lord. if you are not a believer, recognize your debt and respond to Christ's call by believing in Him and being saved.

[20:16] For those who have been saved, you continue to respond to God molding you, to God leading and guiding you on your spiritual walk in Him.

Just as I've mentioned so many times about how God is the potter and we are the clay, understand that when you put on the new self, when you are saved by grace through faith, you are setting aside the former life and the former things.

That is the beginning of your life, to continue to be transformed, to continue to be molded, where God will change your mind and to change your heart.

I'm sure for some of us, you may have known someone who had a hardened heart, someone who was bitter or angry and resentful to the Lord, the God working in them and changing them is part of that transforming process or even how sometimes we get convicted.

I remember many years ago, my wife and I, when we were first dating, if someone was asking for a conversation or money on the street, I would walk past them.

[21:32] It was just very common. I just tuned it out. But I remember one time that God convicted me, you need to talk to this person. Praying with them, offering them a meal.

It was inconvenient, absolutely. But in those moments, God will pull at your heart. Consider the least in our society, consider the least in our culture, much like how, isn't it fascinating that Christ is talking about how the prostitute, this sinner, this faith has saved her.

And she's the scum of the earth, according to their culture. That's something that's powerful. And us as Christians, we are to focus on those who are also sinners, expanding the kingdom of God and sharing the gospel message with others.

Absolutely, it can be inconvenient. We've got places to go and people to see. I understand that. But there are some times when God's like, stop for a moment. Pray for this person.

Have a conversation. Offer them a bottle of water or a meal. Because you'd be amazed at how your life can have such a profound impact on people, even when you don't realize it.

[23:06] You'd be amazed by that. And finally, we have to live and love like Christ, right? It's being grateful.

to live and love like Christ, being an ambassador for him. In the words that we speak to other people, in the actions that we do, and I would even add a third thing, your presence with people can speak miles.

Allow your relationship with Christ to let God work in and through you, let the love of Christ pour out through you. Which is why it's so important for us to exhibit the love of Christ, kindness, generosity, devotion to him.

It is living intentionally, letting Christ's example guide us in what we say and in what we do. And so let us consider that Jesus forgives us large and small debts.

But what matters is how we respond. What matters is if we are ready to recognize the debt and to respond to Christ in faith by believing in him or returning to him or being wholly devoted to him.

[24:32] Let God work in your life, continuing to transform your mind and your heart and consider, I want you to think about this before we close here.

Who do you identify with? Do you identify with Simon? And you think, what a wicked woman who's wanting to be by Christ.

Or maybe you identify with the woman, someone who recognizes their need for Christ. Christ. For some of us, we may identify with one or the other, but in any case, let us choose to believe in Christ, to respond to him, and be grateful for what the Lord has done for us.

Let's pray together. And Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for your son, Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.

And we pray that we may have a heart of devotion and understand our need, our continual need for the Lord.

[25:48] May we recognize that we are saved by what the Lord has done for us. May we have the faith like this woman who is a sinner.

May we have faith and devotion to the Lord, showing hospitality to others, devotion to him. Father, we recognize that even though this parable and this scene here may be difficult for us to understand, may it still work in our mind and in our hearts and transform us, recognizing our need to invite Christ in and to respond to him.

May we be devoted to you. We love you, we praise you, we glorify you, and we honor you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray and we all say together, amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you for listening for this week's message from Ontario Community Church. I pray that you are encouraged and strengthened in your walk with Christ. For more sermons and resources, visit OntarioCommunityChurch.org. May God bless you as you live out his grace and truth every single day. Amen. Amen.
[27:10] Amen. Amen.