

24. Jesus Had Dinner in the House of a Pharisee

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom. Jesus had been speaking to the Pharisees and lawyers and showed them that their actions were like those of children in the marketplace because they rejected both the message of John and the message of Jesus. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus was invited to have dinner at the home of a Pharisee. We will see that Jesus used this dinner to teach the Pharisees about the importance of forgiveness.

Luke 7:36-39 says, “Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, ‘This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.’” Jesus had just finished teaching and one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to his home for dinner.

Jesus accepted the invitation of the Pharisee and they went to his house and sat down to eat. Meanwhile, a woman in that city heard that Jesus had been invited to eat dinner at the home of the Pharisee. This people of this city knew that this woman was a sinner (prostitute). This woman came to the house with a flask made of alabaster that was filled with a very good smelling oil. Alabaster was a piece of marble that they would carve into various shapes to hold expensive oil. In that culture, they would lay around the table and the food would be in the center. That meant that their feet would stick out away from the table.

The woman came into the house of the Pharisee and stood at the feet of Jesus. This must have taken great courage because of her past life. Then, she began to cry in true repentance for her sin. Her tears fell on the feet of Jesus. She cried so much that the feet of Jesus became wet and the woman began to wash the feet of Jesus with her tears. Then, she used her hair to dry the feet of Jesus. She began kissing His feet and poured the expensive oil in the alabaster bottle on the feet of Jesus.

This caused the Pharisee to start thinking evil thoughts. Luke 6:8 says, “But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Arise and stand here.’ And he arose and stood.” Jesus also knew the thoughts of this Pharisee. We have seen that the Pharisees were looking for reasons to reject Jesus. This Pharisee suddenly had what he thought was a good reason to reject Jesus. He decided that Jesus could not be a prophet because a prophet would know the sinful lifestyle of the woman that was touching Him. The devil has three ways that he uses to tempt people. 1 John 2:16 says, “For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.” Here, we see that this Pharisee was just as guilty of sin as the woman. The only difference was that his sin was the sin of pride that caused him to reject both Jesus and the woman who needed forgiveness.

Since Jesus knew the thoughts of the Pharisee, Luke 7:40-43 says, “And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ So he said, ‘Teacher, say it.’ ‘There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?’ Simon answered and said, ‘suppose the *one* whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have rightly judged.’” Jesus chose to reveal the thoughts of the Pharisee named Simon by giving him an illustration and then asking him a question. The illustration was about a man who had two people who owed him money. One person owed the man five hundred days’ wages and the other person owed him fifty days’ wages. However, neither one of them had any money to repay the person that they owed.

The person that had these two debtors then made a choice. He made the choice to freely forgive the debt of both of the debtors. The word translated “freely forgive” is used in 1 Corinthians 2:12 where we read, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” Here, we see that God gave us the Holy Spirit so that we can know the things that have been freely given to us by God. We could do nothing in our own efforts to receive the Holy Spirit. Instead, God gave us the Holy Spirit as a free gift. In the same way, we see here that the person chose to freely forgive this debt.

Then, Jesus asked Simon, the Pharisee, a question, “Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” Simon answered that he thought that probably the one who was forgiven the most would love the most. Jesus answered Simon and told him that he was right. Then, Luke 7:44-48 says, “Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little.’ Then He said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’” Here, Jesus explained some differences between the woman and Simon.

Simon had invited Jesus to his house for dinner but did not wash his feet or even give Jesus water to wash his own feet which was a common way to show respect and honor to a guest. That was considered an insult in that culture. In contrast, the woman had washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiped them with the hair on her head. Simon had not given Jesus a kiss of welcome which was the common practice in that culture. In contrast, this woman had shown her love for Jesus by continually kissing His feet. It was a common courtesy to anoint the head of a visitor with oil since the person had been walking out in the sun but Simon had not shown that common courtesy. In contrast, the woman had anointed the feet of Jesus with fragrant oil. Simon had invited Jesus to his house for a meal so that he could look for an excuse to reject Jesus. In contrast, the woman realized the greatness of her sin and came to Jesus for forgiveness.

Both Jesus and this woman knew she had committed many sins. The woman knew that she did not deserve forgiveness. Jesus then told Simon that this woman had come with many sins.

However, Jesus said that she would leave with her sins forgiven. She would leave with a great love for Jesus. 1 John 4:18-19 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” The woman had recognized the love of Jesus for her and she had responded with a great love. In contrast, Simon had not even asked Jesus to forgive his sins because he thought that he was good enough to earn his way to heaven. Simon had shown by his actions that he had little love for Jesus and he did not ask for forgiveness for his sins.

Then, Jesus turned to the woman and said, “Your sins are forgiven.” Jesus went on to explain to those at the table why the sins of this woman were forgiven. Luke 7:49-50 says, “And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’ Then, He said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.’” Jesus explained to the woman the reason that her sins were forgiven when He told her that “your faith has saved you”. The word translated “forgiven” means *to let go or to send away*. The woman, with her many sins) had come to Jesus because of her faith. Now she was able to leave with no sins on her record. They had been forgiven (Ephesians 1:7). They had been blotted out (Acts 3:19). They had been removed as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). They had been buried in the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). In addition, she could count on the promise that God would remember them no more (Jeremiah 31:34). As a result, Jesus assured that woman that she could go in peace (Philippians 4:7-9). True peace is the result of a right relationship with God.

Meanwhile, Simon and his friends who were sitting at the table with him suddenly had a new question in their minds. That question was, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” In Mark 2, Jesus also told a man that was paralyzed that his sins were forgiven. In Mark 2:7, we read, “‘Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’” Jesus knew their thoughts as well that day. As a result, Jesus said in Mark 2:10-12, “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’--He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw *anything* like this!’” Jesus knew that those in the house of Simon that day also had to make a choice. They either had to recognize that Jesus is God or they had to choose to reject that fact.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others that the fact Jesus can forgive sins is due to the fact that He is God. We want them to be able to explain that people must come to Jesus and repent of their sin of unbelief. Those who place their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus as the payment for their sin will also experience forgiveness of sin and receive eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why Jesus can forgive sin.