

How Much Have You Been Forgiven

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into the story from Luke 7:36-50 where a sinful woman shows deep love and gratitude towards Jesus by washing His feet with her tears and anointing them with fragrant oil, contrasting her genuine love with the Pharisee's lack of hospitality and understanding of forgiveness. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy before God, understanding the equal price of redemption for all, and measuring our forgiveness by the depth of our love for Jesus and others.

Scripture: Luke 7:36, Matthew 5:3, Ephesians 4:32, 1 John 4:19, Colossians 3:13, Romans 5:8, John 13:14, 1 Peter 4:8, Luke 7:47

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Genuine Love for Jesus"

Description

This sermon delves into the story from Luke 7:36-50 where a sinful woman shows deep love and gratitude towards Jesus by washing His feet with her tears and anointing them with fragrant oil, contrasting her genuine love with the Pharisee's lack of hospitality and understanding of forgiveness. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy before God, understanding the equal price of redemption for all, and measuring our forgiveness by the depth of our love for Jesus and others.

Transcript

So turn with me to Luke chapter 7. Luke chapter 7 and verses 36 through 50. Luke chapter 7 36 through 50. Then one of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him and he went to the Pharisees 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 Pharisees 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 a 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 and Jesus answered and said to him Simon I have something to say to you and so he said teacher say it there was a certain creditor who had two debtors one owed 500 denarii and another 50 and when they had nothing with which to repay he freely forgave them both tell me which of them will love him more Simon answered and said I oppose the one whom he forgave more and he said to him you have rightly judged then he turned to the woman and said to Simon do you see this woman I entered your house and 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 and those who sat at the table with him began to say to themselves who is this who even forgives since and then he said to the woman your faith has saved you go in peace and so Jesus is invited by the Pharisee and I'm going to speak about the Pharisees in maybe next week or the week after I have a whole set of thoughts around the Pharisees that I want to share with you but the Pharisees obviously they were the lawyers they were the conservatives in the Israeli set up they were both political and a religious party which sounds somewhat familiar today and so one of the Pharisees asked Jesus or him to eat with him clearly the reason he wanted Jesus to eat with him was it while he had an ulterior motive we don't exactly understand the reason it wasn't because he liked Jesus he didn't this didn't respect Jesus at all because when Jesus comes in the custom is that the feet of the visitors needs to be washed normally they would call a servant and if there is no servant available then the the youngest or the most junior of those present would wash the feet there would also be a customary greeting today we we shake hands well we used to and hopefully we'll shake hands again those days they would they would give a kiss on the cheek he didn't kiss Jesus and if you were an honored guest then he would you would put olive oil on the on the head anointing the head he didn't anoint Jesus so he's disrespecting Jesus every inch of the way and in fact it was it was in the custom it wasn't acceptable to eat with dirty feet as much as it wasn't acceptable to eat with dirty hands and so he has some ulterior motive he wants to talk with Jesus and possibly he wants to ensnare Jesus he may have been one of the 70 leaders of the Sanhedrin or the 71 and he may be looking for something against Jesus we're not sure what it was but clearly he was not Jesus's friend and so Jesus goes and Jesus knows what's going on he knows who this man is he knows what his motive is even more than we know what the motive it was and and yet Jesus goes because he is going to use this as an opportunity to teach a very important lesson and a very important principle and so verse 37 behold a woman in the city who was a when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisees house brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil now this woman must not be confused with a Mary Magdalene in the next chapter where I erroneously began to read because you'll see that Mary Magdalene appears in the next chapter if this was Mary then Luke would have said so because remember one of the things about Luke is that he is very precise and he pays a great attention to the detail and so if this was Mary he will said so but this is not Mary she appears in the next chapter so this is another woman what she was we don't fully know it is very likely that she was a prostitute it just says that she was a sinner now in the custom then you could have been defined as a sinner by one of two things the one is that you were married to a man who was a very evil man that would make the woman a sinner or she was a prostitute and so that seems to be the reason in effect if you look at the way that Simon the Pharisee responds to Jesus about her it seems that this woman is defiled in every sense of the word and so when she knew that Jesus sat at the table now there are a few more things that we have to understand in the background here the first is that it was custom to leave the doors open when you had a honored guest like that so that everybody who wanted to come in and listen to the conversation could come and listen the Pharisees love to discuss and to debate the scriptures and to talk about the law and all of these things and and so they would they would use all sorts of opportunities to do so and and this would be a typical situation so Jesus is a teacher you'll see that he addresses him as teacher or in the Greek the desk allows not rabbi but teacher and he invites me in and he says come and and sit at my table so the doors open and various people are coming and going it seems obviously it's not very light it's at night time it seems and they don't have big fancy electric lights they have maybe a little oil lamp on the table so you can't really see what's going on they're reclining at the table and this is this is important because it's part of the part of the story they they would lie down they would recline on their left side with

their heads towards the table eating with their right hand and their feet which was the the dirty part and which was the least honorable part of the of the human body because simply you know those days they didn't have clothes shoes they had sandals and they had didn't have paved roads they would walk on on dirt and so their feet with was were dirty and so they would lie with their feet away from the table so you can understand then that when she comes in the first thing that she encounters is the feet of Jesus she is clearly looking for Jesus she knows who Jesus is and it seems although it doesn't say so in the context it seems that she had had an encounter with Jesus previously and that Jesus had forgiven her sins and that is why she comes in she's not coming to hear the theological argument she's coming to meet with Jesus and so she brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil this was a very expensive thing that the flask the the bottle alabaster is a kind of marble a very very beautiful marble that comes from Egypt and and so that the the bottle itself was valuable and then the fragrant oil which would have come from the east somewhere would also have been very expensive this was something that the rich people had but it was also something that prostitutes used to ply their trade and so she brings the flask and the fragrant oil and this is different to the other story where she breaks the where the other one breaks the the flask and she stood at his feet behind him weeping so you can see the picture he Jesus is lying with his with his head at the table his feet are sticking out on the other side together with everyone else's feet and she comes and she just stands at his feet and she begins to weep why is she weeping well according to Jesus because she had been forgiven she had been forgiven and as she comes and she meets Jesus the the the joy and the and the emotions just well up and there's and there's and then the tears just begin to to drip down on the feet of the Lord Jesus this is this is you know we we don't in the Western world we don't really appreciate this kind of emotionalism and and and specifically me with my Teutonic background where we're not great on these kinds of things but clearly this woman is overwhelmed she she has she has come to see the one who is forgiven her sins and as she meets him the tears just just flow and and as she looks down the tears fall on his feet and she sees that his feet are not washed and she begins to wash his feet with her tears and she doesn't have a towel so she takes her hair and this was an unacceptable thing those days women had to have their hair up and tied and so she lets her hair loose this was this was really immoral in in in the eyes of those around and she begins to use her hair to wipe the feet of the Lord Jesus to dry his feet and she kisses his feet and she anoints his feet with fragrant oil now it seems that those who were looking on that to them this may have been slightly erotic and immoral and Jesus obviously to him it is nothing of those things Jesus is simply seeing someone who deeply loves him because she had she had come to realize the greatness of the forgiveness that she had found at the hands of their of her Savior and so she is there and she she doesn't embrace him she doesn't kiss him on his head or anywhere else but she kisses his feet because she is not worthy to to rise up any and to do anything more and and obviously Simon is very upset the Pharisees name is Simon he's very upset and so 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 she is a sinner can you see the difference between these two characters the one is a religious figure and I'm so so concerned that there are so many Christians so many evangelicals who are so religious and yet there is no there is no passion there is no emotion there is no deep love there is no deep gratitude for what Jesus has done it's all up here it's all in the mind and they'll argue and debate and discuss the theology and this and that and the other thing but where is the where is the love where is the where is the tears just welling up as she recognizes the great forgiveness that she had found at the hand of the Savior and so the Pharisees all concerned about the the peas in the queues and about the intricacies of the law and and here's this this this vile woman and and she is she is touching Jesus and Jesus is allowing that now Jesus should not have allowed that even if he wasn't a prophet according to him and if he was a prophet then he would have known who this woman is

and so Jesus answered now look at this the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he spoke to himself he didn't speak to Jesus and say if you're a prophet then what's going on here he is speaking to himself and Jesus answers him so how can Jesus answer him because Jesus is the prophet and so Jesus knew what he was thinking he was just thinking in his heart and saying what who's this man who's a teacher and he's a he's claimed people say he's a prophet and how can he allow this to happen and so Jesus answers him and Jesus reveals his heart and he says Simon I have something to say to you and so he said teacher say it and so Jesus tells him a parable he says there was a certain creditor who had two debtors so creditor is someone who has lent money debtor is someone who owes money one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty I think these numbers are arbitrary I don't think there's any meaning in those numbers are simply one owed a lot ten times more than the other denarii remembers one day's wages so the the fifty was just under two months worth of the 500 was about a year and a half 18 to 20 months worth of wages the fact was that both of them could not could not pay when they had nothing to with which to repay he freely forgave them both tell me therefore which of them will love him more when I come back to these two guys in a in a moment so Jesus just asks a simple question and Simon answered he said it's logical he says you know stupid question really I suppose the one who was forgiven most and he says you have judged rightly you have judged rightly and then he turned to the woman and said Simon do you see this woman I entered your house and you gave me no water for my feet but she has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of a head you gave me no kiss but this woman has not ceased to kiss my feet since the time I came in and so what is Jesus saying about the Pharisee and the woman the Pharisee owed 50 the woman owed 500 the Pharisee had religious legalism and he was keeping the law he was counting the the leaves of the mint when he puts it in the pot he's he's counting every penny making sure that he's paying his tithes to the exact to the exact detail he's fasting twice a week he's praying several times a day he's doing all of these things so maybe he's not as bad as that woman was but now I want to ask you a question that Jesus didn't ask but were inferred and that is that these two owed different amounts but neither of them could pay is there a difference then between the two well let me ask you this question if you're a billionaire and you go bankrupt and another man is a wage earner and he only owns a motor car and the clothes back and he goes bankrupt what's the difference between the two there is no difference they're both bankrupt they both cannot pay their debt it doesn't matter if the debt is billions of dollars or ten dollars if you cannot pay you're bankrupt and you're in trouble and those days you would end up in debtors jail and so really what Jesus is saying is that yes maybe this woman has been forgiven more but Simon you are just as bankrupt you also cannot pay the little that you think you owe and obviously he doesn't understand how much he does owe but you still can't pay in fact that this is the this is the problem is that we we look at others and we say well you know I thank you good Lord that I'm not like those people that I don't do this and do that and I haven't got involved in this and that and the other thing and and I live a pretty moral life and I try to be a good citizen and I try to keep the law and I try to do all of these things but it doesn't matter how religious someone may be they are still bankrupt because even if they owed God one one penny they cannot pay because there is only one thing that can pay for the price of our sin and we know the answer to that the blood the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and so what price was needed to bail each of these debtors out because remember Jesus is just telling a parable but he's saying there's the rich man or the Pharisee and there's there's this woman in order for her to be forgiven what price needed to be paid for her sins the death and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ the Pharisee may have only broken and they didn't because he probably broke thousands of laws but if he just broke one law what price would have to be paid for his sin still the death and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ you see there's not a smaller atonement for a religious person and a bigger atonement for another person it's the same price it's the same it's the same debt the soul that sins not many sins one sin the soul that sins it

will die the wages of sin is death and so it doesn't matter how many sins we have committed and here's the problem is that is that some of us come from good backgrounds I grew up in a Christian family my family have been preachers for for four generations I never did particularly bad stuff and so I really don't have much reason to be thankful know the price that was paid for me is the same price that was paid for the worst sinner in the world for that sinner who died with Jesus that robber who died with Jesus on the cross and Jesus said today you will be with me in paradise it was the same price that was paid for him it was paid for me because I was just as bankrupt as that robber on that on that cross next to Jesus the problem is that we forget the price that had to be paid you see it seems easy when you read the story because Jesus just says your sins are forgiven but we know that that couldn't happen just on the basis of just him saying that is forgiven but it was on the basis that he would shed his blood on the cross and we understand the theology that that the sin was forgiven in anticipation of the price being paid if Jesus didn't die on the cross there would be no forgiveness for sins because without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins and so Jesus would still have had to die but the Pharisee couldn't get it because he was so full of his own religious stuff that he couldn't even begin to understand his absolute bankruptcy before God and you remember that this is the way Jesus speaks about in his in the Sermon on the Mount both in Luke and in Matthew and and this the the Sermon on the Mount begins or the Beatitudes begin blessed are the poor in spirit and remember we spoken about this many times it's not because some are poor and some are not poor we're all poor the problem is that some don't understand their poverty don't understand their bankruptcy before God and their absolute need for him to intervene and and if he doesn't we are undone woe is me because I am undone and so should he have been as thankful as she was yes he should have he should have because his penalty was the same as her penalty the price for his redemption was the same as the price for her redemption and so the question just is and I had to ask myself the question as I went through the passage during this week is there this kind of deep deep love deep love for Jesus because he saved me or have I got used to the fact that I'm saved do I even think that well maybe I deserve to be saved the sad thing is that many so-called Christians think that they deserve to be saved because they're pretty good people and I pray that the Lord would somehow inscribe upon our hearts and as we come to the Lord's table again this evening that we would afresh a come to understand the price that was paid for each one of us so verse 44 he turned to the woman and he said 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 her hair overhead Jesus isn't here physically tonight so how can we wash his feet by washing one another's feet and obviously I'm not speaking about bringing a basin and physically washing I mean in serving one another Jesus said if you've done this to the least of these my brethren you've done it to me and so our gratitude for what the Lord has done for us is directly proportionate to the degree to which we are willing to serve one another but when we when we don't want to help when we don't want to serve we're simply saying I'm entitled I deserve to be we're not grateful and folks the reason I serve the reason I give it I've given my life to serve the Lord and to serve these people is because he has saved me and because I've come to understand that without him I have nothing and that if he didn't save me I would be the worst and the most terrible sinner in the world and because of his grace upon my life I have no other option but to love him with all of my heart and how do I love him I love him by washing your feet by serving you and we ought to love and serve one another because that's how we show our love for the Lord Jesus but when we stand off like Simon did and and you know he's just sitting there and he's enjoying the meal and he's enjoying the conversation and he's enjoying maybe the glow that's coming with Jesus because Jesus is a celebrity at this time remember people are following him in massive numbers he's performing miracles everybody's talking about him and maybe that was one of the reasons he wanted Jesus there because Jesus had some celebrity status he's enjoying all of these things but he doesn't kiss

Jesus he doesn't even do the most basic common decency thing and wash Jesus's feet or call a servant to wash Jesus's feet he just ignores him and folk I wonder how many Christians today and these days treat the church that way the body of Christ that way we just enjoy the presence of Jesus we just enjoy the teaching we just enjoy the blessing that comes with having him in the house and all of these wonderful things but there's no love there's no passion there's no zeal it's simply a cold religious theological thing 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 the Greek the language here is have been forgiven for she loved much but to whom little is forgiven the same loves little now now think about that our forgiveness is measured by our love is that what Jesus is saying yeah our forgiveness is measured by our love if we do not love have we been forgiven now leave that question with you if we do not love him and if we do not love the body of Christ and if we do not love one another have we been forgiven because Jesus is making a very simple clear statement and he's saying the degree to which we love one another is a measure of our forgiveness great love great forgiveness no love no forgiveness and then he said to her your sins are forgiven so he confirms what he had said earlier and he assures her that her sins have been forgiven and those who sat at the table with him began to say to themselves who is this who even forgives sins remember this conversation comes up on it at a different time and the and the answer obviously is that only God can forgive sins they know this and remember the others who are at the table must be other Pharisees and other learned people and and and and you know who's who's this man who is this man who can forgive sins again sometimes I think that I get the impression that Christians think that they've forgiven their own sins but there's only one who can forgive and his name is Jesus and he said to the woman your faith has saved or healed you go in peace what does he say to the Pharisee nothing he just walks away and leaves the Pharisee in his sin so as we come to the table this evening I pray that we would not come out of routine and just do the ritual of taking the bread and the wine and saying yeah yeah he died on the cross I pray that it would become real and personal to us that we would question our love you remember Paul was a Pharisee he could have been this man Paul says as far as the law was concerned I was blameless I kept every one of the rules and yet he says I was the chiefest of sinners and brother and sister unless you come to the table this evening and recognize that you that I are the chiefest of sinners that has cost the precious blood of the Lord Jesus to save us and as we come around the table this morning or this evening and obviously we're not going to come around because of the distancing but look that we would we would indeed just just pour out our love to the Lord Jesus and if you want to do so vocally you're welcome to do so but at least in the in your in the depth of our hearts maybe maybe find the love that just overtook this woman that as she came and she sees Jesus lying there that the emotions just welled up as she realized what had happened and I pray that that would be our experience this evening father we thank you for your word we thank you Lord for your immense grace that saved a wretch like me Lord none of us is worthy none of us was good enough in any way that Jesus should die for us and yet he paid that price and paid that debt that we could not pay and father we understand the greatness of that debt it cost the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and so Lord I pray that you would help us to be those who love because we understand what has happened to us and Lord as we come to the table this evening I pray that you would be present as you were at that table that day and Lord if there are issues that have not been dealt with Lord we pray that we may deal with those and that we may find your your forgiveness as you forgave her that you would forgive and Lord that it may partake of the table in an honoring way we pray that you'd help us in Jesus name amen

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