

The Importance of Loving Jesus

by Erlo Stegen

The importance of loving Jesus more than others, and how to get godly love through recognizing sin in God's light and having godly sorrow and repentance.

Duration: 59:06

Scripture: John 5:1

Topics: "Loving Jesus", "Godly Sorrow"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a clever person who struggled to connect with others. On his deathbed, he longed for music, which symbolized a heavenly choir singing for him as he entered the afterlife. The speaker then poses a personal question about how we view our lives and the importance of loving Jesus. He references a biblical passage in Luke 7:42 to illustrate the concept of debt and how it can imprison us. The sermon emphasizes the need for godly sorrow and true confession of sin, highlighting the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. The speaker also shares a story of a man who, upon learning he had a limited time to live, dedicated his remaining years to serving God. Despite not living the full ten years, he died with a sense of fulfillment. The sermon concludes with a mention of a musically talented woman who struggled to teach others because she couldn't understand why they couldn't play the notes she taught them.

Transcript

Let's look at Luke 7, verse 42. Towards the end of the verse, towards the end of verse 42, tell me therefore, which of them will love him more? That's our theme now. Which of the two will love him more? Let me speak about the importance of loving Jesus.

Jesus said there were two young men. Both of them had debts. One had a debt of five hundred denarius.

Well, we're not familiar. Let's, we're not familiar with denarii. Let's say, we'll speak in the old terms of pounds, let's say ten, ten rand or so, or more.

Or per denarii. In Now, when we were children, a cow would cost as much as five pounds. So ten beasts, you could say, is an equivalent value.

Now, the second man had a debt of just fifty pounds, you could say. Now, both of them were completely imprisoned by their debt in that they were incapable of living a normal lifestyle. Everything went into paying

back the debt.

There were very strict laws pertaining to debt in those days. A person would be taken, even as a slave, should he not pay back his debt. So both these men were troubled.

How are we going to pay back our debt? And then the creditor, the one to whom the money was owed, said to his debtors, I forgive you, I wipe off all this debt. You must have been a very good man. We live in an evil world, but praise God, here and there, you still find a good man.

So he said, I forgive you your debt. And then Jesus asked a man, Simon, of these two, who loved him most? Or who loved the creditor most? Who would be the most devoted, the most grateful, appreciative of the two? And so Simon answered, the one who was forgiven much, who had the biggest debt wiped out. And Jesus said, you answer correctly.

He who's great debt has been removed, loves that person much. Now why should he say such a thing? Now Simon was a Pharisee. He had heard about Jesus' reputation and invited him to come along and have a meal with him.

And so when Jesus had arrived with his disciples, and they were seated there at the table, now we've heard Dr. Lutuli referring to our various cultures. When I was in Korea, I was taken into the custom of the people there in Korea, which was when you eat, you sit down on the floor, and you have a minute little table. It's a very low down, and that is how you eat at the table.

Now as a typical, as a typical Westerner, I found much difficulty trying to fold my legs properly, and I felt awkward, and I was amazed as to where they put their legs. So sometimes I would get my daughter to sit next to me and say, well, just stay close by so that I can get my legs stretched out behind, and it's not visible. So if you do go to the East, to places like Korea, do some good exercising beforehand.

Anyway, it's good to be well exercised. I think the men suffer from not being able to fold their legs as well as the ladies can. Similar, in a way, to the Middle Eastern custom of the day, this context which we read of here where our Lord was seated in this way, they would be reclining at the table.

Now when he entered in, he noticed that a woman was standing close by. He knew her, recognized her. She was famous, or should one say infamous.

She was promiscuous, as you'll find, like you find promiscuity as we've heard of boys being so promiscuous. When Simon noticed this woman at the feet of Jesus, he said to himself, if this man was really a prophet, he would have known what type of woman this is. Now Dr. Luke records for us here in our text that she was actually wiping Jesus' feet while she was crying with the hair of her head.

She was weeping so profusely and then wiping the tears off his feet with her hair. Wiping his hair, she even kissed his feet. And she had a jar of very precious perfume that she poured upon his feet.

Now Jesus, understanding her tears, said, Simon, you're the one who's invited me. Even though you are the host, you have never brought me the customary dish and wiped my feet with a towel. But she cries upon my feet and she washes my feet with her tears and wipes my feet.

Why so? Jesus then said, the answer is that he who's forgiven much, loves much. Now I've said that the theme for this message is the importance of loving Jesus. I don't know whether there's a love that you feel

towards the Lord Jesus.

There is an astonishing word in the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 16 verse 22 it says, Cursed is the one who does not love the Lord. Cursed is the one who does not love the Lord.

And the original Greek means exactly that, anathema to the one who does not love the Lord. It is of vital importance to love Jesus. And then in the Lord's parable he takes two people and asks which one loved the most.

He doesn't say do they both have love, he asks who loves the most. That plays an important role in the Bible. After Jesus' resurrection and he saw his disciples and they were together on the shore, Jesus said to Peter, Simon son of Jonah, do you love me more than these? He didn't ask him do you love me like they love me.

He asked do you love me more than these? Do you excel in your love for me? Out of everyone of us, I would like everyone to get this point straight. This is a thing that matters to our Lord Jesus Christ, to God. He'll never tell you do you love me like the others, no.

He says do you love me more than those love me. Remember in the Corinthian letter it refers to competition, athletics and running the race. Many run the race, he said.

Only one wins the prize. Many compete, only one wins the prize. And then he says run in that fashion, in that way.

Not that you run to come second or third. He said the first. We don't have time to really examine that in all its richness, but it is an important theme in the Bible.

Remember that man who had been lying for 38 years crippled next to the pool of Bethesda? The Lord came and said would you like to be healed? And he answered I have no one to put me into the pool. Whenever it is stirred I find that others get there first. What had been happening was that when the angel stirred the waters only the first one to get into the water would be healed.

Not the others, not the second or the third. That's a spiritual lesson to all Christians. That's how we have got to believe.

That's how we have got to serve the Lord. But sadly then Sadly, that's often not the case. You'd find rather Christians making excuses and saying but that person does it, why can't I do what that person, that person dresses like that, can't we just be the same? God doesn't want you just to be the same.

He wants you to serve him with all your heart that you individually serve him. And in, here, John was, Jesus was testing Peter, sorry, in that letter, the gospel of John. In the gospel of John Jesus asks do you love me more than these? Is your love greater towards Jesus than these? Different angles, different ways of looking at it.

He was Peter's great friend of John. Do you love me more than your friendship towards John? Do you love me more than your friendship towards John? I remember many years ago saying to a young man who just got engaged, Jesus must be first in your life. He said what? You don't understand Olo.

The thing is you don't know what the love towards a girl is like. That is all consuming, he said. Because when I was a young man and I got to know the Lord, I said the first thing I'd like to have is a bicycle.

I'll go on a bicycle and I'll go from hut to hut and tell the people about Jesus. The second thing I pray for an old pickup. When I've got a tent for meetings that I can carry the tent.

After that, marriage. That weren't New Year resolutions. I kept to that.

And I tell the Zulus, I'm a soldier. In Shaka's time, a soldier was a soldier up to 40 years. After that, he could think of getting married.

First a soldier. And with 40, I had the first child. The Lord gave me grace to be pure right to marriage.

And you hear that also you girls, you who are virgins. Also possible for a young man to remain sexually pure right till marriage. When I stood before the altar with my bride, it was the first time that I held my bride's hand.

I said that to the pastor. He said, you can't be serious. That can't be possible.

You fibbing. There's no such thing. But God knows it was true.

I never touched a girl. And I told my wife, you know that you're the first girl in my life. If we do live like that, AIDS would not be a problem.

So Jesus speaking then to Simon said, now Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these? For instance, Jesus also said, if you love wife, husband, parents, children, whatever more than me, you are not worthy of me. The first place. That's running the race.

Jesus first. Do you love me more than these? For it is all inclusive. Do you love me more than your fishing? More than them? More than they love me? I grew up in the Lutheran tradition.

In our Lutheran tradition, it is the norm that we would baptize or christen children. And as was our custom, I had my godfather and two godfathers and an aunt. And they had to believe for me and say, we deny the devil.

We don't have anything to do. Sadly though, one of my godfathers later on when I became a Christian and I was devoted to reading the Bible, he said, young man, what are you reading the Bible for? It will just make you go crazy. The second one was on record as saying, for me, the most important thing firstly is my work, my farm.

Secondly, fishing. Thirdly, hunting. And the fourth one was on record as saying, for me, the most important thing is my work, my farm.

When this mission started, he came as an older man then to me and said, I'm repenting, I'm converting and stopping with my life of sin, for the doctor has just told me that my smoking is killing me. And he said, if you stop today, maybe you'll still live ten years. And he came to me and said, Elo, only ten years, only ten years, only ten years.

He says, I'm repenting today. And I've brought you some luquat plants, let's plant them. Those will testify to the fact that the day they were planted, I turned to God.

And he said, Elo, only ten years, only ten years, only ten years. And I've brought you some luquat plants, let's plant them. And he said, Elo, only ten years, only ten years, only ten years.

And I've brought you some luquat plants, let's plant them. He got a greater shock than a person when he's told he's got AIDS. He says, only ten years to live.

He says, I live for myself, for my farm, for fishing and for shooting. Stop! For now, from now on, I'll only live for God. The last ten years.

And he did it. And he did it. But he didn't even live ten years.

When those luquats flowered for the first time, I think after five years, he died. But he died a blessed day. His wife was very, very out of the ordinary musical.

She was my mother's sister. But she couldn't teach anybody to play the piano. Because when she taught them, they said, why can't you play those notes? There, it is written.

Just sit down and play those notes. So very clever people usually are bad teachers. They can't understand those that haven't got brains like them.

So when he lay on his deathbed, all can understand English for a moment. When he lay on his deathbed and the children around and the wife, he said, music, music. And one of the children said, Mama, he wants you to play the piano.

She said, no, no, no, music. A heavenly choir came down to sing for him when he left this world and went to the one whom he loved the last five, six years of his life. When he left this world and went to the one whom he loved the last five, six years of his life.

He would come back late at night. And it was before the time of the cell phone where you could phone your wife and say, I'm going to be late. He would be out late telling others about the Lord Jesus.

Now may I ask you a personal question? Now may I ask you a personal question? When I am tending to Jesus, When I am tending to Jesus, Jesus said, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these? In English, we've just got the word love. Just one word. And yet we can't distinguish sometimes between love and lust.

Three different words in Greek define love. We use love for all three. Let me just refer to two of them.

So Phileo and Agape. So Jesus was saying to him, Simon, do you Agape me? He answered and said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I Phileo you.

Agape in Greek refers to God's love. That which is only of God, which is a self-sacrificing love, which lays down its life, loving the world, laying down his life. The Phileo love is more that platonic love towards a friend.

A strong affection to a person. So Jesus was asking Peter, do you have this godly love, Agape love? And Peter said, yes, Lord, you know all things that I have this Phileo love to you. Jesus said, well, shepherd my and feed my lambs.

Asking again, Jesus said, Peter, do you have this Agape love towards me? And Peter said, Lord, you know all things that I have Phileo love towards you. Jesus said, then shepherd my sheep. Then the third time Jesus asked Peter again, Peter, do you just Phileo me? Do you have this Phileo love towards me? And it was then that Peter's heart was broken.

That is what made him to feel so hurt and wounded him so when Jesus said, what, do you love me just as a friend with just Phileo love, not with Agape love? Now let me ask this personal question, dear brother, dear sister, sons and daughters, do you love Jesus with a godly love, Agape, or do you just Phileo him? Dear friend, listen attentively, I don't want you to go through this without looking at this question in your eyes. Do you love Jesus? Or is there no Agape love in you? You don't think about him, you forget, he is a heavy wheel behind the wheel. You will not call upon him if there is something wrong with one of your wills.

He is not a heavy wheel. Dear brother, listen attentively, I don't want you to go through this without looking at this question in your eyes. Final point.

How will we get this love? That should be everybody's aim, to have this love. That should be everybody's aim, to have this love. Jesus says in our text, he who has forgiven much, loves much.

There's no person without sin in this world. Many years ago I'd go to Pietermaritzburg at night, walk the streets, speak to the drunkards, try to help them. I went and visited Indians, Hindus, and I told one man, everybody has got sins.

He says no, I haven't got a sin. I say I'm sorry, I've got sins and you've got sins as well. He says of course, you are right.

When I walk out of the front door and I... He said, well, my sin is that sometimes I trample these insects like an ant, believing in the idea that, well, it must be the forefathers, the ancestral spirits that have gone into this ant and through reincarnation. That's my real sin, he said. I said, no, there's more to it than just that.

Your anger, your grudges, your bitterness, all these things, that's real sin. Have you ever seen your sin as sin? Are you to justify it like smoking? He says, well, I don't know. Is it wrong or is it right? I don't know whether it's really a sin.

You'll never stop it. But you see it in God's sight. You can even say smoked meat lasts longer.

You can try to justify it. But the day you recognize and see sin in God's light, the way God sees it, there'll be godly sorrow in your life and you'll say, God, I'm the greatest sinner. Please forgive me.

Godly sorrow worketh repentance. Godly sorrow brings repentance. Godly sorrow brings self-murder.

But godly sorrow brings repentance. If you see sin in God's light and how terrible it is, you can say, gentlemen, I'm a sinner. There's no one like me.

Paul said, I'm the greatest of all the apostles. That's how he saw his sin. And for the rest of his life, he said, I'm the smallest.

I'm not worthy to be called an apostle. That's true repentance. That's godly sorrow.

Godly sorrow brings self-murder. Godly sorrow brings self-murder. Once again, godly sorrow.

We speak about forgiveness. But have we really confessed the sin in the light of God and seen the awfulness of sin? Look at the cross where Jesus died. Because of that thing, Jesus was murdered.

The most murderous death that can be died. He died because of your sin. And if you realize that, then the life of sin is over.

And by the grace of God, never again. That anger, that anger, that anger is gone. And if that love can fill your heart.

Then you will love your brother. Even the enemy. And if you are white, even a black person.

Or an Indian. Because Jesus bloomed for them, and died for them. death.

And the Bible say, He what say? He had for God live, and not for his neighbor live, not for his brother. He is a liar, he is a liar. If you see your sins in the light of the cross, that it caused Jesus to have to be murdered on the cross, it makes a great difference.

Then you know what it is to have godly sorrow and repentance. And then you will love all people, realizing that Jesus bled and died for them too. You won't say, well, I dislike this type of person and discriminate and say that I don't like that person or whatever type.

But you'll have the love of God towards everybody. And then friends, you don't love those, only the big guys. On judgment day, Jesus will take the least, and the last, and the poorest, and say what you've done to him, you've done to me.

You can't love Jesus one drop, one iota more. Then the least in your eyes. And who is that? Who's the least in your eyes? And your heart doesn't go out.

And godly love to that person. Jesus will take the smallest, the least, the lowest. On the day of judgment, and say what you've done to that man, or woman, or child, you've done to me.

You'll be judged according to that for all eternity. You'll go into heaven, or you'll be doomed and damned forever and ever. Jesus will take the smallest, the least, the lowest.

And if you don't love the Lord Jesus, he might say to you, well, I was that sick person. Maybe that person with HIV that you did not visit. Jesus will say that last, that least one that was of no worth to you.

And like the rich man and the poor man that Jesus refers to in the Bible, the rich man just ignored completely the poor man who was dying of sores outside the gate. But it was that man who went to heaven, not the rich man. The Bible says God through his Holy Spirit has poured out his love into our hearts.

The overflowing of love. Have you got that love? The Bible says if you've got that love, you'll keep his word and it won't be difficult. If you've got that love, you can't help your brother and you won't be able not to feel and bleed for the least and the lowly.

Now, please pardon me, forgive me that I took so much of your time. Maybe you say it's the first time that I've sat so long in a church. But because of the importance of this matter, I said, may they bear with me.

We're facing eternal issues and you don't know when you'll die. It could be today or tomorrow. And woe to you if you've got to stand before God and you didn't love him more than others.

Let's stand and pray. We thank you Lord for all that you've done. We thank you that Dr. Lutuli could be in our midst.

Bless her, bless the work she's doing. May it mean much, not only to us, but to the whole country. And then your question to all of us.

Do you love me more than these? May it be a question that will be answered by everyone right now. May we face the squarely. And may it be true that that love is not just theory, but experience in our life and a reality.

That the curse won't come upon us, which comes to all those that don't love the Lord. Now God may your grace, Lord Jesus, be with us all. The grace to attain to this love.

Amen.

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