

An Un named Woman Worships

by Fred Tomlinson

This sermon delves into the powerful encounter between Jesus, a Pharisee, and a sinful woman, highlighting the woman's bold act of worship and Jesus' transformative love and acceptance. It emphasizes the unchanged and undiminished mission of Jesus to bring hope and restoration to those in despair, inviting listeners to respond to his call with abandon and experience the profound transformation that comes from encountering the Savior.

Scripture: Luke 7:36, John 10:27, Revelation 1:17, Psalm 29:2, John 4:23, Ephesians 6:12, Hebrews 13:8, John 6:37, Psalm 40:2, Psalm 40:3

Topics: "Bold Worship", "Transformative Love of Jesus"

Description

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Transcript

Hello, my name is Fred Tomlinson, and I am speaking to you from a house in Abbotsford, British Columbia. The house is a house that we refer to here as the Fellowship House. If any of you are interested in a bit more information, you might want to go to our website.

It's a very simple website. This is a house church in Abbotsford. The website address is simply mckenziefellowship.com. Take a look at it.

And if you want to leave a comment there, you're most welcome. You might want to leave a comment here on the YouTube or wherever you're watching this program. I assure you that I both appreciate the comments that so many of you are leaving.

And I thank God, just to know that there are people out there who are hungry for God in a deeper, richer way, and that you're enjoying these broadcasts. So please do that. In this session, I want to read a fairly long passage, 14 verses, from Luke's Gospel.

If you'd like to follow me in your Bible, please do. I'm in chapter 7 of Luke's Gospel, and I'm taking up the reading at verse 36. And one of the Pharisees desired him.

Of course, the hymn is in reference to Jesus. One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meet.

And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meet in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee, which had bidden him, saw, he spoke within himself, this man, if he were a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said unto Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.

And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors. The one owed 500 pence, and the other 50.

When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he for whom he forgave most. And he said to him, thou hast rightly judged.

And he turned to the woman, and said to Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, and thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. And thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven. For she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said to her, thy sins are forgiven.

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, thy faith has saved thee. Go in peace. You know, I think that's just a priceless story, truly, truly wonderful story.

And there's very much in the passage of Scripture that we'll be able to put some deep thoughts in our own hearts about ourselves. Let's do that, shall we? The way I'd like to start off my talk is by perhaps asking you to allow me to stretch your imagination a little bit. If you can imagine, you're watching a security camera lens on screen, which is situated in the home of this very rich Pharisee, this rich religious Pharisee's home.

And there's an event in progress at this point in time. And evidently, the Pharisee had invited many guests. And as we're looking at the camera and watching it, the group sitting around, talking, probably eating and drinking together, when suddenly, another figure enters the house.

It's a woman, she's uninvited, an uninvited guest, if you will. And she walks in to the room where the people are gathered, and sort of scandalously marches across the room, ignoring everyone present at the time, and she goes directly to Jesus. Look a little more closely.

In verse 37, we read there that this woman was a woman of the city. She was a sinner, it says there. And this is really very polite language to actually say that this woman was herself a prostitute.

And taking into account those who participate in that kind of activity, I think I could safely say that this woman who came into the house in this way was a woman whose life was just like today we'd refer to it as

a train wreck. She was in a mess. And I believe it would be true to say that her personal world was a world of moral darkness.

Her self-worth had been shredded. And she would be an epitome of hopelessness and almost universally rejected by the people of the community. And I believe I could also add to that, that it's very likely that her mind was just tormented continually by demonic voices and spirits.

And it may be, you know, that there are those who are listening to me as I express these things. Maybe your life is in some kind of mess as well. Maybe your circumstances are quite different from this woman's.

But nevertheless, I know from the experience of my own life and the people that I've met in the course of my journey, there are very, very many people who as a result of circumstances and activities in their lives that they've engaged in, have brought ruin or found ruin entering into their lives. And they just feel a sense of hopelessness. And it could be that the Holy Spirit has actually caused you to pause and just listen to this message even.

On this occasion, perhaps he has a word for you on this occasion. I trust that's so. Let me just say a word about the domain of spiritual darkness.

You know, there are lots of different ideas afloat about demons. And there's some weird and crazy ideas. I am aware of that.

But nevertheless, of course, the Bible has a lot to say about them. And certainly in the stories of Jesus, he encounters them not infrequently. And I would like to say to you that demon spirits are not all contained in witches' caverns or in some remote mission field.

I mean, when I was growing up in the church that I was raised in, and we never saw any activity of demonic spirits in our meetings, not that I can recall. But from time to time, we had missionaries who would return on their furloughs, and they would have their various stories to tell. And it's certainly true that it was not uncommon for them to share stories about evil spirit powers and demonic activity that they confront in the course of their ministry in those different places.

And we kind of accepted that. Well, that's what happens on mission fields in these faraway places. But you know, that's not the whole story.

That may very well be true. But I believe that there are demonic spirits and forces that are working even right within our church assemblies. And that shouldn't be shocking.

Maybe it is shocking to you, but it shouldn't be, because we know how the Scripture speaks about these powers and these spirits. I mean, the Apostle Paul describes them quite graphically in the last chapter of the book of Ephesians. And we're told in a variety of ways that we're involved in a spiritual conflict.

In other words, there are spiritual enemies that are working against us. It was Jesus who spoke about the enemy has come to steal and to kill and to destroy. Or we hear Peter talking about the enemy and going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

So these things are real. They're real today. And there are men and women who are hounded by these dark powers in one way or another to one effect or another.

And we in the course of our own lives and our own ministry have encountered these situations and people who are tyrannized by these powers. And we know with a certainty that these areas are very real and the powers are very strong. You know, I could suggest to you that there are many different ways in which these powers gain influence over our lives.

There's a verse of Scripture in the book of Ecclesiastes which says that if you destroy the hedge, the serpent will bite you. In other words, by our own activities, by our manner of life, by our carelessness or by engaging in certain activities, we actually are opening the door for these enemies who are really gatecrashers anyway. They're just looking for an opportunity to bring trouble and destruction into the lives of men and women.

And in teaching about this on other occasions, I have said that, you know, there are consequences for our different actions. For example, if we engage in areas of uncleanness, it's not to be surprised when there are spiritual powers that seize the opportunity to bring damage into the life of such people. But it's not only immoral behavior.

I mean, loads of other areas that we could think about. But on the other extreme, I'm thinking about false doctrine. I believe that false doctrine, teaching of the things concerning Scripture, which is twisted and distorted by the enemy for his own purpose, is something very real.

And not infrequently, we've encountered people who've come under false teaching, erroneous teaching. And it seems that has allowed the door to be opened for demonic influences to bring trouble into their lives. This is not an occasion for me to tell stories.

But we have stories. And another way that I've spoken about it is to say, you know, if you put your hand in the fire, you're going to get burned. Or if you jump in the swimming pool, you're going to get wet.

And if you play around in areas of spiritual darkness, there will be consequences, whoever you are, because that enemy is waiting there to steal, to steal your testimony, to bring ruin into your life, and into the lives of those around you, and so on. So, so much for that. But back to this woman in the story.

And some have claimed that, well, it's quite obvious that at some moment prior to this occasion, when she comes barging into the home of the Pharisee, she must have heard about Jesus. Well, I can't deny that. And I think it's a very rational conclusion to come to.

But you know, taking into account this situation that we're finding here, the fact that there's nothing random about this woman as she comes into the house, she comes in boldly and decisively, she knows exactly why she's come in and she knows what her purpose is and for which she's come into the house. And there had to be more than the fact that she just heard him speaking when he'd been speaking to a crowd at some point or other. But I think, I think if we, if we rewind the cameras, rather, we can think about her boldness, we can think about just how shameless she is as she comes in.

She's not concerned about anyone. She's not concerned about what people are thinking at all. And it's just like a lavish emotion that's flowing as she comes marching in.

She knows why she's there. So I suggest to you that it's, there must be more to this woman's life and experience than that she merely heard Jesus or heard about him, I mean to say. I believe she had actually seen him.

Surely she had seen him. She knew who she was looking for. She'd seen him.

And I'm thinking of a text of scripture in the first epistle of John, right at the beginning of that epistle where John is talking there about Jesus and the privilege of his own life and the lives of his contemporaries, his fellow disciples. But John says, we saw this incarnated son of God. He said, we saw him.

And then he goes on to enlarge upon that. He said, and we have gazed upon him because they were filled with wonder and they gazed upon who is this man? And there must have been many, many times when they watched Jesus in his various activities and listened to him, his speaking, and they would think to themselves, who is this man? And you know, I believe that when this woman with all of her troubles and the bundle of stuff that she was carrying around with her found herself looking at Jesus, I believe she was transfixed. I believe she gazed upon him because he was unlike any man that she had ever met in her life.

He belonged to a different universe. Do you remember another woman? We read about her in John chapter four, and frequently referring to that story, we talk about her as the woman at the well. And without retelling the story on this occasion, you remember how she had met Jesus at the well when she was there to fetch water.

And there's a conversation that takes place between her and Jesus. And as the result of all that was said and all that she'd experienced, the text of scripture says that when she went back to the city, she went back, this is how it's worded, she went back to the men and said to them, come and see a man that has told me all things that ever I did. Do you see that? And those words caught my attention many, many years ago.

And just the way she went to the men and said, come and see a man. He was a man such as she had never met in her life before. She knew men, but she'd never met a man like this man.

And this is certainly true for this unnamed woman in this passage of scripture. And everything about him was so different. I believe it would be true to say, this is how I read this text, that as she stood somewhere, almost certainly in a crowd, and there was Jesus at the center, and she's looking at him, she's watching him, she's gazing at him, she's listening to the words that he's speaking.

And I believe that while she was completely captivated by him, that what I would like to call the raging storm of emotion and trouble in her own heart just somehow ceased. And his voice was like the balm of Gilead. And somehow that steel like door of her heart that she locked to seeking to protect herself, no doubt, became open.

She became vulnerable as she listened to him. And you know, there's something that she could never have known on that occasion. And it was this, I believe that that woman in spite of her lifestyle and all her behaviors and all of her sin and immorality, little did she know, but she was one of this great shepherd's sheep.

She didn't know that. How could she know that? But the fact is, as she stood there, this woman, she was listening to the voice of the great shepherd. And that reminds us of what Jesus was teaching in John chapter 10, when he said, my sheep hear my voice, or they, and again, they know my voice.

And without this woman being able to analyze and understand exactly what was going on. Put very simply, I believe as she watched this man, Jesus, and she listened to Jesus, and she listened not only to what he was saying, but the tones of his voice, and she felt something was happening inside of her inner being.

Something was resonating, something was reaching out to this man, as he was speaking.

And you know, I don't believe for a moment that this happened literally. But I believe in her heart, she ran to him. She was drawn to him on that occasion.

And somehow, somehow his sheer presence impacted her, I believe, in such a way that she felt as though she was being translated into another realm, something was opening up to her heart and to her mind that she had never contemplated before. She was being loved, she was being loved by the Son of God, actually. And it was impacting her dramatically.

And I believe it's this that explains her passionate behavior, which we were thinking about as she entered the home of the Pharisee. You know, all this reminds me of some great words of Charles Wesley, Charles Wesley, the great hymn writer of yesteryear. One of his verses goes like this, in reference to this shepherd man, this great Jesus, the Son of God, he wrote, he speaks, and listening to his voice, new life the dead receive, the mournful broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.

And I believe that's exactly what was going on when that woman stood and listened to Jesus and watched him. You know, what is the message that we're to take from this story, as we're sort of moving through here a little on this occasion? Well, I'd like to suggest that it's this, that this Jesus, as we know from another text in Hebrews, he's the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so the way we saw him there in this sort of cameo that we've been looking at, that's the way he is, what he was doing, the impact he was making on these lives, on this woman's life, is exactly what happens today.

He may be doing that for you, even as I'm speaking to you, but he still beams light into prison cells. He still speaks to dead souls, and they wake up. You know, he still causes chains to fall off.

This is our Jesus. He causes steel prison doors to fly open. You know, he makes wounded spirits whole.

He takes vile people and makes them pure and holy. Amen, and amen. Believe that.

He's not changed, his ministries are not changed. Whether we're exposed to that kind of ministry in our churches is not the issue really. The primary issue is to know and understand that his mission is unchanged.

His purpose is unchanged as he speaks to men and women, or as he speaks perhaps to some of you today. Amen. Now watch this in the passage.

I'm looking in verse 38 again, where I'll just read that verse. And this woman stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment. Amen.

What was she doing? I'll tell you what she was doing. She was worshipping God. That's what happened.

She was worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness. She was giving to the Lord the glory due to his name, as Psalm 29 puts it. Amen.

Look closely at her as she worships. If we're on the same page together, there is a woman who is worshipping Jesus in spirit and in truth. Watch how it takes place and weigh it against modern trends today.

You know, what was going on there didn't involve a band or skilled musicians. There was no leader of this worship. There was no special prayer that she prayed.

As a matter of fact, so far as we know, she never even uttered one word. Her worship was an action, and it was an action of response. She was acting based on what she had seen.

I believe, and I've said this many, times over the years, that true worship is a response to a revelation. I mean, just for one example, just think of the Apostle John as we find him in Revelation 1 on the Isle of Patmos. Just this one line comes to my mind, which is dynamite.

It says, and when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. There's true worship, and there's the explanation for that worship. It was an action, a spontaneous action, which was a response to what he saw, what God opened his eyes to see.

Amen. And this is exactly what was going on with this woman. She was worshipping this man for, and I don't know another way to express this, but because of his wholly set-apartness.

He was different in the extreme to anyone she had ever known, and her worship was all about him. It was not about herself. She didn't sing a song like here I come to worship or something.

No, no, no. This was far more profound than that. She was preoccupied with him entirely.

She wasn't thinking about what she was doing. She just did it, and her action was all about him, and it was utterly and completely self-effacing. And the Hebrew word for worship, it basically means to bow down, and that's what she was doing.

She bowed down. She hurried into the room. She went directly to Jesus, and she goes down on her knees before him, and she bows her life down to him.

This worship was passionate. It was so passionate that it eclipsed everything, every other thought, every other reason. It eclipsed her reputation.

It eclipsed the way she was dressed. I don't know how she was dressed, but it eclipsed that. It eclipsed the fact that she'd intruded into this house in such a bold and outrageous manner.

It eclipsed the cost, because there was no doubt a significant cost to the ointment that she brought in and spilled all over him. But that didn't matter. She was spilling her life over him.

She was giving her all to him. She was worshipping the Father in the way that he's seeking worship. Do you remember? Again, that's from John chapter 4, verse 23, that the Father seeks those who are worshipping him in spirit and in truth, and I believe that that's exactly what this unnamed woman was doing.

That brings us to this question. Are you a worshipper? Are you a true worshipper of God? Really, we're not discussing singing worship songs. That's for another occasion.

We're talking about true worship. What is the essence, the very heart, the core? What is worship at its core? What is the kind of worship that God loves? I think we're seeing it exemplified and expressed in this woman that we're looking at here. Whenever you do, don't make the same mistake that the Pharisee made.

He was a religious spectator. It was interesting what we read there, wasn't it? He talks to himself. He doesn't articulate his thought.

He said within himself, we read, but then Jesus, the next verse says, Jesus answered him and said such and such and such and such. The fact is, Jesus knew exactly what this Pharisee was thinking as he watched what was going on. Amen.

But before we leave this woman in this situation, just glance back for a moment longer and consider what she found there in those precious moments when she was isolated with him in that busy, occupied room. In those moments of closeness to Jesus, she drank, I believe, of that clear stream of water, that water that flows down the golden street in New Jerusalem, the holy life of God. She drank it there in those moments as she worshipped him.

I believe it with all my heart. Amen. And she knew that he would accept her.

How did she know that? How did she know she wouldn't just get booted out even by the man she comes to? She just knew that wouldn't happen. She knew he was a different kind of man. That would not happen.

She knew somehow intuitively that she was accepted by the beloved. Amen. And how right she was.

How right she was. He would not reject her. He never rejects those who come to him.

Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out or cast away. Isn't that wonderful? And according to the text, he counted her expression of love and worship as her faith in him. It was counted to her as faith.

And as the result, he said to her, when it was all done, he said, go in peace. Hallelujah. And that woman, I can see her in my imagination as she left.

She also left the house of demons where she lived and she stepped into another house. She stepped into the father's house and she stepped into his house, a brand new woman. Glory be to God.

Well, what's the takeaway for us from this passage and from my talk to you on this occasion? Well, I believe this all reminds us of the fact that of the utter preciousness of Jesus himself, his mission remains unchanged and undiminished. His ministry is the same. He's still taking men and women out of horrible pits and out of miry clay.

He's still setting their feet on solid ground, on the solid rock. Amen. And he's still putting that song in their mouths.

He's still doing it. Glory to God. And his mission, as I've been saying, is unchanged.

Amen. Undiminished. This is our Jesus.

And this other takeaway I'm thinking of is not just the preciousness of Jesus, but I'm thinking of the profound transformation that took in this woman. She kind of heard him call her name and she ran to him. She ran to him in utter abandon of everyone and of everything that was her life.

And she took her place at his feet. Let me ask you a question as I close here. Could it be that he's calling your name today? If he is, I encourage you strongly, run to him.

Run to him. He'll not reject you, no matter what you've done. When he chose you, he knew exactly who you were.

He wasn't choosing anyone because they were good people or they were wonderfully moral or filled with good deeds. He didn't choose people on that basis at all. It's his grace that he chooses men and women who in many cases are in real trouble.

We're all in trouble. And yet he chose us. And he chose this woman.

And he may be making himself known to you by his Holy Spirit and through his word on this occasion. And so I encourage you. At an early moment, get alone with God.

Get down before him. You might want to do that even physically, to kneel down in his presence and bow your life down before him and respond in the way that this woman responded to Jesus. And watch what the results of that will be.

Amen. May God bless you. Leave a comment.

And rest assured, I won't know who you name unless you tell me. But we'll be praying. Those of us who gather together, we pray for the people who go on these websites.

And particularly for those who are responding to the word of God, those who are hungry for God. May God bless you richly. In Jesus name.

Amen. Amen.

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