

Precious Praise

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon 'Precious Praise' highlights the transformative power of love and worship in recognizing our forgiveness through Christ.

Duration: 17:42

Scripture: Psalm 95:6, Matthew 22:37-39, Matthew 25:40, Luke 7:36-50, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Praise"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on a story from the book of Luke where Jesus is invited to have dinner at the house of a Pharisee named Simon. During the meal, a woman enters the house and begins to worship Jesus by washing his feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair, and anointing them with perfume. Jesus uses this opportunity to teach a lesson about forgiveness and love. He tells a parable about two debtors who are both forgiven by a moneylender, and asks Simon which debtor would love the moneylender more. The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and serving others, using the woman's act of worship as an example.

Transcript

I just want to read you one story, and let's just look at it quickly. What I want to do now to end the service, we've prayed for needs, but how about just loving on Jesus for a little bit? Okay? I want to end on a sweet note of loving Jesus. This is a picture of some of the purist worship.

We learned some lessons from it. Luke, let's look. When one of the Pharisees, probably a guy named Simon, invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisees' house and he reclined at the table.

You know, they didn't use chairs like the singers are sitting. When they ate in the Middle East, they had cushions, and they laid on the side. Their feet went off to the side and the back, which we're going to notice now, and they leaned on one arm, and that's how they ate, from the table.

Totally different than what we do, sitting at a table on an erect chair and all that. He reclined, notice he reclined at the table. A woman in that town, probably Mary Magdalene, who was known as a sinner and a prostitute, in that town, who lived a sinful life, that's the Greek word there, is the word they use for a woman of the street.

She learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisees' house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. So what they did was, the women of that day wore something around their neck, and in it was a little vial, and then was the precious ointment or perfume, and some of it, if you had enough, was worth like half a year's salary. This was a very precious commodity, and she had a little of her own there that she had in a vial, and as she stood behind him at his feet, notice as he's reclining, she's behind him at his feet, and she's weeping, and she begins to wet his feet with her tears, and then she wiped them with her hair, and then she kissed his feet, and she poured perfume on them.

Notice this takes time. This precious ointment to other onlookers seems like a waste. Why would you pour something precious on somebody's feet when you anoint someone, you anoint their head back in that day, but on his feet, but before the perfume hit his feet, the tears were so copious, they hit his feet, and she wiped them with her hair, not a towel.

When the Pharisee who had invited him, Simon, let's say, saw this, he said to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him, and what kind of woman she is, that she is a sinner is the word used depicting a woman as a woman of the street. If this man were a prophet, he would know who's touching him, what kind of woman she is, she's a sinner. The rabbis and the high-ranking students of the well-known rabbis had six rules that they had to obey.

One of the rules was, you never eat with common people. Number two, you never speak to a woman. So if you were a leading rabbi and a teacher, you were aloof from the people, you didn't sit down and eat with common people, who knows how they could contaminate you spiritually, ceremonially.

And number two, you don't talk to a woman. Woman is beneath you, you don't talk to her. Now Jesus was doing both, eating with common people, and now he was letting this woman not only talk to him or worship him, love him, but touch him.

That would be unthinkable for any rabbi. Jesus answered him. He knew what he was thinking.

Simon, I have something to tell you. Tell me, teacher, he said. Two people owed money to a certain money lender.

One owed him 500 denarii. A denarii was a coin, and it was equal to one day's wages. So if you made 365 denarii, you made one denarii a day.

But it took up a whole day to earn a denarii. So Jesus said, one man owed somebody, a money lender, 500 denarii. The other one owed him 50.

So let's do dollars. So someone owed a guy \$500. Another guy owed the same man \$50.

Neither of them had the money to pay him back. They were both busted. One didn't have 500.

The other one didn't have 50. And then out of nowhere, out of pure grace, he forgave the debts of both. Now, which one of the men will love him more? Who will love the money lender more? The one who was forgiven \$500 or the one who was forgiven \$50? Both of them had a big favor done to them.

And Jesus said, which one will love him more? The one who was forgiven 500 or the one who was given 50? Well, Simon, not knowing that this was going to hit home to him in a second, Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven, the one who was forgiven 500. You have judged correctly,

Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, do you see this woman? I came into your house.

You did not give me any water for my feet. Back in those days, hardly anything was paved. The Romans were the first to pave the roads a little bit, but most everything was dust.

And what they wore was a sandal, which was nothing more than a flat little piece of something with one little strap usually over it. And when you walked on these dusty roads and you just had like a little slipper sandal with a little latch it over it, your feet got filthy, your feet got dirty. So when you came in the house, you automatically in those houses, you took off your shoes and you laid them by the door.

You didn't walk in with those dirty sandals. So Jesus said it was then the job of the servant usually to take water and wash the guest's feet. That was showing hospitality.

Remember what Jesus did at the last supper? He took the place of his servant and he took his garment and he knelt and he washed the disciples, what? Their feet. He's saying, be a servant. You wanna be like me? Be a servant.

Don't be high and mighty. Don't be full of yourself. Get low and follow my example.

So now he says to the man, I came in your house, you did not give me any water from my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered had not stopped kissing my feet. When they met in those days as they still do now, like Italians do it in certain parts of Europe, they do both sides.

You kiss the man, man with man, you kiss the other cheek. Sometimes you just kiss one on the cheek. He said, you didn't kiss me.

You didn't welcome me like that, but she didn't kiss my cheek. She kissed my feet going someplace with this. You did not put oil on my head, but has not stopped kissing my feet.

She might've been kissing his feet while he spoke. You did not put oil on my head. That was the way you greeted someone on a hot, dusty day.

You poured precious oil on his head. That was a sign of, I wish you peace, and it was an expensive way of saying, you're welcome in my house. Jesus said, Simon, you not only didn't wash my feet, you not only didn't give me the kiss of greeting, you never once thought of welcoming me into the house and anointing my head, but she has poured perfume not on my head, which would have been proper.

She poured it on the extremities of my body, on my feet. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven as her great love has shown, but whoever has been forgiven little loves little. Then Jesus said, your sins are forgiven.

The other guests began to say among themselves, who is this who even forgives sins? Jesus said to the woman, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. So don't be mistaken.

The only thing that brings us close to the master and brings forgiveness is faith. But what Jesus is teaching here is not love, although she loved him because she had faith in him and she somehow knew who he was and they were religious leaders and didn't know. Simon the Pharisee didn't have a clue and this woman of the street, she knew.

Oh, I'm so glad that God is merciful, aren't you? What he was saying is this, if the guy who has forgiven 500 bucks, he loves and appreciates more than the guy who was forgiven 50 bucks. And then Jesus is saying, listen Simon, here's the way it works. The one who has been forgiven a lot of sins loves more than the one who has been forgiven a little sin.

On the surface of that, that doesn't sound right. It sounds like it's not fair. If I've lived a better life than some person who's really been out there, I'll never be able to love Jesus as much as they do because they sin more and I sin less.

And Jesus said, the one who's forgiven much, the same loves much. But brothers and sisters, don't you get it? It's just in your mind that you've been forgiven little. All of us have been forgiven so much.

There's not one little sinner here. We're all big, fat, 24 carat sinners here. How many say aloud, amen? And when you see that and have faith in Jesus, you love him so much.

It's not that Jesus said, no, some have a better chance at loving me more because they've sinned more. That's not what that's teaching. It's if you just open your eyes and think what he has done for you.

How much should we love him tonight? Look at me before I close and have the singers come. If it wasn't for his grace and his love, stop and think. I don't wanna know where you're gonna go in your mind now, but just think because you know and I know me.

Where might you be tonight if it wasn't for the grace of Jesus? Where might God find some of us if it wasn't for his love? He reached down into what kind of terrible place for all of us? See, the Pharisee thought he was better than the harlot because he said, no, I might probably sin, but I'm a holy man. And girl was just like, I don't have a chance, but I know somehow that he loves me and we all need to become like her. Notice the time she took to worship him because that's what I wanna do.

I just wanna take a few minutes here to take time. Isn't he worthy to be worshiped? Is he not worthy to be adored tonight by all of us? Should we not take time to do it? You know, if you love someone and you go up to them and you go, yeah, so great to see you. I really love you.

Let's get married someday. Bye, I'll see you maybe next week or two weeks later. Someone say, what kind of person is that? He doesn't love her.

He doesn't wanna spend time and tell her over and over again, I love you. You know, when you really love someone, love sneaks out even when you don't know it's coming. You're sometimes driven to say, I love you over and over again, I love you.

It's that way with your children and your grandchildren. You keep saying, I love you, I love you, I love you. That's what she was doing.

She had abounding love, overflowing love. But notice what she fought through to really worship Jesus. First of all, she had to fight through her own condemnation.

Think of the courage it took being who she was to walk into that house and take her place next to him and start to wipe his feet with her hair and weep and cry over them and anoint his feet with that oil. Because the devil probably was telling her, don't go near him, you've lived such a soil life. How dare you approach the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords? He's the precious lamb of glory.

He's the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and you're some nobody in the street. How dare you come? I'm so glad that God helps us to fight through how the devil tries to, can we say amen to that? The devil tries to hold us back. You're not worthy.

Who do you think you are to just come and worship Jesus? Notice this other last thing. She had to fight through their stares, not only her own self-consciousness. Tonight as we close this service, would you please in the name of Christ overcome your self-consciousness and how other people you think might be looking at you because when she walked into that house and there were more people than Simon the Pharisee, she got every stare, she got every look and there were probably some people saying, who does she think she is? She's gonna walk up to him? I don't believe the nerve she had.

She had us to go by all those stares. It's as if she was saying, stares, S-T-A-R-E-S. She had to go past all of that as if to say, I don't care how anyone looks at me.

I don't care how they mock me or laugh at me. I'm gonna worship my Jesus. Come on, let's put our hands together.

I'm gonna worship. I don't care what anybody thinks. I don't care if anyone scoffs or laughs.

You know what holds a lot of us back from really worshiping with all of our heart, in spirit and in truth? Our miserable pride, our self-consciousness. How do I look? Someone might say, what are you doing? Oh, to fight through all of that, our sins, the devil condemning us, fight through all of that. No, I'm gonna worship my God.

I'm gonna sing praises to him. I'm gonna thank him. He's been so good.

One more time. I am so blessed. We are so blessed.

There were two smells in that room. In the spirit, there was the smell of stinking self-righteousness from Simon who didn't understand that when you realize what God has done for you, that love abounds. You love him so much.

Someone says, no, don't be fanatical. Don't be crazy. Oh, listen, I'm not gonna listen to you.

You don't know where he brought me from. You don't know what he dragged me out of. You don't know the pit.

You don't know how many times I failed him and he never threw me away. Don't tell me not to worship Jesus. I'm gonna worship my Jesus.

There was a smell of that judgmentalism. That's what's in some churches and among Christians, unfortunately, and in the world, self-righteousness, looking down at people. But there was another smell.

Notice this. The ointment that she spilled on his feet, we learn in another gospel, it filled the whole house. When you walked in that house, you would've gone, that is so sweet and beautiful.

What is that smell? It was her worship. Before God, worship has a smell. It's sweet.

To be honest with you, I've smelt it from you. I've walked in this building as God is my holy witness and see you worshiping God sometimes. I've seen some of the people behind me singing and worshiping God

and it makes me jealous.

It fills the room with a beautiful smell of praise to Jesus. Other people are affected. You know what it also does? You ever be in some place where a lady's wearing really expensive Chanel? What number is that? Chanel number what? Nine.

Chanel number nine. And it's so, is it Chanel number nine? Five. Oh, I'm sorry.

Nine is even better. It's Polish. We Polish people, we use nine.

We don't fool with five. But anyway, it gets on you and it stays on you. When you worship God, it stays on you.

It's like a spiritual fragrance. But is there anybody here who just, Pastor, I just want to linger a little bit more with you. And I feel like Mary Magdalene.

I want to pour precious ointment on his feet. I want to weep at his feet. I want to dry him with my hair.

He's just been so good to me. You can step out of your seat and just come in for a few more minutes. Everybody who loves Jesus, put your hands together with me.

We love you, Jesus. We love you, Jesus. We love you, my Savior.

We love you, Jesus. We praise you, my Jesus. We love you, my Jesus.

And as we get ready now to walk out of the building, can I tell you a secret? There's another way of worshipping Jesus and loving him, serving him, showing your love for him. When you love one another. He said, when you do it to the least of these, we don't have them here to bathe his feet with our tears, wipe it with our hair.

But we can love one another. We're gonna have a great Sunday. Invite someone to come with us.

God's gonna do something incredible this Sunday. How many are with me? Say, amen. You invite somebody.

Right now, everybody turn and hug somebody. The Lord be with you.

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