

The Motivation of the Gospel

Luke 7:36-50 (ESV) ³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven - for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

1. The Gospel is the power of God that saves us and sustains us until the Lord

brings us home. "Preach the Gospel to yourself every day," writes one of my favorite authors,

Jerry Bridges. **2. I define the Gospel as the Good News of Jesus Christ that causes us to**

be born again and keeps us growing in the Christian faith our entire lives. It is God's

power working in us and God promises to keep working in us and never let go of us.

Philippians 1:6 (NLT2) *"⁶ And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."* **3. The good**

work is the Good News of Jesus Christ birthing faith inside of you causing you to believe

in and trust Jesus forever and ever. I like the way the Message puts it, **Philippians 1:6**

(MSG) *"⁶ There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this*

great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.”

Every time you open your Bible, God has something to say to you. You do not experience the Good News, found only in the Bible, if you fail to open it up. Your faith Christ is not growing or maturing unless you are opening up your Bible so God can speak to you. Please hear this, as you are in the Bible throughout the week, when you come to worship your soul will be able to take in much more. Your soul will be thrilled to hear the word taught here for you have been eating the Word of God all week long. What you read during the week prepares you to be a better hearer of God's word here.

My granddaughter without teeth is able to eat soft solid food and digest it. As you eat the solid food of God's word during the week, you are able to digest more solid food on Sundays and you won't still need to be bottle fed with milk. You have teeth to chew the Good News, digest it, and grow in the faith. "Faith comes by hearing the hearing of the Word of God." When you open the Word God goes to work on the inside of you. This is what occurs. Philippians 2:13 (NLT2) *"¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."* Your soul needs the nourishment of the Word even as your body needs food in order to live and be healthy.

We are going to take a look at the motivating power of the Gospel through the experience of three people. 1. A sinful woman who met Jesus, 2. A highly respected Jew who encountered the holiness of God, and 3. A self-righteous Pharisee who discovered he was dead wrong (Jerry Bridges, Bob Bevington, The Book Ends of the Christian Life, I am using their outline and insights for this Lenten series of 2023).

4. The Gospel has the power to change any person's life, no matter how sinful. We come to church to hear the Gospel and we leave to give it away. In Luke 7 we find a woman of great sin encountering Jesus. The story begins with an important religious leader, a Pharisee

by the name of Simon, who invited Jesus into his home for dinner. Jesus and the other guests were reclined at the table with their feet behind them as was the custom of the day. The woman “who had been around the block several times so to speak” entered the room with a flask of expensive ointment to anoint the feet of Jesus.

In those days when a special guest was invited to a meal it was not unusual for uninvited guests to enter and sit around the edges of the room so they could listen to the table talk so to speak. What made this incident rather surprising was that a woman whose ill-repute was well known would dare to enter Simon’s home, a super religious Pharisee.

The point is this woman was on a mission and nothing was going to deter her. She did not go to the edge of the room, she lined up to Jesus. She stood at His feet weeping so much so that Jesus’ feet became quite wet with her tears. She let her hair down, a no-no in those days, and used her hair to wipe the feet of Jesus. She bent even lower and kissed the feet of Jesus and anointed His feet with the expensive ointment. The question is why did she do this?

The Pharisee saw her action and drew the conclusion that Jesus was no prophet, or else he would have known what her business was and would never have allowed himself to be touched by such a person, such a low life sinner. I’m sure the self-righteous Pharisee thought, “there has never been such a person in my home.”

Jesus discerned the thoughts of Simon toward himself and responded. There was a money lender who had two debtors, two persons who owed him money. One owed him 500 pieces of silver and the other owed him 50 pieces of silver. Neither man could pay so the moneylender cancelled both debts. Jesus asked Simon, “Which of them will love him more?” Simon said, “The one, I suppose for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” Jesus said, “You have judged rightly” (story taken from Luke 7:36-50).

Jesus spoke to Simon and compared his uncaring treatment from Simon to the woman’s super surprising act of extreme kindness. Jesus put Simon in his place saying, “He

who is forgiven little, loves little.” **5. Because of the sin of self-righteous, Simon sensed no need of forgiveness from Jesus, he showed little love if any toward Jesus.**

On the other hand, the sin filled woman lavished her love on Jesus because she realized that she had been forgiven much. Presumably the woman had previously encountered Jesus, and He had announced to her that her sins were forgiven at that time. **6. She was not forgiven because she loved much; she loved Jesus much because she had been forgiven much** (ibid. pg. 33). **Here are the three steps that occurred.**

We can easily see three steps in the woman’s experience. **1. She became deeply convicted of her many sins when listening to the teachings of Jesus.** **2. She received from Jesus the assurance that her sins were forgiven.** It is these 2 steps, deep conviction of sin and assurance of forgiveness, that prompted the third step. **3. Love and gratitude on her part toward the Lord Jesus.** The dinner at Simon’s gave her the opportunity to display outwardly what Jesus had done for her inwardly. She displayed much love because she had been forgiven much. This was her act of worship unto Jesus. She received the love and forgiveness of Jesus, and it changed her forever. Friends, when we receive forgiveness of sins, we take on the special fragrance of Jesus. **7. I quote, “genuine love for Christ comes through (1) an ever-growing consciousness of our own sinfulness and unworthiness coupled with (2) the assurance that our sins, however great, have been forgiven through His death on the cross.** Only love that is founded on both of these foundations can be authentic and permanent. If we find we lack love for the Savior, one or both of these prerequisites are deficient (ibid. pg. 34).

The woman already knew the forgiveness of Jesus. Jesus announced it publicly so all could hear that her well known sins were forgiven. All knew of her reputation. I think she floated home filled with love from Jesus and for Jesus. **8. This is what we call experiencing the power of the Gospel. It motivates us to lay down our lives in humble and loving service**

out of gratitude for grace (ibid 35). When is the last time you anointed the feet of Jesus, humbling yourself as an act of worship and service, overwhelmed with all that Jesus has done for you? When we obey Jesus, Jesus is honored, and we get blessed.

Moving on from a sin-filled woman we look next at a highly respected Jew, namely Isaiah. We do not know much about Isaiah other than he had a ministry in and around Jerusalem and had an open-door policy with the Kings of Judah. He was a highly influential person, an upper crust person. Today we would say he had access to the Whitehouse.

Isaiah had an encounter with God that was literally out of this world. His encounter with God is why Isaiah is my favorite Old Testament prophet. In college Isaiah 6 became one of my favorite portions of Scripture and still is to this day. **Isaiah 6:1-4 (ESV) ¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.**

The Hebrew language does not have superlatives like we do. Such as you are smart, you are smarter, you are the smartest. In Hebrew when the angels announce God as holy, holy, holy, it means that God is infinitely holy. There is no one holier than God. Isaiah was lifted up into the Presence of the Holy One. I, myself, have pondered his experience for over 45 years. The entire scene is a revelation of God's holiness and Isaiah's acute awareness of his own sinfulness. Isaiah cries out from the depths of his being, **Isaiah 6:5 (ESV) ⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"**

Yes, there is nothing greater than experiencing the holiness of God. It is also a terrible experience for Isaiah felt the weight of his own sinfulness compared to the holiness of God. He felt undone. He felt as if his entire being was disintegrating, completely and literally being torn apart. His life was naked before God, and it did not look good at all. He saw the entirety of all his sins from eternities perspective. He thought he was going to die.

Isaiah's response is astounding for he is at the absolute opposite end of the spectrum compared to the sin-filled woman. He was part of the religious elite and more than likely well to do financially. In other words, he was more righteous than most, at least in his own eyes, and the eyes of his peers. **9. "But righteous though he was in outward morality, in light of God's infinite holiness Isaiah essentially placed himself on the same plane as the woman.**

Isaiah found himself in deep anguish until the angel, the seraphim was sent by God with a burning coal from the altar. Isaiah's lips were touched with the coal as these words were spoken. **Isaiah 6:6-7 (ESV) ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."** **10. Never had the words of forgiveness meant so much to Isaiah in light of God's holiness.** This experience shaped him for rest of his life, his preaching, teaching, and writing. It sparked him for a lifetime of ministry. When we know we are forgiven we get to experience the pleasures of God, for God is pleased. The pleasure of God far outweighs the pleasures of sin.

When the angel spoke words of forgiveness, Isaiah heard the Gospel. Like the woman, he felt his own sinfulness and assurance of God's forgiveness. **Isaiah 6:8 (ESV) ⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."** Isaiah gave his life in service to God motivated by the power of the

Gospel. Awareness of God's holiness, coupled with an awareness of our sinfulness and receiving the Gospel of forgiveness motivates us to live every day for the sake of Jesus.

Before Paul got knocked off his high horse by the Light and Voice of Jesus, he saw himself as completely righteous before God, until God proved him wrong, dead wrong. Paul was able to renounce any sense of his own righteousness as a way of being right with God. Instead, he relied solely on the shed blood and righteousness of Christ. Knowing that he was completely forgiven, God imputing the righteousness of Jesus inside of Paul motivated Paul to work harder than all of the apostles to spread the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus, everywhere for the rest of his life.

11. It is the power of the Gospel working inside of us that opens up our mouths to live and speak the Gospel for the Gospel is the power of God. To be a silent Christian is to hold back the motivating power of the Gospel just itching to get out of you. You and I are to gossip the Gospel, making it a part of our everyday speech. Friends, when you and I experience daily the fact that the righteousness of Christ dwells within us, then we are motivated as we see in the words of Paul, "I believe, therefore I speak. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God to all who believe." Amen and Amen.