

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

08 February 2026

Love and Forgiveness

Text: "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled. You have judged correctly, Jesus said." *Luke 7: 41-41*.

No two emotions common to human beings are more closely related than love and forgiveness. When these emotions are experienced together, they take on a certain unselfishness that is inexpressibly beautiful in its manifestation.

Perhaps the chief reason why the result of the expression of love and forgiveness is so winsome in a person is that it is the chief characteristic of God in his attitude toward humans.

Love and forgiveness radiated from Jesus Christ constantly.

Today's parable is one that, in spite of its brevity, contains a piercingly plain but accurately attractive description of God's love and forgiveness toward sinful humankind.

The audience.

Three persons are involved: Simon (a Pharisee), who had invited Jesus into his house for dinner; the woman, who, as Simon would have said, brazenly invaded the privacy of his house; and Jesus. To Simon the Pharisee, Jesus was an enigma.

To get a first hand opportunity to observe Jesus, and perhaps even to find a means whereby he could gain a theological advantage over Jesus, Simon decided to prepare a dinner and invite Jesus to come.

There, at close range he could watch Jesus' every move; he could analyze every word Jesus spoke.

The woman had been a prostitute.

The King James Version had Luke introducing the woman as one who was "a sinner".

The word used is synonymous with "harlot."

Simon knew immediately who she was.

In utter horror, this fastidious Pharisee watched this unclean woman cross his threshold and defile his home.

No doubt stunned speechless, he and his dinner guests watched as the woman came to where Jesus reclined on one of the couches arranged around the low table.

She stooped down beside Jesus while tears flowed freely on to his feet.

Then she loosened the tresses of her hair and wiped Jesus' feet dry.

From the folds of her robe, she took a vial of precious ointment and poured its contents on Jesus' feet.

Significant to understanding the audience is the contrast in the ways Simon and Jesus saw this woman.

Simon thought he knew who this woman was, but he knew only what she had been.

He drew his conclusion about her on the basis of his own inadequate human judgment.

This is typical of human nature.

But how did Jesus see her?

He knew this woman in a way Simon never could have known her, and he saw her as Simon never could have seen her.

Jesus showed the woman to Simon by comparing her with him.

Christ showed Simon that his boasted morality was as coarse as sackcloth and that the woman's

adoration was as fine as fine-spun silk.

The symbolism.

Jesus was pleading earnestly for the soul of Simon.

But he knew that he had to pierce through a gross misunderstanding of what God wanted from an individual.

The meaning is in the attitude of the moneylender, in relation to the proportion of the debt.

One debtor owed 500 pence, about one and a half year's wages the other only 50 pence, two months wages.

The extraordinary element is that the moneylender forgave them both.

He canceled both debts.

There, in the moneylenders mercy, flashes a picture of the grace of a forgiving God.

The man saw the bankruptcy of both debtors.

According to the laws of the day, they were both totally at his mercy.

But in a sweep of unbelievable forgiveness, he wiped out the debt of both men.

Jesus dealt with Simon at the point of his understanding.

Simon would have admitted that he was imperfect, all right; but at the same time he would have thanked God that he was not such a sinner as the woman was.

Actually, Simon's sin was the sin of the spirit, and sins of the spirit are always worse than sins of the flesh.

The symbolism Jesus was teaching, then, was that everybody is spiritually bankrupt in the presence of God.

He taught that there is forgiveness for all.

The application.

Simon saw himself as easy to forgive.

Christ reminded Simon that when he entered the house, he was not even given the most common courtesies that were always extended in Palestinian homes.

No servant waited at the door with a basin of water to wash his feet.

Simon, the host, did not give Jesus the customary kiss of greeting, nor did he practice the Eastern custom of placing a drop of fragrant perfume on Christ's forehead.

The woman saw herself as unworthy of forgiveness.

She washed Jesus' feet with her tears and lovingly dried them with her hair.

She kissed his feet, and she poured the entire contents of a costly bottle of perfume on him.

All this she did, not in payment for her forgiveness, but in a natural outflow of her love and gratitude for what he had done for her.

The saving faith of the woman was a gift from God.

Note what Jesus then said to the woman in Simon's presence: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

God gives us saving faith when we repent of our sins, and it becomes our means of entrance into the kingdom of God.

The most important thing that happened to this woman was the change that came to her.

Her sins were forgiven; she was given a new nature and was born into the family of God.

But something else happened that we cannot overlook: she outwardly expressed her new relationship with God.

She could not hide how she felt about the love and forgiveness she had received from the Lord.

What she did for him was a spontaneous outpouring of her love and gratitude.

Have you experienced the love and forgiveness of God in your life?

If so, does the world know it?