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Message: Jesus, Friend of Sinners

Text: Luke 7:36 - 8:3

Introduction

- A. Our crucified, risen Lord Jesus Christ has inspired each of the four gospel writers to make certain emphases of gospel application unique to the situations of the original recipients of their gospels.
- B. The particular emphases the Spirit of Jesus impresses on Luke include the “temple motif,” demonstrating Christianity is not a separate religion from Judaism, but its fulfillment, and the “outcast motif,” showing that the hope of Israel, Jesus the Messiah, has come to save not only Jews, but those whom Jewish leaders considered diminished or outcasts from God’s people, including the Gentiles.
- C. We have seen this outcast motif from the very beginning of Luke’s gospel with God gracing an elderly childless priestly couple with a child who would go before the Lord as His prophet. This motif permeates chapter 7 with Jesus healing a slave of a Gentile centurion, and raising to life the son of a widow in the small village of Nain. Chapter 7 concludes with Jesus holding up as an example of His gracious mercy His forgiving and saving a woman whose many sins were widely known in her village.

I. Jesus has a heart to forgive and save outcasts.

- A. 7:36-37 The setting: A Pharisee invited Jesus to dine at his house, and a woman known to be a sinner entered with an alabaster vial of perfume. This appears to be a similar yet different incident than that in Bethany near the end of Jesus’s ministry, as recorded in Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8.

Luke 7:36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined *at the table*.³⁷ And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining *at the table* in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,³⁸ and standing behind *Him* at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

- 1. Jesus makes Himself available to all types of people, including notorious sinners and Pharisees. The Pharisee, Simon (verse 40), though perhaps skeptical of Jesus, appears curious, and treats Him with reasonable cordiality.
- 2. Reclining at the table = U shaped table arrangement with low couches on which the guest would lay and lean on his left elbow/hand while eating with his right. Jesus’s feet would be away from the table at the end of the couch. E.g., at the last supper: John 13:23

There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.²⁴ So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking."²⁵ He, **leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom**, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"

3. While some dinners were closed to invited guests, at special meals the door of the home was left open, so uninvited guests could enter and stand/sit by the walls, hear the conversation, and perhaps beg for the leftovers. This appears to be such a meal. And so a woman who was a notorious sinner, hearing Jesus was present, entered the home and stood behind Jesus. ("sinner" in Luke: 17 verses vs 10x Matt/Mark)
1. We are all born sinners, unregenerate, unsaved children of wrath. There is none born righteous in God's eyes.

Romans 3:9 ... we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;¹⁰ as it is written, **"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;**

Romans 3:23 for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God,

2. Believers, being transformed by God's indwelling Spirit, still commit sins, yet no longer practice sin without repentance as a way of life.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 Indeed, **there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.**

1 John 3:7 Little children, **make sure no one deceives you;** the **one who practices righteousness is righteous**, just as He is righteous;⁸ **the one who practices sin is of the devil;** for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

3. So while all we believers still commit sin, God, in His Word, no longer calls us "sinners" in the sense of unbelievers, but instead calls us righteous .

Luke 1:5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.⁶ **They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.**

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were still/yet (eti) sinners,** Christ died for us.

Psalm 1:5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **sinner** in the assembly of **the righteous**.

- B. 7:38 This woman was a notorious sinner in this village, which could mean she was a prostitute, adulterer, she or her husband had a dishonorable vocation. But Jesus would

say in verse 47 that “her sins are many,” so her notoriety appears to be due to her actions versus merely being the wife or daughter of a tax collector or other disreputable social class. And she did bring a more costly ointment than mere olive oil, so she could have been a prostitute. Yet we see her with great emotion doing humble acts of love and service to Jesus. The emotion is deep, for the Greek word used to describe her weeping as wetting His feet with her tears (brecho), is a word meaning “to rain” (E.g., Matt. 5:45).

Luke 7:38 and standing behind *Him* at His feet, weeping, she began to wet (brecho) His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

- C. 7:39 Simon’s doubt and discomfort with Jesus’s acceptance of her is due to Simon’s wrong assumptions.

Luke 7:39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

1. Simon assumed Jesus was not a prophet, for a true prophet would be clairvoyant, and a true prophet of God would not welcome a sinner like this woman. Perhaps her touching him rendered Jesus “unclean.”
2. Simon’s discomfort and doubt illustrates Jesus’s characterization of the Pharisees’ and lawyers’ cynicism and desire to find fault with Jesus. What Jesus will receive from sinners, a Pharisee will reject.

Luke 7:34 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, **a friend of tax collectors and sinners!**'"

II. 7:40-50 What the woman had that Simon lacked - a faith in Christ that acted through love.

- A. Jesus tells Simon a parable on the relationship between forgiveness and love.

Luke 7:40 And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher."⁴¹ "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty."⁴² "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?"⁴³ Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

1. The very prophetic knowledge Simon thought Jesus lacked is revealed twofold - Jesus both knows the woman’s background and also Simon’s skeptical thoughts.
2. Simon’s response, “I suppose ...” possibly indicates the reluctant yet truthful answer on

one who realizes he just stepped into a trap.

3. denarius = 1 days wage for a soldier or laborer.
 4. The parable is a picture of God's grace to forgive sin, something which Simon should value.
- B. 7:44-46 Jesus contrasts His treatment by the woman versus Simon. If Jesus should not receive this woman, how much less should He receive Simon!

Luke 7:44 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 **she**, since the time I came in, **has not ceased to kiss My feet**.⁴⁶ "**You did not anoint My head with oil**, but **she anointed My feet with perfume**.

1. The woman's expression of love in contrast to Simon's omission of much lesser expressions.
 - a. **she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair** - you gave me no water for my feet
 - b. **she ... has not ceased to kiss My feet** - you did not greet me with a single kiss
 - c. **she anointed My feet with (expensive) perfume** - you did not anoint my head with olive oil
 2. Thot: How are we showing genuine interest and love versus polite unaffectionate courtesy to Jesus?
- C. 7:47,48 Jesus extends forgiveness to the woman, revealing His authority to forgive sins.

Luke 7:47 "For this reason I say to you, **her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much**; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."⁴⁸ Then He said to her, "**Your sins have been forgiven**."

1. Sincere love for Christ is always produced by sincere faith in Christ. Where such love exists, so does the faith by which we are justified. The verb "forgiven" in verses 47 & 48 are in the perfect passive, indicating that she came to saving faith in Christ prior to her acts of love.
2. "**he who is forgiven little, loves little**" might be a general maxim, not intended to imply that Simon loved Jesus at all or was forgiven at all.

D. 7:49 Pharisees response: "Who is this?" (But the woman knew.)

Luke 7:49 Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, **"Who is this man who even forgives sins?"**

Luke 5:20 Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, **your sins are forgiven you.**"²¹ The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, **"Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"**

E. 7:50 The faith by which she was saved was implicitly present in the woman who loved Jesus.

Luke 7:50 And He said to the woman, **"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."**

1. Faith, love, obedience are distinguished, but never separated.

Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, **you who are seeking to be justified** by law; you have fallen from grace.⁵ For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but **faith working** through **love.**

2. Westminster Confession of Faith 1646, CHAPTER IX, Of Justification

*II. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; **yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.***

3. Consequently, where no love for the Lord exists, no saving faith in the Lord exists.

1 Corinthians 16:22 **If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed.**
Maranatha.

James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, **he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

4. "Go in peace." Jesus desired to assure the woman of what the Pharisee would not assure a sinner - that having been justified by faith, she has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 7:50 And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; **go in peace.**"

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

III. 8:1-3 The Ministering Women: A Picture of Faith Working through Love

Luke 8:1 Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. **The twelve were with Him,² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses:** Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,³ and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

- A. Rabbis would not teach women. Jesus honored them. This continues Luke's outcast motif, that Jesus is the Savior of all people.

Luke 10:38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.³⁹ She had a sister called **Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word.**

- B. Of the women who traveled with, ministered to, and were witnesses of Jesus, 3 receive special mention:

1. Mary Magdalene = of Magdala, a town on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee about 3 miles from Tiberius.
 - a. 7 demons had been cast out of her. Yet Jesus receive her.
 - b. Mary occupied a prominent place among the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ.

Mark 15:40 There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were **Mary Magdalene**, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome.⁴¹ When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Luke 23:55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Luke 24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;⁵ and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"⁶ "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee,⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."⁸ And they remembered His words,⁹ and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.¹⁰ **Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.**¹¹ But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

John 20:1 **Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb,** while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.² So she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."³ So Peter and the other disciple went forth, and they were going to the tomb.⁴ The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;⁵ and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.⁶ And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there,⁷ and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.⁸ So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed.⁹ For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.¹⁰ So the disciples went away again to their own homes.¹¹ **But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb;**¹² and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying.¹³ And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.¹⁵ **Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."**¹⁶ **Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).**¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and

your God."¹⁸ ~~Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.~~

2. Joanna (Heb. Yohana, the feminine equivalent of "John")

a. the wife of Chuza, a steward of Herod Antipas, who arrested and beheaded John the Baptist, and according to the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus (Luke 13:31). Yet Jesus received her. (Perhaps knowledge of Herod Antipas and his court reflected in Luke came through Chuza.)

b. She also was a witness of the resurrection.

Luke 24:10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and **Joanna** and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.

3. Susanna (lily) - nothing else is mentioned of her specifically.

C. This group of women ministered to the needs of Jesus and his entourage.

Luke 8:3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, **and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.**

Mark 15:40 **There were also women** looking on from a distance, among whom *were* Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome.⁴¹ When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and **minister** (diakoneo) to Him; **and there were many other women** who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Conclusion

- A. If we put our faith in Jesus as divine Savior and Lord, then we will love Him and want to serve Him.
- B. Christ's gospel contains good news of His offer of forgiveness and salvation to all peoples. Jesus can be approached by even the most notorious of sinners who turn from self and sin to Jesus.
- C. Those who know that Jesus has a heart to forgive and save outcasts will not refuse to offer His mercy to all and receive sinners who repent though their sins be many. So behold the

heart of Jesus, Who said ...

John 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and **the one who comes to Me**
I will certainly not cast out.