

Bible Class – the Parables of Jesus

16th April 2026**The Parable of the Money Lender****Luke 7:41-43****Passage for Consideration:**

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And 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, to whom he

forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Context

It would be sensible to understand why this parable was given and the background. Jesus described this parable when he was attending a private meal in a Pharisee's house, located in the Galilee region, (see wider context) a man by the name of Simon. This event took place in the first year of Jesus' ministry.

The Pharisee was curious and wanted to get to know this Jesus. Seeing him in the crowds and with disciples was one thing, but having a time for a face-to-face meeting and seeing what this man was like was quite another. Jesus agreed, and there in the house, Jesus accepted his hospitality. But during the meal, a local lady seemingly known to the Pharisee came in, and immediately without joining in the meal or discussion began to attend to Jesus, - she had heard all about this man as well, but seems that she had worked out

a lot more about Jesus than the Pharisee! She stood behind the Saviour, and quietly weeping, *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* from an expensive alabaster (a type of soft marble-like stone) container.

What followed is very interesting to those of us who are concerned in understanding human nature.

Verse 39: *Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches him: for she is a sinner.*

This proves that Simon the Pharisee had invited Jesus not to be kind and courteous, but being crafty wanted to work Jesus out by private observation. It also proves that the Pharisee had pre-conceived ideas, was discriminatory and judgemental about people. About the woman – he labelled her ‘a sinner’ – clearly, in contrast, he did not regard himself as a sinner. No, he was a Pharisee (Hebrew – *perusim* meaning separated one) a special pious one. Additionally, he decided that Jesus couldn’t be anyone special, as he could not even work out the lady was a sinner. If he was a Prophet, he would avoid the sinner, so as not to be contaminated.

So much is wrong here:

- The Pharisees decided who was a sinner or not based on their observations. False: see Isaiah 11:3; John 8:15-16; 1 Corinthians 4:3-5
- The Pharisees believed that you became spiritually unclean by not washing your hands, mixing with the ‘wrong’ type of people. False: see Mark 7:15.

- The Pharisees believed some people can be labelled sinners, and others be pure. False: see Romans 3:23; Romans 3:10,12; 1 John 1:10.
- The Pharisees believed that Prophets would not associate with sinners. False: Matthew 3:5,6; 1 Kings 18:1; 2 Samuel 12:1.

How was Jesus to begin to unpack this display of complete misunderstanding, and self-justification? Where to begin? His response shows amazing wisdom. He did not return fire with fire. But thoughtfully, disarming the Pharisee, and leaving him simply with something to think about. Thinking was evidently not something Simon the Pharisee was too used to doing.

(Unlike the woman washing his feet. She did not need to interrogate Jesus to work out that he was more than a Prophet. She had listened, and knew Scripture, and could see that this was the Just One which had been sent – the Messiah, and she made sure that he was Anointed.)

So Jesus presented a very short little story to Simon, about two men who owed another man some money.

One owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. A big difference in the amount. One was a fair bit – 50 silver coins, it would take hard work to pay it back, but probably just about workable. The other chap owed 10 times as much. There was no way that was going to be paid back except with extreme difficulty, maybe not even ever possible.

However, Jesus continued, when the time came to pay the debt, neither of them could pay! What happened next was unusual -

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.

Oooh, the Pharisee would have been surprised! Letting people off the burdens they were forced to carry was not a habit the Pharisees were used to! See Matthew 23:4!!

Jesus was careful in his speech. The normal word in Greek for 'forgive' is *aphiemi* – which denotes a legal release of debt. But Jesus did not use that word. He used the word *charizomai*. It is translated as 'frankly forgave'. Looking in the concordance, 'frankly' is only used in the Bible once and it is here.

Charizomai is used to describe an act of grace or a "freely given" favour, - mercy – a word chosen deliberately, that the creditor cancelled the debt willingly and gracefully. No grudge, no hanging on, no resentment, but – the debt – Gone!

The word is used 23 times in the New Testament, 15 times in Paul's letters. Here are some examples where the word is used:

- Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.
- Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;
- Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

The forgiveness is not earned, but is through grace.

The Pharisee was under the impression that you earned forgiveness, that somehow we deserve to be forgiven. It is not the case. The Pharisee was under the misplaced idea that by giving tithes of his harvest, and washing his hands regularly, and observing all the rituals

and man-made rules and regulations, that he would be fast-tracked to paradise.

But Jesus then asked the simple question, catching the Pharisee by surprise – again.

Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

Simon answered: *I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, You have rightly judged.*

The woman was weeping – because she felt unworthy, because she recognised her own character flaws, because she knew this man – who was not a sinner – would die as said the prophets, because she knew that while she was a sinner – her Messiah would die for her (see Romans 5:8).

The Pharisee saw himself as the one with just a small debt, but the woman the one with the big debt. But now he suddenly was taught that true knowledge and intimacy and friendship with Jesus – true love was acknowledging the gift freely offered, but only if he was humble enough to acknowledge he was in need of it.

Jesus demonstrated his parable with a practical explanation – the woman who loved much, who appreciated she could be forgiven – even though she appeared (to some) to have had a past of disrepute was there kissing his dusty feet, cleaning them with her hair and precious oil, and she wasn't even invited!

By contrast, the Pharisee who didn't seem to particularly like this preacher from Nazareth much, didn't even offer a bowl of water to wash with, as was the custom, to his guest, and it was his house, bad manners indeed!

The Pharisee in the parable represented the nation of Judea, who believed they were the chosen ones, and that the Gentiles were unclean. They believed that it was the law that made perfect, and by keeping rituals they could purge themselves of uncleanness and sins.

But by extension, this is true of religious people in general, who believe that their form of religion is enough – “I am a good person, and believe in God” they believe that is enough.

However, the woman who washed Jesus feet symbolises the rare class of people who accept that there is nothing they can do earns them forgiveness, by themselves they are not worthy (Genesis 32:10) and all they can do is stoop down at Jesus’ feet in prayer. (Isaiah 66:2)

Jesus concluded: *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.*

One lesson at least, is maybe we should be more careful judging others, and check our own reputation. How much do we love the Messiah?

Brother Terry