1. A judgmental Pharisee, a sinful woman, and Jesus

This title and theme is taken from Luke 7, our Gospel reading, which records a meeting between a judgmental Pharisee, a notoriously sinful woman, and the Lord Jesus. We also have judgmental Pharisees and sinful people around us in our day. And one of our own sins, among many, is that we are judgmental towards others and filled with self-righteousness. We deny it and yet we know that these sins and others come from our sinful nature inherited from Adam. So, to our text from Luke 7.

A Pharisee named Simon had invited Jesus to his home to dine with him. Inviting someone to your home was more significant in that society than ours, especially among the Pharisees. An invitation to your home was inviting the guest to have table fellowship with you and a way of accepting someone into your circle of friends and labeling them as morally and religiously fit to associate with. The meal is actually a festive banquet thrown in honor of Jesus by the Pharisee, because Jesus was now famous for His preaching and healing. But as our text will show, there was also a hidden agenda perhaps to trap Jesus in some misstatement or false step, because Simon did not follow the accepted duties of a host towards Jesus.

Pharisees were a religious group in ancient Palestine which were popular with the people, and were extremely accurate and minute in all matters of following the many regulations of the Old Testament. In Matthew 3:7 Jesus calls them snakes, because of their self-righteousness and arrogance. The Pharisees remained bitter and persistent enemies of our Lord. They could not bear his doctrines focused on God’s grace through faith in Jesus, and they sought by every means to destroy his influence among the people. Simon, in our Gospel in Luke 7, is one of the few Pharisees willing to invite Jesus to a fellowship banquet in his own home, even if it was for a hostile purpose!

Surprisingly, a sinful woman of the town finds her way into the banquet in the home of this Pharisee, a religious leader of the town. She is probably a prostitute, because she is called “a sinner,” although the text does not say so. V. 37 says “behold!” to emphasize how surprising it is for this notoriously sinful woman to come into the banquet in the home of a religious leader like Simon, the Pharisee. She had heard Jesus preaching about and promising the forgiveness of sins through faith in Him. She believed by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had forgiven her. Forgiveness now produced love in her heart towards Jesus, her Savior, motivating her to come into the house of this Pharisee, something unheard of...
that such a notorious sinner like her should come into the house of a religious leader like Simon. She begins weeping so that her tears fell on Jesus’ feet. She is weeping in joy that Jesus has forgiven her sins. She kneels at the feet of Jesus, wipes His feet with her hair, kisses His feet, and anoints them with the ointment from the expensive jar of perfume which she has brought with her.

In v. 39 Simon is thinking that because she is religiously unclean because she is a notorious sinner, she should not even be touching Jesus, thus making Him unclean. In v. 39 the judgmental Pharisee thinks, "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!" Luke 7:39

The Greek makes Simon’s thinking clear: “If this man were a prophet—which He obviously now is not, He would have known she was a terrible sinner and not allowed her to touch Him.” Simon had lost any faith that he might have had in Jesus, when he saw that Jesus allowed this notoriously sinful woman to touch Him, thus make Jesus religiously unclean!

2. The Parable of the Moneylender and the Two Debtors

Jesus, because He is God, knows what Simon is thinking and responds in v. 41 with a short parable, followed by a question directed at Simon.

"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Luke 7:41-42

The one debtor owed ten times more than the other—about two years of wages, a great debt! Jesus asks a question with an obvious answer: the debtor who owed ten times more would be expected to love the moneylender more, who had forgiven, cancelled, his great debt. Simon answers this way and Jesus says that Simon has answered correctly.

3. The Application of the parable to the judgmental Pharisee and the sinful woman

Jesus then gives the application of the parable to the judgmental Pharisee and the sinful woman. Jesus represents the moneylender who forgives both debts. The sinful woman represents the debtor who owes the great debt of 500 denarii and the judgmental Pharisee the lesser debt of fifty denarii. Jesus says 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.” Luke 7:44-46
The woman has displayed her great love for Jesus as a result of her being forgiven of her sins by Him. In contrast, Simon in his judgmental righteousness has shown no love for Jesus, because he did not think that he had any sins which needed to be forgiven by Jesus. The sinful woman had done what the judgmental Pharisee failed to do. The sinful woman even exceeded all that the judgmental Pharisee was expected to do as the host of the banquet.

For she wet His feet with her tears, while Simon gave no water for Jesus’ feet—a required obligation for the host of a banquet in ancient, dusty Palestine, where everyone walked to get anywhere.

She kissed His feet, while Simon gave no kiss of welcome to Jesus—another required obligation for the host of a banquet to an invited guest.

She anointed Jesus’ feet with the perfume, while Simon did not anoint Jesus’ head with oil, the treatment that was expected towards a guest at a banquet.

The sinful woman showed much love towards Jesus, while the judgmental Pharisee showed little or none. This brings us to the punch line of this text.

4. Forgiveness produces love!

The point of this Gospel reading from Luke 7 and the title of my sermon is: “Forgiveness produces love!” Jesus says that as with the debtor who owed much in the parable, 500 denarii, the sinful woman with her many sins is forgiven by Jesus. Evidence of that forgiveness is the great love she showed towards Jesus: her tears, her kiss and her anointing the feet of Jesus. Jesus says in v. 47, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much.” Luke 7:47

She is not forgiven, because she showed such great love Jesus. That would be putting the cart before the horse. That she is forgiven is evidenced by the loving deeds she did for Jesus. Forgiveness produces love!

That the judgmental Pharisee, like the debtor who owed little, is not forgiven is evidenced by his lack of love towards Jesus. Jesus says that he loved little. In fact, the Pharisee in his judgmental spirit and arrogance, secure in his self-righteousness thought that he had no sins which needed to be forgiven by Jesus. He had no faith that Jesus was the promised Prophet in the Old Testament, the prophesied Messiah, the Son of God.

5. Her faith brought her forgiveness

So, why was the judgmental Pharisee not forgiven while the sinful woman was? It certainly was not the Pharisee’s lack of loving deeds towards Jesus nor the love she showed towards Jesus. Jesus gives us the answer in v. 50 when He
Forgiveness Produces Love! Luke 7:36-50 (ESV)

addresses the sinful woman now freed from her sins, 
"Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Luke 7:50
The gift of faith given to her by the Holy Spirit, faith in Jesus as the One who could save her from her sins, is what she had and what the judgmental Pharisee did not have. That faith in Jesus is what gave her forgiveness of her notoriously sinful life as a prostitute! That faith in Jesus is what saved her! That faith in Jesus is what gave her peace with God! That faith in Jesus is what produced the deeds of love which she showed Jesus in the banquet hall of the Pharisee! That faith was a gift from the Holy Spirit through God's Word of promise.

6. We are like the judgmental Pharisee and sinful woman!

This Gospel reading from Luke 7 reminds us that we are like the judgmental Pharisee and sinful woman! For we all have the same sinful nature inherited from Adam just like the Pharisee and woman.

Like the Pharisee we can be judgmental and self-righteous. In our judgmental spirit, we can always find real and not-so-real sins in those around us. It is easy for us to identify those sins, sins of immorality, sins of greed, sins of unbelief, and condemn others. We find it easy to leave others in their sins and smugly wrap ourselves in our self-righteousness. After all, we know Jesus. We got to church.

We follow the laws. We consider ourselves to be religious and good people–just like the judgmental Pharisee.

And we are also just like the sinful woman. We are true sinners like her. We are trapped in our sins just like her. We break the commandments every day, committing sins of despising God’s Word, sins of defiance of rightful authority, sins of sexual lust and immorality, sins of murderous hatred, sins of gossiping, coveting, and envy. Like the sinful woman, before Jesus forgave her, we are caught in our sins and sin habits, which we cannot escape by our own powers.

And like her, God’s Word has come to us and given us faith in Jesus. Like her we owe a great debt of sins. Like her we are forgiven of those great sins through the gift of faith in Jesus, the Savior!

Conclusion

This Gospel reading from Luke 7 is a wonderful reminder of where love comes from. In contrast to being judgmental and self-righteous, in contrast to be trapped in our sins, love comes from forgiveness and forgiveness comes from faith in Jesus. For forgiveness from Jesus produces love for Jesus! Amen.