

Session 4

THE MISSION FOR A TRANSFORMED LIFE

Luke 7:36-50

Memory Verse

Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that's why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little.”⁴⁸ Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

– LUKE 7:47-48, CSB

The Mission for a Transformed Life

THEOLOGICAL THEME: Jesus took on flesh, perfectly obeyed the law of God, and paid the penalty on the cross for the sins of the world. Jesus now sits as a Mediator and Intercessor before God the Father on behalf of all those who are trusting in Him for life.

? What comes to mind when you hear the word mediator?

? Why do we need a mediator before God? Why can't we approach Him on our own?

Many people would describe hell as a state in which a person is separated from God's presence. This is a common idea because we tend to think of God's benevolent attributes such as grace, mercy, love, and patience. If these were the only attributes that comprised God's character, then that description of hell makes sense. But that is an incomplete picture of God's character. God is also holy, righteous, and just. God cannot tolerate sin, does not overlook it, and always punishes it.

That's why people are in trouble. Every person has sinned and falls short of God's glorious standard. Unless someone intervenes, then there is no hope. But someone has intervened. There is a Mediator!

In our passage today, we will consider an episode in Jesus' life that serves as a model to both those who are righteous in their own eyes and those who desperately seek mercy. Jonathan Edwards summed up what the proper response should be for those who know the depth of their depravity. He wrote, "Be always greatly abased for your remaining sin, and never think that you lie low enough for it, but yet don't be at all discouraged or disheartened by it; for though we are exceeding sinful, yet we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, the preciousness of whose blood, and the merit of whose righteousness and the greatness of whose love and faithfulness does infinitely overtop the highest mountains of our sin."¹

Session Summary

In this short episode recorded by Luke, two kinds of people who believe in God are contrasted. First, the Pharisees, with whom Jesus was eating because they had invited Him, believed themselves to be righteous people. This isn't to say that they saw themselves as completely perfect, but they did believe that they had lived strict and holy enough lives to be excluded from the group they designated as "sinners." Second, the "woman in the town," who showed up out of nowhere and made a scene, believed herself to be a sinner and in desperate need of forgiveness.

We might say that all people on earth fit into one of these two categories. Either you are a person who believes that you are sufficiently good to deserve reward and recognition or you believe that you are desperately sin-sick and in need of forgiveness of sin and a new heart.

In our lesson today, we will focus specifically on the woman who came and washed Jesus' feet with her tears. She will serve as an example of appropriate humility and hope in the presence of the great Savior.

1. Greatly Abased (Luke 7:36-39)

The "woman in the town" was probably a prostitute. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that day whether or not she was sin-sick. Even Luke introduced her as a "woman in the town who was a sinner." Jesus knew. The Pharisees knew. The disciples knew. Even the woman herself knew that her sins against God had been piled up and were odious to Him. God hated her sin and she stood before Him as a sinner.

? What evidence did Luke give that the woman was well aware of her sin? What does our approach to God reveal about our view of ourselves and our sin?

The woman didn't come to Christ with a shred of any sense of pride or entitlement. She came in shame, seeking mercy and mercy alone. We know this by her actions. She wept. She washed Jesus' feet with her tears and her hair. She kissed His feet and anointed them with perfume. This was an abased woman. She was laid low because of her sins, and she didn't pretend that she had any righteousness in herself upon which to rely. Like all people on earth (even those who believe themselves to be good), this woman had committed sin and corrupted herself.

Sin is a deviation from the will of God. It is doing what God forbids or not doing what God commands. This woman turned aside from the way of God and chose to follow her own way. God has made His will and law clear in the Scriptures, and any deviation whatsoever is an offense against its Author.

? Why is it important to realize that all people find themselves in the same place as this woman did, even if our particular sins are not the same?

To think that this woman was alone in her foolishness is evidence of our own foolishness and blindness. We are sinners indeed and have many times in our lives offended God with our own acts of pride, selfishness, lust, and rebellion.

How could we, after all that God has done for us, rebel against Him and transgress His law? He created us, gave us life, provided for us from birth, has given us countless undeserved gifts and kindnesses. Yet we, along with every person on earth, stiffen our necks against His will and turn up our noses at His invitations. How could we?

Our constant transgression of God's law shows just how radical our own corruption is. Our continual leaning away from God reveals just how total our depravity is. What hope do we possibly have after offending such a great God to such a great degree? Like the Israelites, without someone to intervene and intercede, we have none.

? Application: Where have you been guilty of ignoring or denying your own sinfulness before God? Where do you need to take a similar posture to the woman in these verses?

2. Discouraged Not (Luke 7:40-43)

One of the most astounding parts of this story is the fact that this woman came to Jesus at all. What was the point? How could someone as sinful and unclean as she was presume to get anywhere near Christ, much less touch Him and beg for mercy. This, in fact, was the exact perspective of the Pharisees. They were appalled by the very notion that someone so sinful would dare come to one of their homes and think she would have an audience with Christ.

? What did Jesus teach in regards to those who come to Him, regardless of their state? How might this have given the woman encouragement and assurance?

The woman was abased, but she wasn't discouraged. She wasn't discouraged because God the Father was working in her heart to draw her to the Son. Not only that, but Christ promised He would never cast out those who come to Him. He said, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37). So, this sinful woman, despite her desperate sinful state, was not discouraged to come to Christ because the Father was compelling her and she had the assurance that Christ would receive her.



How does this promise of Christ apply to us today? How should it impact the way we view others?

John wrote that Christians have an Advocate with the Father, not that they had an Advocate. It would be a terrible thing if Christians had received forgiveness of sins at one time, but then were expected to live a perfectly sinless life from then on. They would be no better off than those who had rejected Christ. Consider what Francis Ridley Havergal wrote, “No; if you will only keep on trusting in that precious blood, and not turn away from it, He says that it cleanses, that is, goes on cleansing . . . Perhaps you never thought of this; ask Him now not only to wash you in the fountain of His precious blood, but to keep you in it, to go on cleansing you all day long. Trust Him to do this.”²

Furthermore, if you are a Christian, you can freely invite those who are lost in sin to come to Christ freely. Christians do not have to wonder about or doubt the truth that Jesus Christ will never turn away a humble soul who comes to Him for mercy. Thus, Christians can proclaim the gospel message with confidence because they know that the promise is indeed sure.


Finally, for those who find that they are sinners with very little hope in this world and a clear picture of just how low they are, then the application is clear: Go to Christ! Don’t hesitate a single moment longer. No matter if some self-righteous Pharisee scoffs at your coming, for Christ Himself wants you to be there. God the Father drew you there. All those who come to Christ humbly seeking mercy will never be cast out. You are included in that promise.



Application: How is God calling you to respond to the grace of Christ today?

3. Our Advocate with the Father (Luke 7:44-50)


Sinners come to Christ because Christ is able to deliver on His promise to forgive and save. He is able to deliver on that promise because of who He is and what He has done.

 Read 1 Timothy 2:5. How is Christ able to serve as the Mediator between God and man?

Jesus Christ became the Mediator between sinful people and a holy God. Jesus interceded on behalf of God's people in order that they would be spared from the destruction that they deserved.

First Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." First John 2:1 says, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Finally, Romans 8:34 says, "Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

Take a moment to consider that. Jesus is mediating between Christians and God the Father. Jesus is advocating on our behalf before God the Father.

 How is Christ's mediating work applied to those who trust in Him? How does this apply to the love He showed to the woman in today's passage?

Jesus, being fully God and fully man, did what we were unable to do. Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father. Jesus always did what God the Father commanded, and He never did what God the Father prohibited. He pleased God the Father in every way (Matt. 3:17).

His perfect obedience is a wonder to behold, but how does it help us? Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, explained it like this, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21). Holy, righteous Jesus submitted Himself to a sinner’s death and took the punishment for the sin of God’s people upon Himself. But, that’s not all. He not only canceled the debt that we owed, but He credited our account with His righteousness, “so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

We have to understand that God stands ready to allow His wrath to fall on all sinners. God’s justice would surely be satisfied for our sins by our eternal condemnation and judgment. We stood guilty before a holy God and our sentence of death was ready to be handed down, until Christ appeared to intercede. The Mediator, Christ Jesus, bore our sin. “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Col. 2:13-15).


Now, Christians are blessed beyond anything they can imagine. Not only has their record of sin been canceled, but they have been adopted into God’s family and enjoy all the rights and privileges of sons and daughters (John 1:12).





Application: How has the work of Jesus changed your life?

Conclusion

All people have sinned and fall short of God’s glorious standard. Because of their sin, all people stand condemned before a holy God and are deserving of death. Though they are low and abased as a result of their sin, they aren’t without hope. Jesus said that He will never cast out any who come to him humbly seeking mercy. Therefore, sinners should not be discouraged from going to Christ, but should throw themselves at His feet for mercy. Christ has done the work and now mediates and intercedes for His own.

 How seriously do you view your sin before Jesus? What needs to change?

 How should Christ's mediating work on your behalf change the way you view others and relate to others who have sinned against you?

 How should Christians respond as those who have been forgiven much and loved much? How does this compel us to share the good news with others?

CHRIST CONNECTION: Christ Jesus is the Christian's Advocate and Mediator. He is their only hope for salvation in this world.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Those who have been forgiven much, love much. Christians love both God and neighbor much because they have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.



FOR NEXT WEEK

Transformed For Mission

Main Passages

- Luke 8:26-39

Session Outline

1. The Demoniac Delivered (Luke 8:26-33)
2. The Strong Man Plundered (Luke 8:34-37)
3. The Healed Man Sent (Luke 8:38-39)

Memorize

Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that's why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little.”⁴⁸ Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

- Luke 7:47-48, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - Luke 6:20-26
- Tuesday - Luke 6:37-42
- Wednesday - Luke 6:43-49
- Thursday - Luke 7:1-10
- Friday - Luke 7:11-17
- Saturday - Luke 7:36-50

References

¹Edwards, Jonathan. *Letters and Personal Writings*. London: Yale University Press, 1998.

²Havergal, Frances Ridley. *Little Pillows, Morning Bells, and Morning Stars: Volume 1*. The Havergal Trust, 2015.