

Loving the Saviour who Forgives

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[0 : 00] Well, the sermon actually starts out, actions often say something about us. And Chris, our Easter buns on Boxing Day say something about the shops, don't they?

But our actions can reveal things about ourselves, like who we are. And they can reveal what we think or even how we feel. For example, how much we love something or someone.

For example, take a look at this child's reaction to vegetables. Yeah. So clearly they don't love broccoli, I think it was.

Yeah. But here's another example of an action. This time wearing T-shirts. It says, together on one and since 1952.

And that action of wearing those T-shirts shows great love for each other as well as faithfulness for all those years. I quite like this one.

[1 : 11] If lost, return to Jan and his wife in front, I am Jan. I wasn't thinking of you, Graham. So clearly that action also shows love, but also a sense of humour.

Our actions say something about us, who we are, what we think, and even how we feel and how much we love. Well, so far in this gospel, Jesus' actions have been saying something about who he is.

It's been an underlying theme that keeps popping up and will do until chapter 9, actually. For example, two weeks ago, we saw him raise the widow's son from the dead and the people were filled with all.

And they thought he was a great prophet who had appeared among them. And that news travelled far and wide. And then last week, we heard that John the Baptist came and said, are you, or his disciples said, are you, Jesus, the one who was to come?

Is that who you are? The Messiah. And then Jesus pointed to his actions, didn't he? Well, the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and on it goes.

[2 : 25] Look at my actions. Jesus' actions reveal who he is. Of course, the Pharisees saw other actions from Jesus and concluded he was so indifferent.

They saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors and thought he was a glutton and a drunkard. That's not very nice to call people a party animal. Clearly, the Pharisees, they're not real big fans of Jesus, are they?

They don't show great love for Jesus, do they? And one of the reasons for this is because they don't know forgiveness from Jesus.

That's the lesson Luke gives us today. Only those who know Jesus and forgiveness from him will show love for him.

And Luke shows us this by contrasting two sets of actions. Some from a Pharisee and some from a woman. So at point one, verse 36.

[3 : 28] When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house.

So she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. Here is the first action, and it's the Pharisee's action to give Jesus an invitation.

And now his action might suggest he wants to honour Jesus. After all, he's no doubt heard that Jesus has been called a prophet, like we saw a couple of weeks ago.

But the fact that Luke calls him a Pharisee three times in two verses, when just last week we heard the Pharisees had rejected God's purposes, well, it gives us pause to think.

And as we'll see, this Pharisee is undecided about Jesus. He hasn't invited Jesus to trap him like others do, but he hasn't really invited Jesus to honour him either.

[4 : 32] He's undecided. But it's still a special meal, because they were reclining. Family meals involved sitting at the table like we do today, but special meals involved reclining with your kind of feet out.

I'll show you a picture. That would be better. So here they are. They're kind of on cushions. Actually, they're cushioned tables, which means they're kind of elevated a bit, and you can see their feet sticking out the end.

The Romans did it as well, and they called it a triclinium. And so, as you can see, they're elevated, and they would get served, and so on. It doesn't look very comfortable to me. Maybe it stopped you spilling food down the front of you.

I don't know. Anyway, that's what it was. And at these special meals, the door was left open for the public to come in, which is why this woman can wander in without a problem.

But it's what she does next that is a problem. Verse 38. As she stood behind him, notice she's standing, because it seems Jesus is elevated, at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears.

[5 : 44] Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them. Have you ever been to a dinner party when one of the guests did something socially awkward?

Anyone? I wasn't at this one, but I heard about it. The host for dessert brought out a cheesecake, I think it was, on a really nice-looking plate. And one of the guests thought, oh, that's a nice plate, I wonder who made it.

And they picked it up and turned it over to see who made it on the back. Needless to say, the cheesecake went splat, and the table went quiet. It was socially awkward.

But that was nothing on this. I should also say that this woman here, I think, is different to Mary, who anoints Jesus with perfume for his burial, which happens later on in all the other Gospels.

Rather, this one is known for living a sinful life, perhaps a prostitute, we don't know. So can you imagine the scene? It's in the middle of dinner.

[6 : 54] In walks this sinner and starts crying over Jesus' feet. With her hair let down, which was a social no-no, she starts wiping his feet, then gets out perfume, the smell filling the room, all with everyone else glaring.

Talk about socially awkward. And perhaps even scandalous, given who she was. And yet, despite the socially awkwardness or even the scandalous nature of it, she is unashamed about doing it.

She doesn't care what the people think at the moment. Jesus matters more. Here is the woman's unashamed action.

Which is then followed by the Pharisee's indignant reaction. Verse 39. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is.

That she is a sinner. If this Pharisee was undecided about Jesus before, he's fast making up his mind, isn't he? Because did you notice his annoyance is not actually directed to the woman?

[8 : 20] It's directed to Jesus. He doesn't tell the woman to get out or think ill of her, but he does think ill of Jesus. He can't be a prophet, like they're all saying.

And so Jesus teaches him a lesson to explain both the woman's actions and who he is. So point to verse 40.

Jesus answered him, Simon, I have something to tell you, to teach you. Tell me, teacher, he said. Notice, by the way, before we move on in verse 40, that Jesus answered his thoughts.

Answered him. Simon was only thinking these things. He didn't actually say it out loud, but Jesus answers them. He knows what Simon is thinking, which ought to show him at the very least that he is a prophet.

But also notice here that Jesus doesn't rebuke this Pharisee, but now calls him by name. You see, Jesus hasn't given up on him.

[9 : 24] And he wants to tell him something if he'll hear it. Which is a good encouragement for us not to give up on our non-Christian friends and family. And to be willing to tell them something if they're willing to hear it.

And Simon is willing. He says, tell me, teacher. And so Jesus begins teaching with a parable. Verse 41. Two people owed money to a certain money lender.

One owed him 500 denarii and the other 50. Neither of them had the money to pay him back. So he forgave the debts of both. Now, which of them will love him more?

Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven. You have judged correctly, says Jesus. Now, a denarius was a day's wage.

And so 50 denarii is almost two months worth of pay. 500, almost 18 months worth of pay. That's a lot of money, right?

[10 : 30] Imagine your bank manager rings you up and says, I'm going to pay off your mortgage a year and a half worth of wage. I mean, you'd love them for it, wouldn't you?

And so it's pretty obvious the answer to Jesus's question, isn't it? Who will love the money lender more? I think it's obvious, which I think is why Simon says, I suppose.

Because he's wondering if there's more to this obvious answer. And there is. There's the lesson. Verse 44. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, Do you see this woman?

I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing my feet.

You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven as her great love has shown.

[11 : 34] But whoever has been forgiven little, loves little. Jesus tells Simon to look at this woman and to learn a lesson from her.

What lesson? Well, that love for Jesus means that you know forgiveness from Jesus. The woman's great love for Jesus is her grateful response to knowing great forgiveness from Jesus.

Now, we don't know when the woman was forgiven and Jesus will declare it again in a second, in the next verse. But perhaps she heard Jesus proclaiming the good news earlier in Capernaum.

And that's where they were at the moment. Or perhaps she was one of the sinners with whom Jesus met with. Remember, he ate with lots of tax collectors and sinners. Perhaps she was one of them. We don't know.

Either way, at some point, she realized that she is a great sinner, but that Christ is a great Savior and received his offer of forgiveness.

[12 : 42] And now here, knowing her forgiveness, knowing her 500 denarii debt has been cancelled, she responds with great love.

Without caring what others think, she washes his feet with tears of gratitude and relief. She kisses not his cheek, as was the custom, but in humility, his feet.

And she pours not oil, but something more expensive, perfume on him, or while others are watching. Her unashamed action shows great love for Jesus, because she now knew great forgiveness from Jesus.

But not so, Simon. It's interesting, in verse 47, Jesus specifically refers to the woman, but then says, he doesn't kind of point to the Simon, he says, whoever has been forgiven little, then loves little.

And I wonder if that's because Simon has not even shown little love. You know, while washing feet and anointing heads weren't required by the host for every guest, they were often done for special guests.

[13 : 59] But Simon didn't do it for Jesus, even when Simon thought he might be a prophet. And what's more, kissing on the cheek was customary, like shaking hands.

But Simon didn't even do that for Jesus. He didn't even have COVID as an excuse, you know, social distancing. Yes, he invited Jesus to a special meal, but he hadn't shown any real love for Jesus, had he?

Because he has not yet known any real forgiveness from Jesus. Why? Well, because of that underlying issue I mentioned at the start, about who Jesus is.

You see, Simon may have called him teacher, may have thought he might be a prophet, but he hasn't really recognized his need for forgiveness, nor who Jesus is, the one who gives it.

It's why our non-Christian friends and family don't really show love for Jesus. I mean, they don't know forgiveness from Jesus yet, do they?

[15 : 06] Because they've not yet recognized their need for forgiveness, nor who Jesus is, the one who gives it. which is why we need to keep sharing both with them when we can.

Some Christians say to me that we shouldn't actually talk about sin, it's too negative, but it's real. And people need to hear it so that they might then turn to Jesus, who forgives it.

They might see who he is, which is exactly what we see next. Point three, verse 48. Then Jesus said to her, your sins are forgiven.

The other guests began to say amongst themselves, who is this? Who even forgives sins? Jesus said to the woman, your faith has saved you.

Go in peace. Now, verse 48 may seem odd. If she's already forgiven, why does Jesus say it again? And we know she's already forgiven.

[16 : 09] Otherwise, she wouldn't have responded in love. You know, the forgiveness happens first, then the response of love. But why does Jesus say it again? Well, two reasons. Firstly, to reassure her.

To reassure her that she has been, and continues to be, forgiven. Because it would have been easy to start doubting, after that dinner.

You know, with all those eyes glaring, easy for doubt to start creeping in. Not to mention her social standing. She was a social outcast in a Pharisee's house.

There was no home court advantage for her. And so Jesus reassures her. And in verse 50, he unpacks what it means for her, that her faith in him, as the saviour who forgives, means she is now saved from judgment.

She can go in peace. That is peace with God. Which then gives us peace of mind and heart. But the second reason he repeats her forgiveness, is to provoke that question.

[17 : 21] Remember, he's trying to teach Simon. He wants Simon to see who he is. So he tells the woman she's forgiven again, and it provokes that question from the other guests, in verse 49, doesn't it?

Who is this? That Simon might begin to see who Jesus really is, and put his faith in him like the woman.

And it's similar for us. Luke doesn't record Simon's response, but he does record this event to reassure us, and provoke others. Remember Luke's purpose, it's there on the screen, is to help us have certainty about the things we've been taught about Jesus.

That's why he's written his gospel. Because we too can sometimes doubt, can't we? And so Luke reassures us, not only by showing miraculous evidence like raising the dead, but also by showing us this woman's great love.

Unashamed love. People don't love like this for no reason, do they? But this woman's real love shows she knew real forgiveness, which is more evidence that Jesus is a real saviour.

[18 : 39] The one who paid for our sins at the cross, so that we may remain forgiven too. Luke reassures us, but Luke also wants to provoke others like Simon to ask, who is this?

As non-Christians might read his gospel. That like the woman, they too might come to believe in Jesus. And so the first application for us is to ask, who is Jesus to me?

Who is Jesus to you? Is he your saviour who forgives? Or just a prophet or teacher who taught good morals?

Do you like the woman have faith in him? Because if you're here or online tuning in and you don't, then I'm sorry, but you won't have forgiveness or peace with God.

So ask yourself, who is Jesus to me? And for us who do believe, then the second application is to know our great forgiveness from Christ.

[19 : 45] It's no good me just telling you to love Jesus more, because as we've seen, it's knowing we've been forgiven first, that motivates us to show great love second.

So do you know great forgiveness in Christ? I know it's hard to feel that sometimes, particularly if you've been a Christian for a long time. After all, we haven't killed anyone this past week, or ever actually.

And by society's standards, we're pretty good people, aren't we? But are we by God's standards? We may not have done those big sins like murder, but have you ever lost your temper?

Jesus says, anger in our heart is just as bad. And then there's that prayer of confession. You know, that one that talks about not just the things we have done, but the things we have left undone.

Yeah, sin is not just doing bad stuff like losing our temper. It's also neglecting to do the good stuff, like remembering God each day. And then there's David who said in Psalm 51, that he knows his transgression, his sin is always before him.

[21 : 02] He was sinful from birth. Sinful for all those years. That's a lot of sin. But we need to realise that, not so we feel guilty, but then so we feel the sweet relief of forgiveness.

As Paul writes in Romans, where sin increased, grace increased all the more. I love that. Grace increased all the more.

So there's always forgiveness. realise how sinful we are, not so we feel guilty, but so that we might feel the sweet relief of knowing our great forgiveness from Christ.

And then knowing our great forgiveness from Christ. And thirdly, show great love for Christ. By our actions. Even unashamedly.

Back in 2020, there was a man in the US whose wife had dementia, and he could no longer care for her at home. But he would visit her every day in her aged care place.

[22 : 14] Until COVID came, and her place went into lockdown. And so this is what he did. I love you. I'm going to sing you my song.

Listen. You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey.

You never know, dear, how much I love you. So please don't take my sunshine away. Did you know you're my sunshine?

Now, apart from that annoying squawking in the background, how sweet is that? And he's unashamed, isn't he? He's on a public footpath, looking through a window, singing, while being filming, probably by one of his family members.

But he doesn't care. His unashamed action shows great love for her because he has known great kindness from her.

[23 : 20] all those years as his wife. How much more so are we to unashamedly show great love for Christ because we know great forgiveness from Christ all those years as our saviour.

And so will you show great love for Christ even unashamedly? Whether it's by being known as a Christian amongst your family or amongst your social groups, which is becoming more socially awkward these days, isn't it?

Or whether it's reading the Bible in front of others. I know one guy who used to, before lockdown, would read his Bible on the bus to work and he got some looks but he didn't care.

Or asking the family to move the family function so you still can go to church. That could become awkward. Or by saying grace even when you're out at a restaurant.

Or by listening to Jesus and doing what he says as we'll hear next week. Like the woman, will your actions show that Jesus matters most to you?

[24 : 35] Do your actions show great love for him because you know great forgiveness from him? And so to finish, ask, who is Jesus to you?

Know we have great forgiveness from him that we might show great love for him even unashamedly. Let's pray. Gracious Father, help us to know our great forgiveness from Christ that we may continue to show great love for Christ.

We ask it in his name and for your glory. Amen. Amen.