



**Unit 3:** Return the Favor  
**Sermon Series Title:** The Necessity of Forgiveness  
**Sermon 4:** The Fruit of Forgiveness is Love  
**Bible Passage:** Luke 7:36-50

### **Background/Context**

Belinda faced an unsolvable problem. A widow with little income, she could not give her daughter enough support to complete her college education. When I learned of her situation, I contacted a wealthy man in our community who graciously offered to pay all the young lady's school expenses. I had the honor of delivering this news and seeing a mother's tearful joy. From that moment, she has felt and expressed a deep love for the man who paid what she could never pay.

In Luke 7, we meet a woman who faces a much greater debt, a debt of sin. We don't know exactly what she had done, but we do know that the community looked down upon her. Sometime before this story begins, Jesus forgave this woman for all that she had done. He paid what she could never pay. We know that she had been forgiven much because of the great love she shows for Jesus.

When people look at your life, do they see a great love for Christ, the fruit of a great forgiveness? Does your joyful service for Him show others that He paid a great debt for you? Ask yourself these questions as we meet a woman whose love is the fruit of forgiveness.

### **A. A Great Love Outpoured (Luke 7:36-38)**

Jesus accepted the invitation to share a meal in the home of a Pharisee named Simon. This wasn't unusual, since Jesus shared table fellowship with people from all walks of life. And when a teacher was invited to a meal, the house was opened to anyone who wanted to listen and learn. According to the custom of the day, He "reclined at the table," meaning that He lay down on a couch with his head toward the table and his feet away from the table (v. 36).

A woman, described as a "sinner" (a term often used for prostitutes), heard where Jesus was eating. She took a flask of oil, probably her most expensive possession, and slipped into the house, standing behind Jesus, near His feet. She was so moved with loving gratitude that she wept, her tears falling upon His feet. Not caring who saw her or what they thought, she wiped the tears away with her hair and with them the dust of the road that had gathered on His feet as He walked. She kissed Jesus' feet, an act of great admiration, and anointed his feet with oil. This woman did everything she possibly could to show her love for Jesus.

**Application Point:** When was the last time that you were so moved with love for Jesus that you wept? What do the people who observe your life see you doing that shows your deep gratitude for what Jesus has done for you? What precious gift have you given to Him lately as an expression of your gratitude and joy?

## **B. A Great Debt Forgiven (Luke 7: 39-43)**

Simon did not see the beauty of what the woman had done. He was too busy looking down on her and looking down on Jesus for allowing her to touch Him. Simon wondered if Jesus were really a prophet if He didn't sense the woman's sin and reject her.

Jesus did understand what needed to be done. Simon needed to understand the woman's gift of gratitude and her reasons for being so thankful. As He often did, Jesus offered a heavenly truth in the form of an earthly story. Jesus told the story of two debtors, neither of whom have any way to repay their creditor. One man owed 50 denarii, the other 500. The creditor graciously forgave them both. Then Jesus asked Simon which of the forgiven debtors will love the forgiving creditor more. Jesus led Simon to the right answer—when much is forgiven, much love is the result.

In Simon's eyes, he did not need God's forgiveness nearly as much as this wicked woman. He believed that his debt to God was much smaller than her debt. What Simon failed to see, though, was that both he and this woman were debtors who had no hope of paying their debt. Simon, the Pharisee, needed the same grace as the prostitute. Both, when truly forgiven, would feel and show a great love for God.

**Application Point:** Are you tempted to look down on others because you believe that their sin-debt is greater than your own? How does the truth that no sinner can pay off his debt to God change the way you see yourself in relation to others? Are you more like Simon or the woman in this story?

## **C. A Sign of Salvation (Luke 7: 44-48)**

After challenging Simon to see the connection between God's forgiveness and our love, Jesus asked him a question, "Do you see this woman?" Simon needed to see in her the love for Christ which is the evidence of salvation—and recognize what was missing from his own life.

Though Simon had invited Jesus to eat in his home, he failed to give Jesus the expressions of hospitality a host gave an honored guest. He offered Jesus no water to wash the road dust from His feet. He didn't give Jesus a kiss of peace. Simon didn't anoint Jesus' head to comfort his sun-parched skin. What Simon, the self-sufficient Pharisee, saw no need to do for Jesus the woman gladly did because she was so happy to be free from her sin.

Love for Jesus is still the fruit of forgiveness and a sign of salvation. Those who know that they are hopeless in their struggle with sin, experience the joy of salvation and express their love for the Savior who says to all who will trust Him, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (v. 50).

**Application Point:** How deep is your love for Jesus right now? Does your daily life express a great love for Him? Take some time right now to thank God for the gift of your salvation. Ask Him to show you ways to put your love for Him into action this week.