

## How do we respond to Jesus?

Over the last few weeks we have seen amazing things about Jesus, we have seen from our studies in Luke that Jesus, has raised a widows son from the dead, he has healed a centurions servant without being there, and most amazingly, we saw last week how Jesus, died, and rose again, defeating satan, death and bringing life to all those who will put their trust in him.

Jesus is truly amazing and as we continue to look at his life and teaching, I want to ask the question, how do we respond to Jesus? as we look at the story of Jesus anointing by a sinful woman.

### Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman

<sup>36</sup> When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

<sup>39</sup> 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."

<sup>40</sup> Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

<sup>41</sup> "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> 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?"

<sup>43</sup> Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

<sup>44</sup> 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. <sup>45</sup> You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. <sup>47</sup> Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

<sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

<sup>49</sup> The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

<sup>50</sup> Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

### PRAY

So as we look at how we respond to Jesus, we must remember that this is a question relevant to all human beings. Whether you are a follower of Jesus, or whether you are not, there will be a day when your answer to this question will determine your future.

Also our answer to this question determines how we live life here and now. So very relevant I would say!

As we just read, there are three main characters in this story, we have Jesus, the sinful woman, and Simon the Pharisee, we will look at how the two other characters respond to Jesus, and what we can take from this.

Friends, Jesus message of his father's kingdom is for everyone, the religious leaders needed to hear it as much as the sinners, and so it should come as no surprise that Jesus accepts an invitation to dinner at the house of Simon the Pharisee. Now we don't know why Simon invited to Jesus, it could have been simply because he was intrigued by this popular teacher and wanted to hear more, it could have been that he'd heard enough of this popular teacher and wanted to create an opportunity to try and catch him out. We don't know, we may get some idea of his thoughts towards Jesus from the account tho'

In the times of this meal, it would have been quite different to a meal today. Today we have our houses and we might invite people in to a private dinner, just those invited come. When Jesus walked the earth, a meal was almost a public event, only the invited guests would come to the meal, but the house of the host would have a courtyard that was open in which people would congregate and often listen to what was being spoken about. I imagine with the following Jesus had, this meal was probably quite well attended as people wanted to catch what he had to say.

So to have people milling around was not a surprise, what was a surprise was the sinful woman being present, she would usually steered well clear of these type of events, she was an outcast and shunned by the religious leaders.

The sinful woman was not Mary, Lazarus's sister who performs a similar act, and she is not Mary Magdalene.

Jesus response is scandalous as far as those watching were concerned. Pharisees would not even speak to women publicly, let alone someone like this lady, this was not lost on those watching at the time, and should not be lost on us today. Jesus responds to people with Grace!

So that I hope sets the scene for what we want to pick up from this passage, again, the question, how do we respond to Jesus.

Let's go through the story and look at three ways which Simon and the sinful woman responded to Jesus, and then ask ourselves the same.

#### 1. Spending time with Jesus.

Both characters want to spend time with Jesus.

Simon to listen to this popular teacher and to learn more about what he is saying. He was able to invite Jesus into his home to make this happen.

The sinful woman just wants to be with him, for no other reason than to be in his presence. She is probably responding to Jesus message of forgiveness "come to me and I will give you peace". She knew that she needed to spend time in his presence as it would do her good.

Spending time with Jesus is vital, whether we want to know what he is saying and if we believe it, or whether we are just so amazed at what he is saying and what he has done for us we need to be in his presence.

Jesus came so that we can know God, the only way we get know someone is by spending time with them.

What kind of relationship do we have with someone who we talk to once or twice a week?

Unfortunately that is the type of relationship many people have with God, he is more of an acquaintance who works for us... We meet with him on a Sunday, sing a few songs and learn about him, and then we might do something similar in the middle of the week.

If Em and I had a marriage like that, it wouldn't be much of a marriage. We the church are also called the bride of Christ. He is our biggest passion, and the things/people we are most passionate about we spend most of our time with.... Don't we??

## 2. Acknowledging Jesus.

As we see Jesus comes into Simon's house, we see Simon misses out the customary welcome. To not welcome with a kiss, wash the feet of and anoint with oil was one of two things. It was either over familiar or downright rude.

Guests were always welcomed in this way, family was not. Family and servants would not have gone through this each time they entered the house. Was Simon treating Jesus over familiarly? Did he just think Jesus is one of us, he doesn't need the honour? Was he being taken for granted, as one of the family. Had familiarity bred contempt? Or was he purposely being rude to Jesus?

The reason this was the done thing was because when Jesus walked on the earth, he would have done so in open toes sandals, the roads on which people walked would have been very dusty, and to be honest quite skanky. As many animals would also have used the same roads and paths and left evidence that they had been there 😊

The sinful woman does what Simon doesn't

Her amazement of Jesus words caused such emotion she weeps tears which she uses to wash Jesus still dirty feet, she uses her hair to wipe his feet – this is another taboo, Jewish women would always have had their hair up. – She then kisses his feet and takes the little vial of perfume, probably tied around her neck and pours it on Jesus feet. This act of humility and devotion shows how this woman viewed Jesus and his message of grace and forgiveness. She has been completely undone by him and responds in the appropriate manner. She acknowledges Jesus as he deserves to be, not like Simon who doesn't acknowledge him correctly.

How do we acknowledge Jesus? It can be so easy to become overfamiliar with him. Even in our small group this week we were talking about the amazing death and resurrection of Jesus, we become so familiar with the story that it has lost its power. We want to live lives in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, when we do I'm sure people will see that there is something behind what we believe.

Friends, do we take Jesus for granted? As I said a couple of weeks ago: For some of us, our Jesus is way too small. He's just a helper, a counsellor, a comforter, a friend. He's not Christ. He's not ruler, Lord, saviour, God, king, and judge.

Simon's view of Jesus was too small, the sinful woman had the right idea!

She was overwhelmed by the grace and love that came from Jesus. Let us respond like she did, and acknowledge Jesus for who he is, rather than who we think he should be.

### 3. Appreciating Forgiveness

How much did they appreciate God's forgiveness?

Simon didn't understand true forgiveness, he was a religious man who understood human sinfulness and tried to overcome it by his own effort. As a Pharisee he would have zealously pursued righteousness and this would have been achieved through acts, such as the shedding of blood by animal sacrifice. When Jesus tells him the story of the two debtors he understood immediately what Jesus was saying. He knew that both of them needed forgiving, he understood that both would be grateful to be let off? But he also knows that the one who had the greater debt forgiven would respond with a greater love and gratefulness. He says: "I suppose" because he knew that he had been forgiven, but his response was pitiful. And that the sinful woman who had been forgiven much was showing an appropriate response to the forgiveness she had received.

Forgiveness is forgiveness, but the response will flow from how much we believe we have been forgiven. Simon didn't appreciate grace because forgiveness was always something that he had to earn by keeping the rules and performing a sacrifice. He thought he needed forgiving little, so he loved little.

The sinful woman is amazed that she can be forgiven.

She was called the sinful woman by others, she would have been condemned, judged and shunned by the community and particularly the religious people. She would understand how people today feel when they say: "why should we go to church, all they do is condemn and judge!"

She knew that she was sinful, she understood that she wasn't worthy.

This lady would have been excluded from religious observances that brought about "so called" forgiveness... She thought she had no hope of being forgiven!!

But now the most wonderful news to her! She realises that she can be forgiven, and this comes from all she has experienced from Jesus and his teaching. She understands that he can forgive her if she has faith in him.

She has been forgiven so much that she responds with an amazing act of love towards Jesus! She cannot help herself!! The grace and mercy she has received is outstanding and unbelievable.

This lavish display anointing Jesus is the best she can offer, she gives all she has...

If we believe in Jesus we have been forgiven much, ours was a death sentence before we knew him! Friends let's respond like the sinful woman, not Simon, let us respond to Jesus knowing we have been forgiven much. It is obvious to see! This display by the sinful woman was in your face!!

Let's not keep our response to Jesus private. This lady's response:

Was generous

It was unashamed

It was uninhibited

It was emotional

It was honouring

It was extravagant

It was appropriate

We can too easily take Jesus and his forgiveness for granted.

Let's be those who really appreciate what he has done for us in his death and resurrection, the moment when true forgiveness and life were made possible by our saviour.

We can too easily become too familiar with the Gospel, please let us never tire of hearing the good news of Jesus! Let's be those who want to respond again and again in gratefulness for what Jesus has done for us!

We have all been forgiven much, Lord, let our lives display the wonder and amazement and gratefulness of this as we follow you!

One of the ways we can show devotion and appreciation and love towards Jesus is by taking seriously what he has spoken to us as a church. We are all part of this local church, and God has called us to tear up our books of excuses and become a community of prayer. Let's pour away things that are precious to us, and spend time with God's people calling out to him, worshipping him, honouring him in obedience to his call.

We don't pray for prayers sake, but because lives are at stake!

Lives of those who don't yet know Jesus, lives of those pursuing righteousness, Lives of our families and children.

Prayer works, and ABC will be a truly amazing place when we press into God in prayer!

## SUMMARY

So here we have this amazing account of Jesus forgiveness.

We have been forgiven much, so let's love much!

Let's be a church and individuals that desire to spend time in Jesus presence.

Let's be a church and individuals that have a correct view of Jesus and acknowledge him appropriately.

Let's be a church and individuals that realise that we all deserved nothing, but God has given us everything!

As the Pharisees asked at the end, who is this that forgives sins...

He is Jesus Christ!

He is the Maker of heaven and earth

He is the Alpha & Omega, the beginning & the end  
He is the Son of God  
He is the God man  
He is the Humble Servant  
He is the Man of Sorrows  
He is the Good Shepherd  
He is the Prince of Peace  
He is the Wonderful Counsellor  
He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah  
He is the sinless Saviour  
He is the Resurrection and the Life  
He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world  
He is the sinner's friend  
He is the Great High Priest  
He is the King of Kings  
He is the Lord of Lords  
He is the Way, the Truth, & the Life

His love is glorious,  
His love is marvellous,  
His love is gracious,  
His love is generous,  
His love is matchless  
His love is priceless