



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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October 24, 2010  
Committed to Christ  
Sermon Text: [Luke 7:36-50](#)  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Deuteronomy 16:14-15](#)  
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 89](#)  
Second Lesson: [Colossians 1:13-20](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 5:3-10](#)

### **Committed to Christ Because of Love**

Christ's love which freely offers forgiveness  
The Christian's love which willingly offers Him service

For four weeks now we've been looking at "Love Takes Time." When you think about this theme and you think about what we've been looking at, it's contrary to the way our society talks about love, isn't it? In our society, we're more used to love being described as some giant hole that you didn't see as you were walking along and whoops, you fell into it. It's something that happened to you. It's just an emotion. It's not something that is active and planned. It's just an emotion.

Scripture doesn't speak of love that way. Jesus didn't take a wrong step in heaven and whoops, there he is in a manger thinking "I guess as long as I'm here, I might as well die for the sins of the world." That isn't how it happened. It didn't just happen. It wasn't just an emotion. It was an activity that was planned. God looked and put our interest ahead of his own and then acted on it. If Christ's love has made us his children, which we've looked at, that really ought to amaze us and just thrill us from the tip of our toes to the top of our head. And then we are going to want to respond by taking time to think about how we love God and others in return.

We've looked at taking time for God in his Word. We've looked at taking time for the Body of Christ, to get to know the Body of Christ, our fellow believers, and love them, genuinely love them, not blame them or point fingers at them, but love them. We've looked at taking time to love our neighbor.

We have before us the opportunity to recommit ourselves to loving Christ. That's why we are committed to Christ, because of love...the love that freely offers forgiveness through Christ. Then our love responds to that forgiveness and willingly and lovingly offers him service.

This morning we see two people that have that love offered to them by Christ, the love of forgiveness. We see two completely separate responses. And the question we need to ask ourselves is really, honestly, in our daily life, which one are we more like? If it's not the answer we want it to be, then it's repent and turn back to God and focus on the forgiveness and that love.

You are probably familiar with and have heard this story before of Jesus being anointed by this "sinful woman" as he ate at the pharisee's house. Luke is the only Gospel that

records it for us. We don't even know for certain where it was. It appears to be in Galilee. But what is certain is that a pharisee invited Jesus to dinner. From what we find out later on, we're not told why he invited Jesus to dinner but it doesn't appear that he wanted to learn from him. If you noticed, he calls him "teacher." He doesn't call him "Lord." He doesn't address him with the title of faith of acknowledging that he is anything more than just another teacher. When he answers the obvious question Jesus poses, he goes "Well, I suppose." He's kind of hedging his bets in case Jesus trips him up with it later. From Jesus' description of what he did for Jesus, it doesn't seem this pharisee invited Jesus in for any other reason except probably to get an eye on him and trip him up and find out for himself that he isn't what others claimed him to be. It seems to be the preconception that this man had.

Jesus comes to his house. He has dinner with him. He is reclining at the table. Don't picture them sitting around at tables on chairs like we do. It was more of a couch where they are leaning forward and his feet would have been behind him. So what happens is not a woman crawling around underneath the table like we might picture it, but someone that came into the house and was there behind them and was able to do all of this as the others were visiting.

Jesus describes what happens to Simon because Simon, in his head...notice he didn't say it out loud, but in his head he said "This guy can't be that much of a prophet because if he were, he would know what kind of sinful, terrible woman this person is and he wouldn't let her be doing this." We aren't told what her sin was, but obviously it was a sinful lifestyle that everyone knew about. Whatever it was, she was caught in some open sin that everyone knew about. Simon thinks less of Jesus because Jesus allows her to do this to his feet.

So Jesus tells a very short, very pointed story. He says, "Simon, in your mind's eye, picture this. There are two people. One owes 500 denarii." A denarius was a day's wage, so 500 days' wages. Over a year's worth of work they owe to this other person. "The other owes 50 denarii. A month and a third, or whatever that comes out to. Neither of them could pay it back. It was an impossibility for either of them to pay it back. So the guy forgives both their debts completely. He wipes them away. Which do you think is going to love that person more?" Simon says, "I suppose the one who has had more forgiven." I suppose, duh, obviously. He could see just how unpayable it was. The other one couldn't pay it back, but they probably thought in their head "Yeah, somehow, some way, I could probably pay this back some day down the road." But we're told they had no ability to pay it back. They couldn't have, but in their mind's eye they still thought they could. So they wouldn't appreciate it as much. They wouldn't respond to that gift as lovingly and as joyfully as the person who had over a year's worth of work coming just to pay, not even to live on.

Then Jesus drives home the point to Simon by saying "Take a look at this woman. I come into your house. You haven't done any of the things that are normally done for a guest. You didn't give me water to wash my feet. You didn't anoint my head with oil. You didn't greet me with a kiss, the common greeting of the day. You just kind of blew

me off completely Simon. But look at her. She hasn't stopped wetting my feet with her tears and wiping them off with her hair. You couldn't even give me a bowl. She didn't give me the regular oil. She has this perfume and she anointed my feet with it and she hasn't stopping kissing my feet since I walked in. So really Simon, who do you think loves me more? This woman, or you?" He says "This woman obviously loves me more because she has had her sins forgiven. She recognized how unpayable her sinful debt is because people keep dumping on her all the time about her guilt and her shame. But you, Simon, you're kind of full of yourself. You think you can pay back your sins to God. You think God's pretty lucky to have you on his side. So you don't love me a whole lot if you don't really think you need a Savior." This is the meat of what Jesus is saying to Simon.

He's offering to Simon, "Here I am. I am your Savior." Simon goes "Yeah, that's nice, but I'm okay. I'm good. Pass whatever that bowl is at the other end of the table. I don't really need your forgiveness." Whereas this woman is desperate for it. This woman drops everything to go and find this perfume. This woman drops everything to go and devote herself to Jesus and serve him in every way she could. Why? Not because this takes away her sins, but because she believed Jesus was the answer to her sin. Jesus didn't say her love saved her. He said her faith saved her. "Her many sins have been forgiven for she loved much" would be a little bit like saying this morning "It's raining" before the sidewalk is wet. It's the evidence of what has already taken place. Her love is the evidence that she already believed that Jesus was her Savior.

Here Jesus offers forgiveness fully to these two people. One treasures it and the other goes "Yeah, that's nice, whatever. I don't need it." If we are going to be committed to Christ and want to manage our time faithfully and wisely, we have to recognize just how sinful we are and how much we have been forgiven. I think this is one of our dangers as generational Christians who all our lives have known that Jesus loved us and lived and died in our place and took away our sins. Yes, we know we're sinners, but we don't really want to stop and think about that too much.

What did we sing a little earlier today? "Led by you to see my errors, Lord I tremble at your terrors." You all sang that this morning, right? Really? Do we tremble at our terrors at how much we have sinned against our God? Or do we go "yeah, I'm a sinner. I'm not perfect." But do we in our heads go "But I'm not as bad as that guy. I'm not as bad as that person. At least I'm here." Do we really tremble at our terrors, terrors at the fact that we have affronted a Holy God and not loved him with our whole heart? Or do we go "Yeah, I know I'm forgiven and that's good. Let's just keep moving on Pastor. Don't make me feel bad with my sin."

This is the one thing I'm always certain of...when someone comes and tells me "Pastor, you've been preaching too much Law lately," if I go back and look at the last week or two of sermons, I know exactly which sin they are struggling with because that's the one I was talking about. But when it's "That was a great sermon Pastor. You let them have it." I know that's not the sin they are struggling with. That's just how we are.

We at times have lost the “wow” factor of God’s forgiveness. I’ll give you an example...I wrote about it this week in the devotion in the school newsletter. Mr. Pingel did a devotion at chapel this past Wednesday and I thought it was an excellent chapel. He was making the point that how much we treasure the gift is how much we respond in thankfulness. He had someone come forward. He had three gifts for him. The first gift was a used pencil. No kid is going to get excited about a used pencil. A kid isn’t even going to get excited about a new pencil, right? The next gift was a box of pens, brand new pens. They would last you the whole year. That’s nice, whatever. It’s like underwear at Christmas, right? Who cares? The last bag had a laptop. The kid pulls the laptop out and boy, there’s a buzz in the room. Everyone is oohing and aahing and there’s this excitement. Excitement was palpable in the room at seeing a laptop.

Then he goes on to talk about the gift that God has given us that really brings the most thanksgiving from us...Jesus, who has taken away our sins. He presented it beautifully. He laid it out there, and it was wonderfully done. I look around the room as we are talking about Jesus, and we’re flopping our Order of Service around, watching it go back and forth, taking our offering envelope and swinging it to try and figure out how much money is in there that “I won’t have for treats the next time I’m in town,” and I see this glazed-over look on the kids’ eyes.

Isn’t it sad that we’ve lost the “wow” factor of Jesus and the “wow” factor of a laptop trumps it? Aren’t we a little closer to Simon than we are to this woman? Don’t we need to re-look at ourselves and recommit ourselves to Christ and see that we are sinners and the only answer to our sin is the perfect life and death of Jesus, the body and blood given and shed for us, and this incredible act of our God who left heaven and became one of us?

Maybe some of you are thinking “Oh, yeah, but you don’t understand. We’re Germans. We don’t get excited about much of anything.” Try scheduling something when the Packers are playing and tell me you don’t get excited about anything. We’re nuts. We get awful excited about things. It’s just for some reason we think we shouldn’t get excited about God. And I think that “some reason” that leads us to think we shouldn’t get excited about God is Satan. Who is the only person that doesn’t want us excited about our God? It isn’t the Holy Spirit. It isn’t the Father. It isn’t the Son. It’s the devil. We’re the poorer for it when we don’t get excited about our God.

So take a look at this. Take a look at what God has done for us...that he calls us his children, that he’s made us his children. Then look at the amount of time he gives you in a day as a way that you can say “thank you,” and use it faithfully. Use it like we’ve been talking about...for your family, for the Body of Christ, your fellow believers. Use it for your neighbors. But most of all, also find time to get connected to Christ so you have the “wow” factor. Otherwise, we are going to end up like Simon.

Simon couldn’t see Jesus. Why couldn’t Simon see Jesus when he was right there in the room? He is talking to him, right? He couldn’t see him because his eyes were on this woman. “Look at her. She’s terrible. Look at what she is doing wrong. She’s

awful. He should know better than this.” His eyes weren’t on Jesus even as he was talking to him. His eyes were on himself. “I’m better than she is.”

Whereas the woman, where were her eyes? They’re only on Jesus, even if only on his feet. She couldn’t take her eyes off Jesus. She was so excited about this forgiveness.

Think about yourself. What do you spend more time doing? Looking at Jesus, focusing on Jesus, learning about Jesus, or thinking about in our congregation what other people should be doing so that things would go better? Honestly, which do you do more of?

So what are you closer to, Simon or the woman?

The correct answer is, get closer to God, his love and his forgiveness.