

Forgiveness For All
Luke 7:36-50
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When my brother and I were very young, back in the 60's, big time wrestling was on TV all the time and was my brother's favorite sport.

He loved watching it and his favorite wrestler was Killer Kowalski.

These guys would come into the ring and climb the ropes, then jump on to their opponent's chests, they would hide knives and cut out each others eyes but no one ever stayed injured.

In spite of all of this my brother still thought that it was all real.

I, being 4 years younger and maybe less trusting, had my doubts.

One day, many years later my brother was doing some set up work at the Lowell Auditorium he found out that all of his heroes choreographed their fights.

By the time I was ten, I knew this but he didn't learn this till he was 50.

What does it mean to be a champ?

Some (many) would say that Tom Brady is the perfect picture of a champ.

For others it might be baseball heroes or marathon winners or winners of the Tour De France.

At times we find that some of our heroes have won by taking a few shortcuts.

Putting the odds in their favor.

Some may have taken steroids, deflated a ball or as in the Tour De France, put tiny motors in their bikes.

My brother doesn't look at wrestlers as champs anymore.

How do you feel when you find out that one of your champs has cheated?

What should be the punishment for cheating?

In life, we all desire to look better than we really are.

We all would like to be champs.

We all want to look smarter, richer, more beautiful or stronger than we are.

As Christians, we all want others to think that we better people than we really are.

We would like to look like we have it all together.

The problem is, is that we don't.

Each of us are sinners, we are broken and in fact, as I like to say, we are despicable.

Romans 3:23 says that all of us have sinned and that all of us fall short of the glory of God.

In reality there is only on champ and that's Jesus.

But, as Pastor Jonathan preached two weeks ago in the account of the lost son; we learned that some people's sins are obvious and other people's sins are hidden.

Today we are going to look at how Jesus deals with our sin and we'll talk about how in return we can learn by His example to offer forgiveness to others.

We will learn how our acts of forgiveness create paths for other to come to Jesus.

Let's Pray: Father as we come before you tonight we ask that you would open our hearts and our minds to you. We pray that you would speak to us and that you would show us how to forgive those who we have learned not to forgive; that you would give us love for those that we have chosen not to love. God, help us to become people who forgive as you forgive. Amen.

Read Luke 7:36-50

In the first verse we see that a Pharisee invited Jesus to his home for a meal.

At this time Jesus was not popular with the Pharisees.
In fact, most of the commentaries teach that this Pharisee was out to find fault with Jesus.
I would like to give him the benefit of the doubt.
I think that he may have had an open mind and wanted to learn more.
Today we mostly think of Pharisees as bad people because of how they treated Jesus.
But, they were people who while trying hard to honor God lost their way.
They tried to be examples of Godly living and tried to be guardians of the law.
I find it ironic that this set of scriptures teaches about forgiveness and yet the commentaries are condemning of this poor Pharisee.

Well, whenever you invite Jesus in, it's not going to go anything like you expect.

For those of you who have recently invited Jesus into your lives, you may want to put your seat belts on as you are about to go on a bumpy ride.

This man may have expected to just sit and talk but right off the bat he finds things uncomfortable.
There is a sinful woman sitting on the floor in his house pouring perfume on the feet of Jesus.

Not only that but she is crying and creating a scene.

The Pharisee thinks to himself that Jesus has no clue who this woman is.

The Pharisee knows who she is and that she is not much good.

The Greek implies that she is a married woman who sleeps around.

This Pharisee thinks that Jesus can't be a prophet and not know this.

He can't see that Jesus could allow this to happen.

Jesus knows what he is thinking and says, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

At this the Pharisee seems to be open, his heart seems to be soft; he seems ready to receive and ready to learn.

In verses 40–48 Jesus exposes Simon's errors and according to one commentary, he proves that:

1. He knows this woman, her past history and her present condition;
2. He even knows what Simon has been saying to himself;
3. He is, accordingly, a prophet; in fact a discerner of hearts and minds;
4. He is nothing less than the divine Savior, clothed with authority to forgive sins.¹

When people are open and ready to learn God will speak.

So Jesus tells (verses 41-42) how two men owed a debt. One debt was small and one was large.

He says that both debts were forgiven and then asked which one of these who were forgiven would love more.

Simon answers (verse 43), "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."

Jesus told Simon that he was correct and then Jesus tries to show this Pharisee how this woman, who knew how great her sin was, was showing love to the one who had canceled her debt.

I believe that Simon had to have an open mind and heart to see this.

The message in this set of scriptures can only be learned if you too have an open mind and heart.

This sermon isn't like most sermons on forgiveness.

Most sermons teach us how to forgive those who have in some way personally offended us.

These verses teach us to forgive people types that we don't like.

They verses teach us to forgive bad people.

People who have taken short cuts to win.

People who don't live by the rules.

People who are the worst in our eyes.

For this Pharisee, this sinful woman was not worthy of forgiveness.

She may have purposely broken all the rules.

She may have not even cared about what God wanted.

But in spite of all of who she was, in spite of all she did, Jesus offered her forgiveness and she knew it.

She understood the grace of God and it caused her to love.

She didn't just love a little, she loved a lot.

She didn't care that she was in the home of a Pharisee; all she could see was Jesus.

I believe that her tears may have been two fold.

Tears of sorrow for her past sins.

And, tears of joy for her new state.

She was now a sinner saved by grace.

She was once lost but now she sat at the feet of Jesus.

This woman cheated a lot in life yet Jesus created a place for her to find forgiveness.

That's the God that I serve!

I need a place like this.

You need a place like this.

This Pharisee needed a place like this.

And those who have offended you need a place like this.

In some ways we are all like the Pharisees; we think that we are good enough but others aren't.

We all have some groups of people that we think don't deserve God's love.

People who don't seem to care about God in anyway.

People who break all of the rules that we follow and cheat all the time.

People who come out as winners by cheating while we play fair and lose.

But Jesus teaches us to forgive.

When I was about 4 years old I had an accident at the swimming hole. I walked out into the deep water on a piece of concrete that had fallen off the road. When I reached the end I kept on walking only to go under the water.

In my area of the town there was one man that no one wanted anything to do with.

He played in a band at night clubs and drank.

He was clearly no good.

But, he was the first person in the water and the one to pull me out.

I learned a lesson that day.

And then at eight years old when my parents separated and we moved into a 12 family house in the city, money was hard to come by but there was a woman who lived downstairs who was a sinner just like the woman in our scripture text. But, before she would go out on the town at night to make her living she would come to our door and ask my mother if she could give me a quarter to pray for her.

I learned a lesson from that.

I learned to be an independent thinker; I learned to forgive when others didn't.

What are the people groups that you can't forgive?

Political groups? Lawyers? Drug addicts? Communist/Socialist? The rich/the poor? Religious groups? Isis? Those who get abortions or are for woman's rights? Sexually perverted?

Who are the people that are at the feet of Jesus crying?

Who are the people that Jesus has forgiven that you haven't?

I found an interesting verse in my studies a few weeks ago.

2 Corinthians 2: 10-11, anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

One of Satan's schemes is to cause us to see others sins and not our own.

He knows that if we create a path of love and forgiveness, people will come to Jesus. (Repeat)

Each time we hold unforgiveness we have been outwitted by Satan.

In verses 44-47, Jesus shows the fruit of this woman's faith.

Read verses:

This woman did all these things; her faith was alive.

The Pharisee did nothing.

In verse 50 Jesus said to the woman, "your faith has saved you, go in peace."

The saddest thing for me to see is that the drunks and the prostitutes are coming into the kingdom and the good people are not.

It's people like this sinful woman that will hear, "Well done my good and faithful servant."
(Matthew 25:23)

The people who cheat can see their need for forgiveness so well that often they will do whatever it takes to find Jesus.

What about you?

Are you too good to come to Jesus for forgiveness of your sins?

Do you see yourself as someone who is better than others?

Someone who won't come to the feet of Jesus?

My wish for you is that you could see your sin!

You may think that you are better than others but you are not.

Jesus said that there are none that are righteous, no not one. (Romans 3:10)

If you are a believer; one who has come to the feet of Jesus, what paths do you open for others?

Are you like this Pharisee who can't see what Jesus saw?

Is your standard so high that you can't believe that Jesus forgives everyone?

In the game of life we all cheat; we all fall short of God's glory.

We all need to learn to forgive and forgive everyone and everything.

Can you see this woman at the feet of Jesus?

Have you forgiven her?

Do you love her the way Jesus loves her?

Do you know that Jesus loves you just like He loved her?

May God richly bless you!

Benediction: May you leave this place knowing that God loves you and that He has forgiven you for all of your sins. Knowing this may you love others and may you too create paths for sinful people to come to the feet of Jesus. Amen