



Sermon, March 1, 2026
Luke 7:36–50
A Dinner That Became a Divine Encounter

In this Gospel passage, Jesus is invited to dine at the house of Simon the Pharisee. The setting is formal, religious, and controlled. Pharisees were known for their strict devotion to the Law and their concern for outward righteousness. Simon likely invited Jesus out of curiosity, perhaps even skepticism.

Yet during this dinner, something remarkable happened. An unnamed “sinful” woman encountered Jesus and received forgiveness. Grace often enters places where it is neither understood nor welcomed.
Something Is Missing

Simon did not offer water for Jesus’ feet, a kiss of greeting, or oil for His head, basic gestures of hospitality in that culture. His posture was polite, but distant.

In that culture, dinners were often semi-public gatherings, and people could linger along the edges to observe.

The Woman’s Bold Act

While Jesus was reclining at the table, a woman from the city entered. The Gospel identifies her simply as “a sinner.” Her reputation and shame followed her wherever she went. But when she heard that Jesus was dining at Simon’s house, she made the bold decision to go there.

She brought an alabaster jar of perfume. Standing behind Jesus at His feet, she began to weep. Her tears fell on Jesus’ feet, and she wiped them with her hair. She kissed them repeatedly and anointed them with her costly perfume.

Simon was displeased and said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is.”

Jesus, knowing Simon’s thoughts, told a story: Two people owed money to a lender. One owed much; the other owed little. Both debts were canceled. “Which of them will love him more?” Jesus asked Simon.

Simon answered, “The one who had the bigger debt forgiven.” Then Jesus said, “Her many sins have been forgiven, as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” He turned toward the woman and said, “Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

This woman had been labeled by her past. But after meeting Jesus, she left defined by grace. She recognized that the One reclining at the table was more than a teacher; He was the Forgiver.

Where Are We in This Story?

Religion often says, “Clean yourself up, then come.” But Jesus says, “Come, and I will make you clean.” This narrative is not only about the woman, but it is also about us.

Some of us identify easily with her. We know our failures. We feel the weight of regret and wonder if we have gone too far. The good news is that this passage declares that no one who comes to Jesus in repentance is turned away. No debt is too large, no past too stained, because His grace is greater.

Others of us are closer to Simon. We feel comfortable because we think we owe less. We attend church, we think we understand the gospel, and we maintain appearances. But our love is distant, and our worship is restrained. We have forgotten how much we have been forgiven.

Long familiarity with religion tempts us to compare ourselves with others instead of recognizing the grace of God. The danger of comparing ourselves with others is that we will always find someone worse, and our sense of sin and our love shrinks.

But when we look at the cross, comparison dies, pride falls, and gratitude rises. Imagine that room again.

The fragrance of perfume fills the air, tears fall, whispers circle. And Jesus stands at the center, receiving the broken, challenging the proud, extending forgiveness, and creating peace.

Which character are we today?

Are we standing at a distance, analyzing? Or are we at Jesus 'feet, surrendered?

The invitation is the same for all of us.

During this season of Lent, Jesus invites us to bring our debt, our shame, our pride, and our tears. And we will hear Him say, "Your sins are forgiven; your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

May God help us to be like that woman, aware of mercy, overflowing with love, and walking in the peace given by Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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