

FPFWC Christian Development



The Measure of Faith

April 2024

Spring Quarter

April 20, 2024

Lesson #3 – Faith of an Anointer

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Luke 7:36-39; 44-50

ICE BREAKERS-

1. Why is it important that we appreciate the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, and how do we do it?
2. What kind of lessons do we learn from waiting on the Lord?

Key Verse: “He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.—Luke 7:50

LESSON BACKGROUND –

Just prior to the events of today’s lesson, Luke summarized two viewpoints toward Jesus that had emerged. Those viewpoints are revealed by reactions to John the Baptist. On the one hand, “All the people that heard [Jesus], and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John” (Luke 7:29). On the other hand, “the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him” (7:30). Rejection of John the Baptist, the Christ’s forerunner (1:15–17; 3:1–20; 7:33–35), meant rejecting the Christ as well (Matthew 17:12). This set the stage for a contrast between those who held these polar-opposite viewpoints.

As an oversimplification, we can see “the publicans” (tax collectors) as a demographic that represented the first view above. These Jews had chosen to work with the Romans to extract taxes from their fellow Jews, thereby earning great scorn as collaborators. Tax collectors could become wealthy by overcharging taxes (see Luke 19:2, 8).

The Pharisees, by contrast, can be seen as primary representatives of the second viewpoint above. Pharisees advocated strict and scrupulous observance of the Law of Moses. Over time, this resulted in human traditions being added to that law. See Jesus’ critique of this fact in Matthew 23:1–36 and Mark 7:1–23.

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus estimated that there were only about 6,000 Pharisees throughout the Roman empire. Perhaps no more than a few hundred lived in the villages of Galilee. Yet they exerted an influence out of proportion to their numbers, as witnessed by their being mentioned about 100 times in the New Testament. (By contrast, Sadducees are mentioned only 14 times.)

Today’s lesson takes us to an early point in Jesus’ ministry when things had gotten serious enough for Pharisees to come from “every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem” to investigate Him (Luke 5:17). The nearest example up to the point of today’s lesson is Jesus’ having been in the village of Nain, about 25 miles southwest of Capernaum (7:11). Combining that fact with information in Luke

8:1, 22, and 26, we conclude that a village in Galilee was the location of today's lesson.

LESSON COMMENTARY

7:36–39. The contrast between the common Jewish people who accepted Jesus and the leadership who rejected Him was starkly drawn in an encounter between Jesus and **one of the Pharisees** (7:36a). Jesus had accepted an invitation to dine with a Pharisee, and while He was eating (**reclined at the table** 7:36b) a woman, identified only as **a sinner** (7:37a), came to the house. It was not unusual to have uninvited guests standing at the perimeter of the banquet table, perhaps seeking to be noticed or to be offered some portions of the dinner. This woman, however, had come with a bottle of perfumed oil (7:37b) with only one purpose: to honor Jesus. Luke described her movements in meticulous detail to highlight the effect on the dinner party. Her actions of devotion (**weeping**—lit., “bursting into tears”—and positioned at His feet, **wiping** His feet with her hair, **kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume** 7:38) were heedless of all propriety—they were actions of uninhibited affection toward Jesus. The Pharisee's reaction was one of judgmental disgust. He (and no doubt others) thought to himself (7:39a) that if Jesus were indeed a prophet he would know what sort of woman (**she is a sinner**) was touching Him (7:39b) and that He would have refused her devotion and put a stop to this display.

Jesus acknowledged that the woman had shown great love toward Him while Simon had shown little respect for Him (7:44–46). She had been extravagant in her love—Simon had failed even at common courtesies. Her devotion was an evidence of her love, which was the outworking of her gratitude for being forgiven. When Jesus said to her, **Your sins have been forgiven** (7:48), He was not suggesting she had earned forgiveness by her actions, but that her actions were the loving evidence that she had been forgiven. To the consternation of the dinner party (7:49), Jesus pronounced forgiveness and confirmed her salvation (7:50).

LESSON NUGGET – **She Could Not Hide It** – The sinful woman trusted Christ and He saved her; now she wanted to express her love to Him. True faith cannot be hidden, and true faith shows itself in love and worship. Simon the Pharisee was blind: he could not see himself, the Lord, or the woman. He did not know the debt he owed!

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Word for Today Bible, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*