

Sermon Series: Outsiders

Sermon Title: Inside Pictures With Outsiders

Sermon Text: Luke 7:36-50

Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry

Sermon Summary: This study looks deeply into Luke's story of Jesus being anointed by a sinful woman at the home of a Pharisee named Simon. Simon was an insider with the religious establishment of his day, but was an outsider when it came to a personal relationship with God through Jesus. The sinful woman, on the other hand, was an outsider when it came to the religious establishment, but had been forgiven by Jesus and was now an insider in God's family! The story unfolds inside Simon's home where he had invited Jesus to a meal. The woman, who was not invited, comes in the house through an open door and anoints Jesus with perfume as a way of saying thanks for His mercy shown to her. Eleven snapshots are taken from this scene to help us see and understand powerful spiritual truths relating to outsiders that are found in this story.

Full Sermon Notes:

Aren't you thankful Jesus has brought you out of the wilderness of this world and into His protection, provision, peace and presence? We were cast down by the sins of this world and held in bondage. However, Jesus broke the chains and we are free to lift our hands in praise to our glorious God and Savior! We are free to use our hands to serve the One who sacrificed everything so we could know His love!! We were outsiders, but Jesus welcomed us to come inside. His door is always open to anyone who would want to come into His presence! Today we're going to see some inside pictures from an encounter Jesus had with some outsiders. One accepted His invitation to become an insider and one rejected. We will learn great lessons and gain great insight from these inside pictures with outsiders. Let's pray and ask God to open our eyes to see all the detail in these pictures. Let's pray!

Let's turn in God's Word to our story today. Luke 7:36-50.

While you turn there, I'll give you a little background. This story is one of the most poignant stories in all of the Bible when it comes to seeing how Jesus connected with someone who was an outsider when it came to the religious establishment of the day. The story takes place inside a Pharisee's home. There was an outsider who made their way inside the house! Thus our sermon title, Inside pictures with Outsiders. It's a story with a lot of back story, or interesting background, if you like. All four gospels tell a story of a woman anointing Jesus with oil. Matthew and Mark tell a story almost identical to each other and name the location as Simon the leper's home. John's story is similar, but gives no location, However, John actually names the woman as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, the man Jesus raised from the dead. Our message today comes from Luke's gospel and was probably a different incident altogether. It takes place at the home of a man also named Simon, but who was a Pharisee, and the lady is unnamed. This is the story we will hear and hopefully see today, and though the woman's name is not mentioned, we discover that her reputation preceded her.

You've heard the old saying "a picture paints a thousand words?" Well this story paints a thousand pictures. Pictures we need to see today! Most of you have scrapbooks or photo albums with pictures of important events in your life. You take them out ever so often to remember, to reflect, to revive precious memories. As you know I love photography. If I had been at this event in Jesus' life, there would have been some stunning photo opps! Like this one...

The Meal

Luke 7:36 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

Before we examine the picture of the meal, let me just point this out. Jesus gets an invitation from a Pharisee and He accepts. Jesus knew what a majority of the religious leaders thought about Him, but He cared about their souls and took every opportunity to reach out to them! Now back to the picture of the meal. They didn't sit in chairs at a table like us, they reclined on small cushions. They would typically leave the door open during meals like this so others could stop by and engage in the conversations. It was a cultural thing. So it was not unusual for an uninvited guest to just show up and stand around behind the main guest. But picture this...The Pharisee's prided themselves in ritual cleanliness when all of a sudden an unclean, unwanted guest shows up, definitely an outsider. So we will now take a snapshot of one of the main characters of our story...

The Sinful Woman

Picture this: They were reclining at the table when...

Luke 7:37 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.

The fact this lady is said to have lived a sinful life and from the comments Simon the Pharisee made about her, many scholars have concluded this woman had been a prostitute. But something had changed! Scholars believe she had met Jesus and He had forgiven her before this meal. For her to have the boldness to enter a Pharisee's home, knowing she was an outsider and knowing the kind of reception she would receive, shows something of her motivation. She didn't care. Her focus was dead set on giving thanks to Jesus for her new life! No matter what others thought, she was no longer defined by her old way of life. Jesus had changed all of that. She might still be on the outside of the religious institution of her day, but she was no longer an outsider when it came to knowing God and being known by God! But something we should not miss here. The very fact she had lived the particular sinful way of life she had lived, would indicate she was not a woman of great means, so the gift she brought was probably her life savings. Let's get a snapshot of...

The Woman's Gift

Luke 7:37 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.

Evidently this jar of perfume or ointment was worth 300 denarii or a little over a year's worth of salary for the average Jew back then. This was probably an oil imported from India. So this was a very sacrificial gift for this woman to give. But why would she give such an extravagant gift? It had to do with her new heart, which we will get a snapshot of in just a moment! Because genuine love is such a beautiful thing, people will sometimes be extravagant in their attempts to show their love to someone or to show their gratitude to someone for their love

Now I have a practical question for you: Have you considered something beautiful you could do to show your love for God for the extravagant love He has shown to you?

Folks I'm not talking about trying to earn God's love or trying to be good enough to deserve it, we could never do that! I'm trying to get us to think about how we should be so grateful for the gift of God's love given to us through Jesus, we would want to live for Him out of gratitude for His Amazing Grace. Aren't you glad God was willing to be extravagant in His love for us?

This sinful woman was so thankful for God's extravagant love and forgiveness that she decided to be extravagant with her gift, and it all had to do with her new heart! This past week, I had a procedure done on my heart called a Cardioversion. Before they did the cardioversion they had to place an instrument down my throat in order to take pictures of the back of my heart. Kind of complicated, and thankfully I was asleep for the whole procedure. Things went good and I'm back in sinus rhythm. Thank You Lord! In our story today we don't need modern medical equipment to get our next picture.

The Woman's Heart

Luke 7:38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears...

Why was she crying? She knew the pain and humiliation of her old life was a thing of the past! Her heart had been changed! Her desires had been changed! Her purpose in life had been changed! And it was all because of Jesus! These were tears of relief and tears of thanks giving! This scene reminds me of Psalm 107:1-15. It could be the testimony of this woman...

Psalm 107:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Psalm 107:2 Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story— those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,

Psalm 107:3 those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

Psalm 107:4 Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle.

Psalm 107:5 They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.

Psalm 107:6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

Psalm 107:7 He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.

Psalm 107:8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind,

Psalm 107:9 for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Psalm 107:10 Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains,

Psalm 107:11 because they rebelled against God's commands and despised the plans of the Most High.

Psalm 107:12 So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

Psalm 107:13 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

Psalm 107:14 He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness, and broke away their chains.

Psalm 107:15 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind,

The chains of this woman's sinful life had been broken! She was no longer an outsider, and an outcast! She was an insider! And what was her gift of thanks? It was so much more than just perfume. It was an outward action that signified an inward change of heart! And we know that when our heart changes our life changes! In fact the writer of Proverbs gives us insight into this truth...

Prov 27:19 As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.

You may recall me saying this before, and I'll say it several times today: in the Hebrew language the subject-verb agreement rules are different than in English, so this verse can also be correctly translated:

Prov 27:19 As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart.

This woman's actions were a reflection of her heart! Now we get a snapshot of

The Woman's Act of Thanks

Luke 7:38 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.

First of all, let's just all agree on this one thing. A woman's hair is a pretty important thing to her. Not many women would consider using their hair to wash someone's feet. And even fewer would consider kissing someone's feet. Back in Biblical times, it was an extreme act of respect to kiss someone's feet. And then she takes this perfume, which could have been sold to help support her while she looked for a new line of work, and she pours it on His feet. Why would she

do this? Because Jesus had taken care of her spiritual need for forgiveness, there was no reason to think He wouldn't take care of her physical need for sustenance! But there's something I didn't read in any of the commentaries. Something we shouldn't overlook in the picture painted by this act of thanks. This fancy perfume may have also been a tool of her old trade, and she was giving everything to Jesus. She wouldn't need that perfume anymore. She was burying that old way of life, and Jesus was going to take that old way of life to the cross and take the punishment for her! What a beautiful picture. But this story has another picture or two. We will now take a snapshot of...

The Self-appointed Judge

Luke 7:39 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."

There's always those who are willing to stand in judgement of others. Simon had judged the woman to be an unclean sinner, and Jesus to be a false prophet! I'm thinking, "Who made this guy the judge?" Here's the problem with men playing judge. You can't see the heart! Simon had no way of realizing that Jesus had changed this lady's heart and had cleansed her of her sin. He only knew of her former way of life and her reputation. He couldn't see her new heart. His old perception was no longer correct! And while we can never fully know what's on someone's heart, we can't forget the words of the writer of Proverbs...

Prov 27:19 As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.

Or

Prov 27:19 As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart.

Simon's actions were also very telling and revealing on this day and Jesus is about to call him out. Simon was about to find out how wrong he was, not only about this woman, but about his erroneous belief that Jesus was a false prophet. Listen as Jesus uses a parable to paint a picture for Simon and the rest of the folks around the table. This is a very telling snapshot...

The Parable Picture

Luke 7:40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.

Before we get to the parable, did you notice it says Jesus answered Simon? Luke tells us Simon had said to himself "if this man were a prophet, He would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is..." , but Jesus is about to answer his question out loud! Hmmm...false prophet? I don't think so. Jesus knew Simon's thoughts. Jesus did this kind of thing a bunch, because He could and it helped keep people honest. Ok, the parable picture. Jesus said...

Luke 7:41 "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

Luke 7:42 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?"

Luke 7:43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

Do you think Simon realizes he is one of the main characters in the parable? The next snapshot we get from this story is stunning, it is a picture of..

The Spiritual Blindness of Simon

Luke 7:44 Then He (Jesus) 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.

Dr. Malcolm O. Tolbert, one of my favorite theologians, put it this way...

"Jesus turns to the woman, bringing her by this gesture into the circle. "Do you see this woman?" No! Simon had not seen her. He had classified her and dismissed her as one beneath his notice. He had depersonalized her by thinking of her as being just like all others of her ilk. But on every count the woman is shown to be Simon's superior. She has a much greater capacity for love and gratitude, based, as Jesus teaches, on her capacity to receive."

Broadman Commentary Volume 9, page 70, column two paragraph 2.

Her greater capacity to receive what? Forgiveness, cleansing, salvation, and the love of God. Why was her capacity so much greater? She knew she was a sinner and in need of a Savior. Simon the Pharisee, thought he had his act together. He didn't need a Savior. It has occurred to me that there are two kinds of Pharisees in our world still today. Religious and non-religious.

Religious Pharisees say, "I'm a good person, therefore, God loves me!"

Non-religious Pharisees say, "I'm a good person, therefore, I don't need God!"

Something to think about! And now we get a snapshot of...

The Customs of the Day

Jesus uses this snapshot to paint a very "high definition" picture of the difference between the unnamed woman, and Simon the Pharisee.

Luke 7:45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.

Luke 7:46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

You see, Simon had not even given Jesus the common courtesy of offering water to clean the dust off Jesus' feet at the door, no kiss on the cheek, or the customary bit of oil on the head to designate an honored guest. Remember, Simon had invited Jesus into his home. What was his motive? I don't know. But the uninvited guest, the outsider, the sinful woman, had not stopped showing honor, respect, and thanksgiving from the time Jesus had entered the house. You see, thanksgiving is giving something to show thanks. It's doing something to show thanks. It's not giving in order to get something, it's giving because you got something and you want to show thanks! It's like with our salvation. It's a gift we don't deserve, we can't earn, we can't buy, so we live our lives to show our gratitude for such an amazing gift!! We live our lives in a way that gives thanks and we do things to give thanks and we sometimes thank give! In other words we give something away to show our thanks!!! That's what this lady did and it's what Simon the Pharisee did not do! Maybe Simon considered Jesus to be an outsider and didn't want to show Him the normal courtesies of the day! Or maybe, Simon was an outsider who didn't want to become an insider in Jesus' circle. Maybe Simon was afraid of losing his insider status with the religious elite of the day. Simon was evidently one of those Pharisees who thought he was good enough and didn't need anything Jesus had to offer! So sad because he was missing out on the very thing he desperately needed! And what might that be? Well we are about to take another snapshot and this next picture is a masterpiece! It's what Simon needed that he didn't think he needed!!

The Picture of Forgiveness

Luke 7:47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

When translating the Greek language, you at times have to depend on the context of the verse and the story, much like the Hebrew language. “As her great love has shown” or “for she loved much,” can also be translated “so she loved much!” This brings this into harmony with the parable Jesus had just told. The one who had been forgiven so much loved so much!

I've had people ask me how I can love those who don't love me. And I tell them it may not be easy, but it is simple. Jesus forgave me of my sins against Him, how could I be so arrogant to turn around and not forgive someone who has sinned against me? I love the way Paul put it in Ephesians...

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

Ephesians 1:8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,

He lavished forgiveness and grace on me, how could I have the audacity to refuse forgiveness to my fellow man? And remember, forgiveness is never saying it's okay the wrong that was done or allowing yourself to be abused, but it is about realizing none of us are perfect and we all need God's lavish love, forgiveness, grace and mercy and we need to be willing to give it and all the

more if someone is genuinely repentant and asking for your forgiveness! Give forgiveness as it has been given to you!

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 5:1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children

Ephesians 5:2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Let's read the last three verses of our text and take a snapshot of...

The Picture of Faith

Luke 7:48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Luke 7:49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Luke 7:50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Jesus makes it very clear: The woman was not saved by the good works she had done that day. She was not saved by her worship, or her gift of the extravagant alabaster jar of perfume, but was in fact saved because of her faith in the gift of forgiveness that Jesus had given her by His grace which He would pay for with His life on an old rugged cross, not too long after this event! This sinful woman had experienced the reality of the forgiveness of God through faith in Jesus. Simon had not experienced that forgiveness because he didn't think he needed forgiveness. He was blind to his need and evidently he was not the only one...

Luke 7:49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

The pictures are clear. The question is, as you look at the 11 pictures painted by our story, which ones speak to your heart the most? And which of the characters pictured do you most relate to? It's important to know.

And let me say this, if you've not received the gift of forgiveness Jesus gave this sinful woman, then you'll have a hard time understanding the woman's actions of worship and thanksgiving. You'll have a hard time understanding people you've seen worshipping at church today! Why? Because worship is a response to a gift received. Worship is not done to earn brownie points with God. It's done out of the overflow of gratitude and thanksgiving you have for Jesus setting you free from a life of slavery to sin. Just like He did for the woman in our story. I'm going to ask our worship band to make their way to the platform. As they come, let me share with you what we are about to do. Today we took some pretty awesome snapshots from Luke's story! What we are about to do is paint a picture of what Jesus did for us on the Old Rugged Cross. We are about to engage in a practice that reminds us of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The extraordinary price He paid and sacrifice He made in order to

secure our forgiveness and our salvation is beyond our ability to comprehend. But not beyond our ability to receive! However, the question remains, how will you respond to that amazing love? Will you accept that love and the grace and forgiveness which are offered through the sacrifice of Jesus, the precious Lamb of God? Can you imagine how hard it was for God the Father to send His One and Only Son to suffer and die for our sins, our transgressions, our wickedness? He did this so we could become children of God! John put it this way in 1 John 3:1....

1 John 3:1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

We are going to sing the first two verses of our closing song and give you an opportunity to respond. You can come and pray with me or one of our other staff who will be here at the front. Then you can pick up one of these packages with the bread and juice, which symbolize the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, broken and poured out for your sins and mine. As they lead us, if you've never received the gift of salvation you can do so right now. And if you want to come and just kneel at this altar and pray you are welcome to do so.

The Lord's Supper - Jesus agreed to pay the debt you and I owed, and it cost Him everything! He paid it all by giving it all! He laid everything down to take up an old rugged cross! He went from being high and exalted on the right side of the Father in Heaven to being nailed to and lifted up on that old rugged cross He had carried! From His high and glorious position in glory to His lowly and despised place in the grave! We must never forget the exorbitant and extravagant price Jesus paid for our salvation. So as we get ready to take the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, remove the bread from the top of your package and let's listen to Paul's words to the church at Corinth...

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,

1 Corinthians 11:24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

1 Corinthians 11:25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Let's pray!