

David Uth's Convention Message

Convention Sermon – 2012 Southern Baptist Convention

Forgiven Much

Luke 7:36-50

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Part 2

I'm reading from the Gospel of Luke 7:36-50.

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him and he went into the house, and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at a table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and she wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it Teacher."

"A certain money lender had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii and the other 50. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he canceled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven - for she loved much. But he who has forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Every one of us in the room walked in today as one of two. We came in as a Pharisee or we came in as a sinner, amazed at his forgiveness and overwhelmed.

Now don't miss the point. There were two sinners in this story, and only one of them realized it. And only one of them was overcome with the grace of our God. And of all the discussion and all that I've read about the understanding of salvation among Southern Baptists, I just need to be perfectly honest with you. My greatest fear is not, that somehow I failed to understand everything that happened the moment He saved me, my greatest fear is that I will cease to wonder and I will cease to be amazed, and it will no longer be a big deal of what He did in my life.

Jesus, in this simple story, uses this moment to teach us one of the most incredible lessons about a woman who was forgiven much.

I don't understand why He did what He did for me. Beyond high school, I attended Southwestern Seminary, and 14 years after high school, in 1991, completed my PhD. And I stand here to tell you today, I still don't know how He did it. I will forever be amazed that He did, and I will worship Him and I will praise Him the rest of my life. I will, like this woman, find a way to say to Him, Jesus, thank you. Thank you. Because, I assure you, when she came in the room, it wasn't an issue for her whether she was of the effectual call or general call.

She said "Some man came in here staying at the hotel and he wanted ice cream. He wanted a spoon. He gave it to me because I didn't give him a spoon. If I don't have it, I will go to hell."

I said, "I have good news, he can't send you to hell. There's only one thing that sends you to hell." And I stood there and shared the gospel.

Here is my biggest concern, was that brother one of our pastors?

Maybe this question of Simon, "So you see the woman?" is appropriate. Let's turn to the woman. Who was she? We don't know. The Scripture doesn't say. She doesn't have a name.

I have had a lot of professors, and I've been one, but this woman teaches me more about Jesus than any professor I have sat under. She comes in, and she brings ointment.

Now I want to show you something. What happens in this text, is not to accomplish her salvation, it is because of her salvation. It's not to accomplish the forgiveness of her sin, it is in response to the forgiveness of her sin.

I want to take you to the verse. I want you to notice carefully verse 47. Jesus said, "*Therefore I tell you her sins, which are many, are forgiven.*" Would you circle "forgiven" and circle the tense verb, that it's happened.

"*Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven - for she loved much.*"

I would translate that to be, 'therefore, she loves much.' In other words, He had met this woman before. This was not her first encounter with Jesus.

There had been a moment, before, where He met her and changed her life. So we don't know how long she has been holding on to that flask. We don't know how long she has been waiting for the moment because she wanted to find a way to say thank you. She wanted to find a way to tell Him thank you and to pour out ointment on His feet, and I think it happened to come about, in a home of a Pharisee.

I want to walk you through what happened, and I want you to carefully watch this. One of the greatest scholars I have been influenced by is I. Howard Marshall. He said there was an emotion of the moment that took over this woman. I believe, like Marshall, she had intended to come in and anoint his head.

You understand, reclining at meal means they weren't sitting at a table, they were basically lying down. I believe that, when she came in the room, she was holding the ointment, and her desire was to go over to anoint His head with it, the ointment. But, I believe when she walked in, and she was holding this close to her heart, when she saw Him, she is so overwhelmed, she came to His feet first because they were reclining. Then she is embarrassed and lets her hair down. Immediately wipes his feet with her hair. That probably wasn't in her plan. Let me tell you why.

The Talmud spoke to women on letting their hair down. You don't let your hair down, women, only in the presence of your husband. For a woman to let her hair down in public is the same as exposing her breast.

But, in this moment, she sees His feet wet with tears. She lets her hair down, and she wipes His feet with her hair, because she wants to say thank you. She is overwhelmed with His grace and what He has done. Then she gets the ointment and anoints his feet.

Here is a woman who, in one moment, captures the essence of Jesus' teaching, and hears the teaching. When you know Christ, as a follower of Christ, as a Christian, you have been forgiven much. Therefore, love much.

This woman did that because she loved much. She had been forgiven much. And I know there's some in the room reading the text, thinking, it says "you have." Jesus gave that as an analogy. His point was, we have all been forgiven much. Therefore, love much.

You're going to hear a theme this afternoon of the North American Mission Board, called Love Loud.

Let me give you one reason you should listen to that report and engage in a way to Love Loud, because you have been forgiven much.

We ought to find every way possible to love Him back. Why do we not? Why are we not more extravagant in our love? Why are we not more vocal in our love for Him? And I think there's a progression.

Bill Bright, before he passed away, had another vision. I was told, not many know about this vision, but Bill had a vision. God gave him a vision of another awakening in this country. He said God showed him something. It would not come the way the others had come, but it would be an awakening of the church loving the community, and the people around them, in the love of Jesus. And because they demonstrate the love of Christ, people see Christ for who He is. And there's a great turning to Christ.

Bill had this vision, and I have never forgotten that conversation. I have been praying, God let it begin with us, so we've been doing something called Love Orlando. Our people, one Sunday, pledged over \$5 million to make a difference in homelessness and hunger. They have given over \$4 million to see that happen. There was no announcement; and there wasn't any preparation. It was just a spontaneous moment of God moving upon His people.

I'm praying God will, in this church, and other churches, that after hearing the report this afternoon, there's going to be an awakening that we have been forgiven much. Therefore, we will love much.

Let me tell you what has been happening, just a progression.

First: You will never see those sinners and people around you until you see yourself. Simon didn't see her. Simon was more interested in the law on how you appropriately wash your hands.

In Luke 19, Jesus gets in trouble with another Pharisee because He did not wash His hands correctly. Are you kidding me? He was caught up, and didn't have time to see people. Are we more interested in the right verbiage in the sinner's prayer than asking them to call on Jesus? Are we more interested in the technicalities, that we become just like Simon and totally miss them? Look at yourself. How did you come to Christ?

Someone said, "I don't know if I'm saved, I don't remember what I said. I just know Jesus changed my life. I can't explain everything, I just know I was lost, now I'm found. I was blind and now I can see. And when I remember that, I see others the same way."

I went to Haiti with some pastors in this room. This is after the earthquake. We waded through the water, to take boxes to people. Half were dressed, half didn't have a stitch of clothes on. A little girl came up to me, and I saw my daughter. And I thought to myself, standing there in knee-deep water, God, how come I wasn't born here? You've been good to me. I didn't do anything to deserve to be born into the home I was.

Did you do anything to be born in this country? You might want to be careful as you talk about immigration. Did you do anything that said, God I want to be born in this country, and I want to enjoy these freedoms, and I want to have this family? Everything that we have that's any

good came from grace and the Father above, and when you see that, when you realize that in your own life, then you see others.

Second: You won't see it in your own life until you see Jesus. You know what's funny to me is, in Acts 9, when the apostle Paul started to Damascus with the letters, he thought he was right.

Philippians 3, the resume, read it, of the tribe of Benjamin. As to the law, he was blameless, he was righteous.

So Paul was feeling pretty good about himself, according to the law. What was the only thing that changed his world and let him see his sin? He saw Jesus.

I'm convinced when that woman walked in the room and saw Jesus, it overwhelmed her.

Wouldn't it be wonderful in worship services when Jesus is so real that people are so overcome because they're in the presence of God?

He saw the Lord high, lifted up and filling the temple. It was then he said woe is me. It's only when you see Him that you see yourself.

Third: When you see Him, you've got to love Him. When you see Him, and what He has done, when you see the glorious Lord, when you understand anything about what He has done for you – the death on the cross and resurrection, He is coming back for you – you've got to love Him, you've got to find a way to do something.

Let me show you what this woman did. She took this (flask) and she found a way. Let me show you what Simon did. Nothing. Now I want to make sure you understand something. What Simon did was not inappropriate. Hear me carefully. It was not inappropriate. He did not violate any custom. He was not rude to Jesus, nor was Jesus rude to him. It's a great, great read at that point. The only problem with Simon, he did normal. He did normal.

So why did this woman go to all the trouble to do all that she did? Because she didn't believe Jesus was normal. She knew He was not just anybody, and what He had done for her deserved more than normal, so look what she did.

Jesus pointed it out. "Simon when I came in your house you did nothing. But when she saw me, it was customary to wipe the feet of a traveler and a guest with water and dry it with a towel. She used her tears. She used her hair."

It was customary to anoint the head of a traveler with olive oil. It was a cheap thing. But it was customary, it was traditional, normal. She didn't use olive oil, she didn't anoint his head, she poured out this on his feet. Everything she did, said, "Jesus, you are not normal, not average. You changed my life."

Listen Baptists, I don't know whether to call us Southern Baptists or Great Commission Baptists, listen to me: Jesus has done way too much for us for us to act normal! He has done way too much for our worship services to be customary and to be normal. He is not normal. Look at what He's done.

This woman poured this out. There is a lot of discussion on what was in the flask. I think there's some cool ideas. Some scholars believe that it was her quality earnings from being a prostitute. And that she basically poured them out. Possibly.

was with the leader of the *Jesus Project*. Rachel and I had a meal with this man and his wife. They had been in the Sudan and talked about a custom there. When a girl turns a certain age,

her father gives her costly ointment, and she saves it until her wedding. At her wedding, she gives that to her husband. So what if it was that?

We don't know what it was. But I promise you this, it was valuable to her. Her worship cost her something that day. Her love for Jesus cost her something that day.

Let me ask you a question. What does it cost you to follow Christ right now? What does your worship cost? When my wife and family were in Zambia, we were in the bush, in a tent, and the first worship service we ever heard in their language, when they started those drums and started worshiping, I saw a passion I had never seen. We began to weep, because I realized their worship cost them something.

When I was at the South Asia AGM in Thailand, I was blown away by their worship. They were passionate, weeping, hands raised, on the floor, crying out to God. I'm thinking, man, this is unbelievable. Then I remember, worship cost them something where they serve, because it means something when you lift your hands, it means something when you praise Him, when you worship God. Why? Because you're among people who hate Him, and they hate you when you worship.

I'm just asking you, what does your worship cost you? For this woman it cost everything. Why? Because Jesus is not normal.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we go home saying never again will I do normal, customary, or traditional. I will give more to my Lord because He has given more to me.

Last: The greatest sinner in this room was not the woman. The greatest sinner in the room was a Pharisee. Because the greatest sin of all is to be given and loved so much and to love back in return so little.

I believe that is the greatest sin and the greatest threat to us. People who have been forgiven, people who have been blessed so much would love so little. I have my mom with me today, and my wife. They're seated back in front of the sound booth. My mom has been bringing me to a convention since before I was ten years old. We figured it up last night, I've been to 45 years of conventions.

My dad loved coming to the Southern Baptist Convention, and he would sit out there, and as far as we know never went to a microphone. There were others of us that would take care of that, he just sat, but he was faithful and honored God and loved God. My dad served a church in the deep South, in the late 60's, early 70's. My dad had a passion, I couldn't understand why he was so passionate for people. My dad thought the church was for everybody. He started reaching some black children in a neighborhood right near the church.

It wasn't long until the deacon showed up and said, "They can't come here."

My dad said, "Well, sure they can."

"No, they can't. They don't belong here. They have a church of their own. We're going to ask you, pastor to tell them."

My dad said, "I'm not about to tell them." He said, "By the way, guys, this isn't your church, it isn't mine. It belongs to the Lord Jesus. They are welcome here."

Well, it did not go well. They continued to hound him and say, pastor you got to stop them from coming, we don't want blacks in this church, and they didn't always use the word black.

One day the KKK showed up in my dad's office. I was a 17-year-old kid at the time, in rebellion. I'm looking for another reason to give up on the church. I'm watching it. What my dad did forever changed me. The KKK came in his office, and there were three of them.

They said, "Pastor, you know who we are."

"Yes, sir, I know who you are, I'm from Mississippi."

"Listen, we think it would be a good idea you do what the deacon said, and stop them from coming."

My dad said, "I'm not about to."

They said, "We would hate to have something to happen to one of your children."

"The next thing I will tell you," my dad's response was not the most Christlike before a 17-year-old kid, but I thought it awesome - He looked at them and said, "Boys, I love to deer hunt and I can shoot a deer at 300 yards, no problem. And if you or any of your boys set foot in my yard, I will take you out."

Well guess what happened to my dad and that church? They fired him.

I lost my dad three years ago. The last conversation I had with him, I was pushing him in a wheelchair. He said, "Son, I'm sorry I lost that church. I'm sorry I got fired."

I said, "Dad, you may have lost a church, but you won a son. You won a son. You gave me something to be passionate about."

I just couldn't figure out why was my dad so passionate about everybody being invited to church. All of a sudden, I saw it, do you know why he loved much? Because my dad had been forgiven much.

My dad was a gambling alcoholic in Memphis, Tennessee, who worked at International Harvester, and as soon as work would get off, he would get on a motorcycle and head to Beale Street and lose everything in his check, drink it away and lose it all. My mom was that close to leaving him because he left her nothing.

One day he felt a tap on his shoulder at the plant, and it turned his life around. His father, my grandfather told him he was a fool. My grandfather was an atheist and signed up with the Communist Party. I know why my dad loved people so much. Why he loved loud, was because he had been forgiven so much.

Baptists, pastors, ladies, leaders, it's time to love loud. It's time to love much. Because we have been forgiven much.

Forever my hymn, forever my favorite song in the world will be, "I Stand Amazed In The Presence of Jesus the Nazarene."

And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner condemned, unclean.

How marvelous! how wonderful!
And my song shall ever be;
How marvelous! how wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!*

I know you want to sing it with me as we close. As we stand together, may this be a declaration of our love. Sing it loud, because you have been forgiven much, may we love much. Let's tell it: Hallelujah!

—from the office of David Uth

*words and music, Charles H. Gabriel