

“Extravagant Love and Grace!”

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“Extravagant” – Lavish, exceeding reasonable bounds, exorbitant. When we think of extravagant, we think of special and valuable things that we definitely don’t expect. It’s one thing to get a gift, but it’s totally unexpected to get an extravagant one!

Our Gospel this morning puts us at the dinner table with Jesus. Jesus is the guest of a man of relatively high social and religious status. He is a Pharisee named Simon, and as a Pharisee, Simon, was concerned about Jesus and the crowd following Him, so he asked Jesus to dinner to spy on Him.

Open to Luke 7. The dinner was going well as they reclined at the table and discussed issues and listened to each other. That was until an unnamed woman from the city, who is described as having been a sinner, hearing that Jesus was there, comes into the room completely uninvited. Look at verses 37-39, *“And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at 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 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.”*

What sins the woman committed before aren’t mentioned, but her actions here are examples of extravagant love! She stood at Jesus’ feet, using her tears, her hair, her kisses, and perfume. The woman may have been sinful, but she came seeking the Lord. She loved Jesus more than anything else. Her previous actions were sinful, but her heart was loving. Her sinful actions and her heart didn’t line up, but that was OK with Jesus, because He saw her heart. The sinful woman was more in touch with Jesus than the righteous host.

Such extravagant love with the touching of Jesus by a sinful woman would have made any first century Pharisee extremely uncomfortable. Simon’s upset about the woman, but he doesn’t respond to the woman’s actions. Instead, he looks at the situation, and concludes Jesus couldn’t possibly be a prophet, a spokesperson for God, because if He was He would have known what kind of person she was! But Jesus knows what Simon is thinking, and so He tells a story out loud, so all the guests at the table can hear.

Look at verses 40-43, *“And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.” “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.”*

And then Jesus drives His point home! Look at verses 44-48, *“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 is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

This forgiveness given to this woman was a sign of Jesus’ extravagant grace! He saw her sins and sees our sins and is ready to forgive. He asks us to come to Him in true repentance and He hears our pleas for mercy, and in His extravagant grace, forgives!

So what does this story mean for us? Simon’s part tells us not to judge another person’s spiritual health by their actions. But the story isn’t really about Simon. It’s about the sinful woman and the extravagant love she showed to Jesus, and the extravagant grace He shows in forgiving her.

There were reasons why this woman could have stayed away from Jesus. She wasn’t invited, she wasn’t wanted, she might be kicked out, and there might be hypocrites there. But she came and showed her love for Jesus anyway! This woman’s love didn’t earn her forgiveness! But her love flowed from being shown mercy. We are just like the woman and are debtors to sin too! Jesus loves us, in spite of our sinfulness!

This Gospel story is a lesson for all of us. It asks us to consider our own unworthiness as sinners redeemed by the extravagant grace of God. It’s a lesson that asks us to consider how we perceive ourselves as we come to worship and be nourished at our Lord’s Table. It asks us to think about how open we are to expanding the boundaries of our love and compassion to embrace those who may be different from us.

Listen to this quote, *“God’s forgiveness and extravagant grace in Jesus Christ is a scandal. It goes out to sinners regardless of their religious or social standing. It breaks into human existence without prior invitation. It transforms who we are, whom we understand God to be, and how we are to live our lives and utilize our resources. It’s not something that we control, but something that slams into our lives and takes control. It’s not given to us as a result of our love but generates love in us toward God and toward one another.”*

Love Jesus extravagantly! Honor Him. Obey Him. Spend time with Him. Get to know Him better. Remember all that you’ve been forgiven of through His death on the cross and His resurrection. Extravagantly love those around you! Tell them of Jesus Christ and show others what He’s done in changing your life.

Don’t forget, no matter what, Jesus loves and forgives you with His extravagant grace!