

When the Jewish religious leaders were forming an opinion about this Jesus bloke, they got a lot of things wrong. But I'll tell you what: they were spot-on when they said "He's a friend of tax-collectors and sinners"... Of course, they thought that was a terrible, terrible thing,,,,, but it was the whole purpose of Jesus' coming...

When I used to work at the Ag College, they had a proper wash-block set up, with a 3-Phase hot water pressure cleaner. But the problem was, if we had something that was really really dirty, we weren't allowed to use it. We'd have to take a pump down the paddock and hose it off before we brought it back to the pressure cleaner...

And I 'get' that. A big heap of mud & stuff would clog up the grease-trap and it would be a real pain... You know what they say about black soil: You stick to it in the dry, and it will stick to you in the wet...

But some of us can be like that when it comes to the church. Yes, we know that Jesus came to save sinners, and we like the thought of that. But what about when sinners start coming through the door – are they going to be welcome? Or do we expect them to hose their sinful past off down the paddock before they turn up here? And if they are welcome, how are they going to **know** they are welcome???

Now, I reckon I know you lot well enough to be able to say, "Yes, of course they will be welcome". In fact, I'm pretty sure that nothing would give us greater joy, than to see the worst sinner in town, step into this church because they want

to know how to be saved. – Nothing would give us greater joy, would it???

But do **they** know this would give us joy? Do **they** know they will be welcome? When's the last time you actually visited someone (who isn't the most couth of characters), and seriously invited them to your home for a meal, or for you to pick them up on your way to church (making sure they **know** they will be welcome)?

You see, sometimes it **is** a real exclusion where “Owh. I don't really want that person here – They make me feel uncomfortable – I've heard things about them, that are not very savoury...”

And even if we don't say it with our words, our body-language might betrays us, and it tells them “You don't belong here.” So sometimes there **is** a real exclusion (I pray to God that that doesn't happen here).

But probably more often than we realise, there is a perceived exclusion... It is very uncomfortable for a sinner (who knows they're a sinner), to come into the midst of a holy people. And that is what we are. At one time, we were not holy. But by the forgiveness and the sanctification of God, we are now truly holy. And when a sinner comes into the presence of the holy, that can be a really uncomfortable experience for them. They feel they're not good enough; they feel they don't belong.

And so, it's really important that we reach out, to be **truly** welcoming and engaging.

I actually had a bit of a giggle when I was reading in Chapter 7 back in v²⁹ (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too ... As if tax collectors aren't people... In the eyes of Jesus' generation, "tax collectors" must've been seen as the lowest of the low – the epitome of "sinner"...

What example would be used today??? Who is the sinner whom you would consider the lowest of the low, and would you welcome them into this room today???

Would you welcome a:

- bully;
- scammer, who preys on the elderly and the simple;
- rapist?

Whoever would make you feel the most uncomfortable, that person would be the equivalent of a tax collector to Jesus' generation...

And the Pharisees hit the nail on the head – Jesus **is** a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Jesus is indeed a friend, to the worst sinner you could imagine... Last time Jesus was invited to a meal, it was at a tax collector's house. And the Pharisees said, "Why do you eat with people like that?", Jesus said, "It's the sick who need a doctor" – it's a sinner who needs a Saviour.

And the wisdom of God (in the way He calls sinners to repentance), is demonstrated by the fruit of those who respond to the Gospel. The worst of sinners can be totally changed, renewed, made holy. They can be born again (into the Lord Jesus Christ), and become a completely new creation...

That's the wisdom of God...

And this concept cannot be foreign to us, because it is **your** story, and it's **my** story. Even the Apostle Paul, who was a diligent Pharisee, priding himself on his good works and keeping of all of the religious law, realised that before he became a Christian, he was the worst of sinners...

And so the wisdom of God, is demonstrated, even in us. The wisdom of God, is Him, taking a dirty, rotten sinner (me), and forgiving; renewing; sanctifying – to a state of pure holiness... And God is glorified because of that.

Righto, so a Pharisee invites Jesus to dinner. A Pharisee is a separated one – one who was so intent on maintaining his own holiness, he could not bear to mix with anything or anyone who was 'impure'...

And so Jesus turns up for dinner, and the phrase is, they "**reclined at table**"... They don't eat with tables and chairs like we do. There would be a little low table (on which the food was served), and they would lay down (around the table) like we would lay down on a picnic blanket and eat a picnic.

(Righto, so the table would be in the centre, their heads would be near the table and their feet would stick out away from the table). The older I get, the less comfortable that sounds...

But then a woman (who is described as “a woman of the city, who was a sinner”) which probably means she was a prostitute (or at least a woman of loose morals...), she hears that Jesus is there, and so she turns up.

And she stood behind Jesus, weeping. And when she realised her tears had wet Jesus' feet, she got down and wiped them dry with her own hair. And then she kissed His feet, and anointed them with perfumed oil...

When the Pharisee saw that unfolding, he was disgusted... And 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 not only knew what sort of woman she was,, He also knew exactly what Simon the Pharisee was thinking...

Jesus said: “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

41 “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

Now, a Denarii was basically a day’s pay (for a labourer). (\$250 today).

So, let’s think in terms of:

- \$125 000;
- \$12 500

And neither of them could afford to pay back the loan.

Alright, they were both destitute, but one owed more than the

other. And so the money-lender cancelled both their debts. Which one would love him more?

And Simon said, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled”...

And Jesus said, “That’s right”.

And then Jesus drew a comparison of the love that Jesus had received from the woman, compared to the love and simple respect that Jesus had **not** received from Simon the Pharisee:

- A loving host should have provided water and a wash bowl for Jesus to wash His feet when He arrived... Simon didn’t do that.

But the woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears, and dried them with her own hair;

- It was customary to welcome a guest with a kiss. Simon the Pharisee didn’t lower himself to do that.

But the woman kissed Jesus' feet.

- It was also customary to anoint an honoured guest’s head with oil. Once again, not here

But the woman used expensive perfumed oil ...

- Why?
Because she loved Jesus a lot.

- Why did she love Jesus a lot???

Because she was forgiven (a lot).

She knew she was a sinner. But before that dinner, she must've heard Jesus' preaching out in the city – the message of repentance and forgiveness **for** sinners. And she knew the invitation for repentance and forgiveness was for her.

Now, we need to be really clear in what V47 is saying:

47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven – for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.

It wasn't the love that she was showing Jesus, that caused her to be forgiven. It was the forgiveness she had already received, that caused her response of love for Jesus... Do you understand the difference??? Bringing more gifts; doing more service – that's not going to increase your forgiveness...

But when, in faith we respond to Jesus; repent of sin; and receive forgiveness,,, Oh how great the love we have for Jesus... And the **more** we're forgiven, and the more we are **aware** of the forgiveness we have received,,, the more we love Him in return...

It was evident see how much love this woman had for Jesus, and so Jesus knew her sins were forgiven. And He voiced that: **"Your sins are forgiven."**

Now of course, not everyone was happy for Jesus to say that:
"Who is this, who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "**Your faith has saved you; go in peace."**

She wasn't saved by:

- crying;
- washing and drying;
- kissing Jesus' feet; or
- pouring expensive perfumed oil onto Him...

It was by faith she was saved. She believed the preaching of Jesus – of the Good news of forgiveness of sins...

And what beauty we find in these words: "**Your faith has saved you; go in peace."**

When a person is all bound up in sin, there is no peace for them... But what a relief/**release**, when the burden of sin; the ongoing accumulation of evil acts and of our godless past, is dealt-with, and lifted from us, and removed... Peace. She came with a heavy burden, now **go in peace.**

And there are some here today, who are carrying a heavy burden. And God's word to you today may simply be "**Your faith has saved you; go in peace.**"

The wisdom of God, in saving sinners, is demonstrated by this nameless woman. **her sins, which are many, are forgiven**

And the **evidence** of God's wisdom in saving sinners:
Thankful worship...

However:

Simon the Pharisee obviously **did not** love Jesus.

- He didn't welcome Him;
- He wasn't a good host;
- He has an inner turmoil of judgment against Jesus...

- He **obviously** didn't love Jesus.

And that's evidence that he hasn't been forgiven much. Or in this case, that he hasn't been forgiven at all...

You see, in his pride, Simon the Pharisee comes across as a person who does not believe he needs forgiveness... And it's evident, in his lack of love for Jesus, that he's **not** forgiven.

It's another example of "The last will be first, and the first will be last". The worst of sinners, who know their need to get right with God, through repentance and faith, will find forgiveness and experience life in Jesus.... While the self-righteous, see no need for Jesus, and they remain condemned...

Righto, so to finish off, we move into the first 3 verses of Chapter 8. These are 3 verses – we often skip over them – but when we do that, we miss something that's really important.

Luke is continuing the theme of “Much thankfulness, because of much forgiveness”... And it’s the **women** who teach us this. Jesus is going through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, but it’s the women who get the focus here:

- Mary Magdalene, whom Jesus had released from 7 demons;
- Joanna (whose husband was King Herod’s household manager);
- Susanna;
- and many others,

What did they do? How did they express their thankfulness to Jesus??? By giving: They provided for them out of their means.

“Much love/thankfulness/generosity, because of much forgiveness”.

How did Jesus survive, in His ministry? He didn’t have a job to earn money. And no, He didn’t turn the stones into bread – that’s what the Devil tempted Him to do. These women (and many others) provided for them (meaning: Jesus **and** the 12 Disciples) – they provided for Jesus and His whole ministry team out of their means.

Some like Joanna, were probably quite well-to-do, and her means may have been considerable... But when **everyone**

who have ‘some means’ provide from **out** of their means, much is achieved...

Have you ever considered this? Giving generously to support those in ministry, is more than a command – it’s an expression of thankfulness.

Those who are forgiven, in their thanksgiving, give in a very practical way. And in this example, it enabled the Gospel message of Jesus and His disciples, to be proclaimed right throughout the region...

How do **we** express our thanks to God??? **You’ve** been forgiven much. **I’ve** been forgiven much. How do we express that thanks???

We express our thanks in:

- praise;
- worship;
- songs;
- wanting to spend time with Jesus, in His word and in prayer;
- Loving others;
- obedience and in righteous living;

and we express it

- by **giving** out of our means.

I don’t want to make this message about how much you do or don’t donate to Bush Disciples each week, but I would be neglectful if I skip over this...

Much forgiveness = much thanks. And when your heart and my heart are filled with an overwhelming thanksgiving to God, we will give from out of our means...

Some may feel they don't have enough to give. But you know what: God has given every single person, a means to live, and that means, a means to give. We all have a means to give.

Some folk like to give to a specific project. They like to be able to look at a particular achievement, and for them, it becomes sort of a legacy, "I've achieved that"... As if it's about self-satisfaction... Our giving isn't meant to be about self-satisfaction. We give, because we're thankful to Jesus.

And the reality is, when it comes to church and ministry, the ongoing day-to-day provision for those who are in ministry, that's the most important thing we can give to... Jesus and His 12 disciples were provided for, out of the means of those who are thankful...

How thankful are we???

As you know, I only give teaching on "giving" just as often as it gets brought up in God's word. And I actually haven't given any teaching on "giving" for quite a while. And since August last year, this is the first time since Bush Disciples began, that our offerings have dropped below what we require to meet our annual expenses. We've finished off the year with about a \$11 000 deficit...

And so, I believe this is a God-ordained time to highlight this:... Be filled with thankfulness toward God. And if you

- are not giving from out of your means,
maybe this is a good way for you to express your thankfulness – to begin giving out of your means.
- are giving below your means,
maybe it's a good time for you to express your thankfulness, by increasing your giving to what your means allows.

But let's never forget, giving isn't the only way we express our thankfulness – In our thanks, we love Jesus with every fibre of our being – with everything that we have, and in everything that we do...

And we **also** love Jesus, by welcoming Tax Collectors and sinners, as did He.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
we are so thankful.

When we remember how hopeless we were,
and how lost in sin and death,
Our hearts are filled with thanks,
that You have become our Saviour.

Lord, help us to remember,
To remember that we once were not holy;
And to remember that we now are.
To remember that we did not earn this holiness,

but You paid the price for our redemption,
on the cross.

And Lord, give us a heart like yours.
You were known as being a friend of sinners.
May we be known as that too.
Help us to love the world
as You loved the world.
Help us to welcome the sinner;
as You welcomed the sinner.

And Lord, may we express our thanks
with every fibre of our being.
With everything we have;
and with everything that we do,
may we express our thanks.

in the Lord Jesus Christ,
Amen.