

Luke 7

Christ and the Continuing Evidence of His Messianic Ministry

Luke 7 gives us further evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Messiah, the Christ of God. We see this in various miracles that show the range and depth of Christ's power. We also see this in a frank appraisal of his ministry when he is questioned by John the Baptizer: are you really the Messiah? We see the Messianic office of Christ confirmed when he is anointed by a woman with a sinful past.

The Faith of the Centurion (7:1-10)

¹When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." ¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

(Luke 7:1-10)

As mentioned, Luke 7 shows us Christ's ongoing self-revelation as the true Messiah of God. You wonder why the Jews do not come to see Jesus in this light. This question is even more pressing when you consider that a Roman centurion does believe, while Israel does not.

Of course the faith of the Roman centurion is not necessarily an acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is the saviour of the world, as promised from of old after the fall into sin (Genesis 3) but it comes a lot closer to true faith than that of the Jews who are becoming increasingly hostile to Christ's works of salvation. This is the context which we must not forget.

The interchange with the centurion comes immediately after the Sermon on the Mount. It is important to note this connection, for the question is what the people will do with

Christ's message. It is specified that he spoke his message "in the hearing of the people" (7:1). Will there be a positive response? The Lord comes to Capernaum where he receives an immediate and urgent request from the centurion via some elders of the city.

The centurion was commander of a detachment of one hundred men of the Roman army, the basic army unit of Rome. These soldiers were most likely stationed in Galilee under the general command of Herod Antipas. It is noted that Luke, writing to Theophilus, also in the book of Acts, generally writes in a positive manner about Roman commanders. Stationed in Capernaum, this centurion had heard about Jesus' teaching and power and decided to ask his help.

The centurion's servant, a valued slave, was very ill and on his deathbed. This centurion did not write off the slave (as was done so often) but appealed to the Lord to come and heal his servant (7:2, 3). Notice that the man did not come himself but sent some of the elders of the Jews to speak with the Lord. Perhaps the centurion took into account that Jews do generally not speak with pagans. Perhaps he was a very humble man who did not want to aggravate the Lord Jesus with his request, as if a Jewish rabbi would enter a Roman centurion's house.

The Jewish elders have to plead with Jesus (7:4). They point out that the centurion was worthy to be helped. "He loves our nation and has built our synagogue" (7:5). The Jewish elders are still in the framework of merit. There is with some explainers a feeling that Jesus is at first reluctant, but in the end does go with the elders to visit the centurion's home.

In the version of Matthew it looks like the centurion himself came to Jesus, but it is more probable that the contacts came via intermediaries. The centurion himself says, "...I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not consider myself worthy to come to you." (7:7).

The amazing point is that the centurion understands the nature of authority and applies this to Christ. Say the word. He acknowledges Christ's power and knows from where it comes. "Say the word". Note these words. It is enough that Jesus simply gives an order. Jesus is the Christ, called and anointed by God. All he has to do is speak and even the powers of death must obey. Christ has executive power, the ability and calling to exercise dominion over the earth.

We read that when Jesus heard these words, he was amazed. Note that he turns to the crowd following him. He tells them, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel" (7:9). He is amazed at the man's faith. We only once read elsewhere that Jesus is amazed, and that is said about the unbelief at Nazareth (Mark 6:6). The Lord finds faith where it is not to be expected and unbelief where it should not be.

There is a question about Christ's amazement. Some suggest that Jesus knew everything ahead of time and therefore could not be "amazed" or surprised. But the

sense is simpler. Jesus, too, was fully human and there were events that led him to wonder and amazement. One explainer has written, “Our Saviour was and is also human...as God he knew everything ahead of time, but this was not the case with respect to his human nature.”¹ We’ll leave that discussion for what it is. But let us, too, be amazed at the faith of this man. Sometimes faith is not found where it really may be expected. Faith is and remains a gift of God’s grace worked by his Word and Spirit. It is our obligation to be constantly involved with the Word of God.

In Matthew’s account we find Jesus’ added warning, “I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 8:11, 12) The gospel warns us that the first will be last and the last will be first (Matthew 20:16, the parable of the workers in the vineyard).

This account is not meant to show how pious the Roman centurion was, but how sinful Israel was. From his children God expects and demands faith. The men who had been sent to Jesus returned to the centurion’s house and found the servant well. If only Israel would see the love and compassion of God in Jesus Christ!

This section of Scripture reminds us of another centurion mentioned in Acts 10, Cornelius, who seeks God and is visited by the apostle Peter. It is important to note that a Roman centurion is the first convert from the nations. Christ’s work transcends our human limits.

The Raising of the Widow’s Son (Luke 7:11-17)

The previous account of the healing of the centurion’s slave shows us that Christ can heal even from a distance by the power of his Word. This account goes a step farther. The Lord raises from the dead a young man from the town of Nain simply by the power of his touch and the command of his Word. It happens soon after the healing at Capernaum and leads to great awe and praise, even beyond Galilee.

¹¹Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. ¹²As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry”.

¹⁴Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹ Greijdanus, o.c., page 322.

¹⁶They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." ¹⁷This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

(Luke 7:11-17)

The Young Man of Nain Resurrected

Nain was small town located in Galilee, not very far from Capernaum, close to Mount Tabor. The town no longer exists and probably would have been forgotten except for this account. This history is an account of Jesus' raising to life of a dead person. The two others whom Christ raised are the daughter of Jairus, a synagogue ruler (Matthew 9:25) and Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:38-44). The resurrection of Lazarus may be said to be the climax of Christ's miracles.

The raising of the young man has some memorable features that give us insight into Christ's compassion. Christ has his procession, a "large crowd" following after him (7:11), and now he meets another procession coming out a Nain towards him. It is a funeral procession of a young man, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow". The processions slow down when the two meet and eventually stop.

The position of a widow was not easy. Often widows were exploited and had no recourse, because the husbands were dead. Relatives were often estranged from a widow because of the cost of maintaining her. It is of great importance that a widow has children, who can give her a place to live in and an income to live from.

It appears that this widow has lost her only son, and that she has no other children. It is already difficult to lose a beloved spouse. But this loss is truly unbearable if afterwards also an only child is lost. Now she has no one. This widow probably had many sympathizers in the small town where everyone knows his neighbor; for we read that "a large crowd from the town was with her" (7:12). But the widow is totally shattered and can only weep. Who can replace a loved one? Who can replace a child, a son or daughter? Many will have thought that there is nothing to do here. Death is a final barrier, the unbridgeable gap. Is Jesus also now at his limits? Sympathizers quickly disappear after the funeral, as life goes on.

This event is unique because it was in Christ's early ministry. The resurrection of Jairus' daughter happened with only a few witnesses present, for everyone was sent out, except her parents and some disciples (Mark 5:40). At that resurrection Jesus gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this. The raising of the young man of Nain will happen with great crowds present from both sides, on a public street, with many witnesses.

We read that when the Lord "saw her, his heart went out to her and he said: "Don't cry" (7:13). Perhaps that is the limit of human compassion. We try to console, but we cannot bring back the dead. What else is there to do but cry? Perhaps the widow graciously acknowledged Christ's attempts to comfort her. But what can he do? Words are cheap. The funeral procession barely paused.

But Christ is able to do much more we think or imagine. We read, “Then he went up and touched the coffin and those carrying it stood still.” (7:14). Perhaps some people were annoyed? Who dares to stop a funeral procession? Funerals are matters to dispense with quickly and resolutely. Let’s get on with it!

In that time and place, burials were not done with a coffin as we know it (7:14). The dead person was wrapped in linen cloths, laid on a wooden carrying platform, brought to a burial tomb and left there. The platform was taken back. This means that everyone could see exactly what happened next.

The Lord does not make any spectacle out of the matter. He simply commands, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” (7:14b) It happens only by the power of his sovereign Word.

It is as if someone is awakened from sleep. We read that “the dead man sat up and began to talk”. Notice that it is specifically mentioned that the man was really dead. This is no magic trick; no sleight of hand. The young man was really dead. When he sits up, he begins to talk. This underscores that he is not an apparition or ghost but a person who is truly alive. He can communicate. Death breaks communication; life restores it.

Notice that it says, “Jesus gave him back to his mother” (7:15). The young man belongs with his mother. The broken relationship is restored. This account tells us also today that Christ has broken the power of death, understands our sorrows, and will restore to life all who love him. In this faith we live today and die when called.

Jesus and the Question of John the Baptizer (Luke 7:18-35)

¹⁸John’s disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, ¹⁹he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

²⁰When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?’”

²¹At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. ²²So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. ²³Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

²⁴After John’s messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ²⁵If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. ²⁶But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷This is the one about whom it is written:

*“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.”*

²⁸I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

²⁹(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. ³⁰But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

³¹Jesus went on to say, “To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? ³²They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other:

*“We played the flute for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not cry.”*

³³For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ ³⁴The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and “sinners.” ’ ³⁵But wisdom is proved right by all her children.”

(Luke 7:18-35)

Jesus and John the Baptizer

Earlier I wrote about the ministry of John the Baptizer (Luke 3; “John the Baptizer and Jesus the Christ”). Now we look at John’s question, “Are you the one who was to come or should we expect someone else?” (7:20) John expected a ministry of judgment while Christ was engaged in a ministry of healing. How is this to be understood? Jesus is healing even Roman servants and raising people from the dead. What about me? John asks.

Our Lord tells John’s disciples that they must go back to John and tell him that Jesus’ ministry is fully in accordance with the Scriptures. Our Lord quotes from the prophecies of Isaiah². Christ’s ministry is first characterized by mercy and restoration. The time of judgment will certainly come, but first there is a time to repent and be saved. The Lord adds, “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me” (7:23). A word is used that can be translated with “stumbling block” (Greek: “scandalon”). For some the ministry of Jesus Christ is a stumbling block. The cross is unacceptable. The Gospel is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23-25). The Jews expected a great and royal king who would drive away the Romans and restore the Kingdom of David. Romans adored majestic figures. They were all offended at Christ’s humble form. John the Baptizer expected Jesus immediately to realize the judgment of God. But time and again we need to bring our expectation in line with Christ’s revelation.

² See Isaiah 29: 18 ff., Isaiah 35, Isaiah 61.

John the Baptizer Acknowledged as a Prophet (7:24-35)

After John's messengers have left, the Lord begins to speak to the crowd about John the Baptizer. Apparently Christ's next words are not meant for John but for the crowds. Some suggest that the Lord Jesus wished to take away any misunderstanding that might arise because of John's question. What does the Lord say about John? Keep in mind that the Lord wants to maintain John's prophecy about himself as Messiah.

Then follow some (rhetorical) questions about John. Was he "a reed swayed by the wind?" (7:24) If so, then John was not a trustworthy man, because reeds bend and break when the wind slashes over them. You can cut your hand on a broken stalk. John's testimony was unwavering. Therefore John's question about Christ's ministry was not to be seen as a vote of non-confidence.

At the same time John was not a man "dressed in fine clothes". He was not an aristocratic man of means or social standing. Such people are found in palaces and not in deserts.

Did people go out to see John because he was a prophet? Jesus answers the question himself, "Yes, I tell you and more than a prophet" (7:26-28). This means that John is the greatest prophet with a very unique task: to identify Jesus as the Christ, the lamb who takes away the sin of the world. A reference is made to Malachi 3:1. John is indeed the Elijah who was to come.

Yet, Jesus emphatically proclaims, "Among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (7:28). The question is who is meant by "the least in the kingdom of God"? A child may be considered the least. The Lord refers in 7:32 to children in the market place. Yet a child is also the greatest in the kingdom of heaven! (Matthew 18:4)

John is great because he is the last Old Testament prophet who identified the Christ. It is a singular honor. But a little child who accepts the Gospel is greater than John. This is now the order in the kingdom of God.

We read that all people baptized by John, even the tax collectors, acknowledged that God's way was right. However, the Pharisees and teachers of the law, who were not baptized by John, rejected God's purpose for themselves (7:29, 30).

The Lord then uses the example of children who play in the market place (where their parents are either vendors or buyers). It is hard to get all the children to play together. The children say to each other: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry" (7:32). Sometimes people will agree to nothing. Some people, like children, are never satisfied.

The Lord applies this example to John and himself. "For John the Baptizer came neither eating bread nor drinking wine and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax

collectors and ‘sinners.’” (7:33,34) Sometimes you are in a no-win situation. The abstainer has a demon, so they say. The partaker eats and drinks and you call him a glutton and a drunkard (7:32) Make up your mind.

The people are hopelessly divided. They do not come to the proper estimation of Christ. This does not mean that there is no positive effect at all. The Lord concludes, “But wisdom is proved right by all her children.” There are those who will make the proper conclusions and see John and Jesus in true biblical light. The wisdom that is meant here is the wisdom that comes from Above. God does grant this to whomever he wills.

Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman (Luke 7:36-50)

In the previous verses we read about the fact that people cannot come to agreement on the ministry of John the Baptizer and of Jesus Christ. In what follows we find a person who is quite clear and sure on whom Jesus really is and what he is doing. This is brought to the fore in an unmistakable and unforgettable manner.

³⁶Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. ³⁷When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸and 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.

³⁹When 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.”

⁴⁰Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

⁴¹“Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

⁴³Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

⁴⁴Then he 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. ⁴⁵You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.”

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

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

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

(Luke 7:36-50)

The Lord Jesus has been invited to dinner by one of the Pharisees. "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." (7:36)

This Pharisee who is later identified as a certain Simon (7:40) apparently kept inviting Jesus until he agreed to come to dinner.³ We do not know why Simon asked the Lord to have dinner at his house. The account is only about one occasion. The hatred of the Pharisees against the Lord was not as strong at this time as it would be later. But Simon the Pharisee is scrutinizing the Lord to see if there was anything that could later be used against him.

We read that there was in that town a woman who had "lived a sinful life." (7:37) We do not read what she had done, but it was so bad that everyone in the town knew she was a "sinner". Her sin was known by all in the town; she had a very bad reputation. Most explainers suggest that she was a prostitute. It seems to me that perhaps there was more. But who knows?

She learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house. She needed to see the Lord. Perhaps it was an impulsive decision, but she is very determined and well-prepared. She took along an alabaster jar of perfume and somehow found a way into the house and even managed to stand behind the Lord's recliner. "She stood behind him at his feet weeping" (7:38). Her tears were so abundant that she began to wet his feet with her tears. Have you ever see someone crying so much? She wiped the tears away with her hair, kissed the feet, and poured perfume on them (7:38).

This deed of wetting and wiping his feet and pouring perfume on them is unique. This woman has come to the point that she can only weep. She does not ask anything or say something; she just stands there and weeps. What a great sense of guilt and grief has moved her to this action. This woman has a broken life and with it a broken heart. It was a public act not appreciated by everyone.

For when Simon the Pharisee saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet he would know who is touching him and what kind of a woman she is – that she is a sinner." (7:39) It is likely that most of the people present will have thought along the same lines: a holy man of God will not let himself be touched by a sinner!

³ The verb and its tense indicate that it was a repeated request: Greijdanus, o.c., p.348.

How did this woman dare to come to Simon's house and deal with his guest in this manner?

Perhaps we might have been indignant, too. She was broken-hearted and did not expect to be saved. People in the town treated her harshly and scornfully. She knew she was a cursed sinner. Still she came to the Lord.

Had she heard about Jesus that he was kind, understanding, and forgiving of sinners who truly grieved over their sins and repented? Did she somehow feel that this was the person to whom she could go with all her sins and have them forgiven? Of course, there is God's providence here, leading her to Simon's house. But there is also her own conviction that Jesus is the Saviour, the Messiah of God. He would understand. He would forgive. He would restore her. And so she let it all flow freely, her anguish, her shame, her broken dreams, and her shattered life. She wept deeply and her tears were so abundant that they fell on Jesus feet.

Doctrinal Certainties

One of the most wonderful certainties in the Christian life is the sure knowledge of the forgiveness of sins. Sometimes people are told not to claim this forgiveness too easily or quickly because certain conditions must be met. Sometimes it is said that we need to have a special "experience" (some sign of the Holy Spirit, for example) before we can be sure that we are forgiven. There is a need, we are told, for experiential preaching. I can go along with that for some way, as long as people are not preached into misery and defeat. It is, after all, good news!

When it comes to the forgiveness of sins, we confess that there is only one way to be saved. "Only those are saved who by a true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all his benefits."⁴ The struggle for Christians is then not over, but it has been decided in Christ. Anything less would be unbiblical.

Homiletical Horizons

This is one of the most moving accounts in the Gospel. Where can we go with all our guilt, shame, and pain, if not to Jesus Christ? There are things in life of which we cannot even forgive ourselves. What is the worst sin you have ever committed? It is probably a sin you'd never want anyone else to know.

But we learn that we may go to Christ, our Saviour. The forgiveness of sins is not a faint hope clause but a full assurance that all our sins have been forgiven by the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross.⁵ Forgiveness is always out of grace through faith in Christ. But when forgiveness is received, it is received fully and without doubt. This is the very heart of the Christian faith.

⁴ Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7.

⁵ Canons of Dort, chapter V, Article 9.

Every time we hear a sermon or study the Scriptures and believe these are truly the word of God, we come away strengthened in our faith and our resolve to go and sin no more.

A Question for Simon

Simon has a question but he keeps it to himself. Still, his question has not gone unheard by him who knows the hearts of all. It says that “Jesus answered him”. What Christ is about to say has a bearing on Simon’s unspoken question. Still, it is more than just an answer to a question. The Lord says, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” (7:40a) Christ will speak an authoritative messianic word that Simon may not neglect. It seems that the Pharisee is willing to hear, “Tell me, teacher” he said (7:40b). Some explainers suggest that the title “rabbi” (teacher) is not really meant but is a form of flattery. In any case, what Christ says has full bearing on the matter.

Our Lord places before Simon a certain case. “Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” (7:41, 42)

This is not a difficult question. But Simon seems reluctant to answer. Does he sense that his answer may be used against him? Therefore, we read “Simon replied, / *suppose* the one who had the bigger debt cancelled.” Simon can do better than that. The verb has the notion that the answer is meant to humor the Lord.⁶ But the matter is very serious. The Lord says to him, “You have judged correctly.” (7:43) Simon’s answer is taken as a serious judgment.

We read, “The he turned toward the woman and said to Simon...” (7:44). Christ looks at the woman but speaks to Simon. This should be carefully noted, because it is exegetically significant. The response of Christ is directed in a special way to this woman but the words are very clearly meant for Simon and his fellows.

The Lord then 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. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little” (7:44-47).

These are impressive words that are spot on. Christ lists the rules of hospitality. A guest was greeted with a kiss (on the cheek) by way of welcome, the guest’s feet were carefully washed, (often by a servant), and soft, soothing oil was poured on a man’s head. Simon has done none of these. It demonstrates that Simon the Pharisee did not have much consciousness of his own sins and little respect for his guest. Since he felt

⁶F Rienecker, Sprachlicher Schlüssell zum Griechischen Neuen Testament, p. 146.

quite justified in himself, he needed not to be forgiven much. Therefore also he did not love the Lord. But this woman has shown a love for the Lord as her Saviour that puts Simon to shame! Jesus shows his great compassion and his cleansing love. "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3). Then Jesus said to her, "your sins are forgiven" (7:48). The woman is set free from her bondage and pain.

Of course this does lead to some mumbling among the other guests, Pharisees who kept their distance from filthy sinners. "Who is this who even forgives sins?" (7:49)

Christ's last word is for the woman. He said to her "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (7:50) It is still justification by faith, out of grace. Faith is not the basis for justification and forgiveness, but it is the means by which forgiveness is received. The words "go in peace" are truly liberating. She can start rebuilding her life, not back to a life of sin but to a life of service for the kingdom of heaven.

I venture to suggest that the Lord Jesus Christ was never invited back to Simon's banquets. But blessed is everyone who has been invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb.

Questions

- 1) In what ways does Luke 7 confirm the conclusion that Jesus is really the Messiah of God? Find examples in this chapter of belief and unbelief.
- 2) Why is Jesus amazed at the centurion's statements? What is "the nature of authority" and how does this apply to a) the centurion and b) the Messiah?
- 3) What is unique about the raising up of the widow's son?
- 4) Is the question of John the Baptizer proper? Place yourself in John's situation. Would you have agreed with what Christ was doing?
- 5) Do we sometimes have the feeling of being "overlooked" or even forgotten by God?
- 6) Why did the sinful woman anoint Jesus' feet? How do we do the same?
- 7) Why did Simon the Pharisee seem reluctant to answer Jesus' question? Does the Lord condone sin?
- 8) How do we deal with known sinners?

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