

INTRODUCTION

Even from a young age people knew this man would be different. He was speaking in full sentences way earlier than he should. From a young age he confounded adults around him with his intelligence. He rose from nothing and built a movement that attracted thousands to come and hear him speak. His followers were willing to leave behind lucrative careers in order to be his disciples. He walked everywhere he went and seemed to live a simple life. He taught ethics and pointed people to how they were supposed to live. Many followed him because his radical teachings completely changed their lives. He helped them turn their lives around. He even had tons of women who followed him and seemed to be some of his most devoted followers. I am talking about a man named Keith Ranier. He was a leader of a cult named NXIVM (Nexium). He is currently serving a 120 year prison sentence for racketeering, fraud, and sex trafficking. Because his entire cult was built in order to attract and abuse women as his personal sex slaves. The abuse of women is a common thing for cult leaders. We see it with cults and even with other religious leaders or CEO's. People seem incredible on the outside, but you realize it is all a facade.

But what about Jesus? Jesus is another religious leader of a massive movement. And some of Christ's most devoted followers were women. Unlike other men in His day Jesus was willing to spend lots of time with women even alone and even in places that many would consider improper. Even though He was single, never married, and celibate, He never took advantage of any woman.

We are going to take a closer look at how Jesus treats women. Because the way Jesus treats women is radical for His day and is still uncommon in ours. For the women here this morning I hope you will see how Jesus cares for you. For the men, I hope you will see how we should treat women as we follow Jesus.

Open your Bibles to Luke 7:36-8:3

Point 1: Jesus includes women (7:36-39).

Our story today begins with something scandalous.
Jesus does something that no other Pharisee would do.
Jesus does something that no other Rabbi would do.
Jesus does something that no other good righteous Jew would do.
Jesus includes women.
He does not send them away.
He includes them in His ministry and life.
And He does so at a time when women are excluded from spiritual conversations.
Women are not included in the ranks of the Pharisees and Scribes.
But Jesus includes them in His circle.

Our story is focused around a dinner table.
Verse 36, **"One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table."**

A Pharisee invites Jesus to his house for dinner.
And Jesus goes.
Because Jesus will always come if you invite Him.
Even to the houses of sinners.
Even to the houses of Pharisees and the self-righteous.

While they are there, they are all reclining at the table.
Reclining means that they are laying down,
Probably on their sides as they eat and talk.

Verse 37, **"And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment."**

She years that Jesus is eating dinner there.
And she goes.
This is fairly normal so far.

There are private dinner invitations and public ones.
And most of Jesus' initiations to people's homes appear to be public.
And at these the front door of the home would be left open.
And anyone who wants is welcome to come inside.
BUT they need to sit by the walls and be quiet.
They can observe, but they are not really guests.
They shouldn't interrupt.
They especially should not interrupt the host or the guest of honor.

But this woman does.

This woman brings something with her.

"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."

She ends up making a scene.

She brings an expensive flask of ointment.

And she goes behind Jesus to anoint His feet.

She begins crying openly while she runs the ointment on.

She appears to be crying so much that Jesus' feet are getting wet.

These is probably not a few tears.

Picture ugly snotty crying where the tears are flowing.

And His feet are so wet that she dries them off with her hair.

And while her head is down there she cannot help but kiss His feet in reverence.

All of this is going on during dinner.

It is happening in the middle of a discussion between Jesus and the Pharisee Simon.

How distracting do you think that was?

I get distracted constantly at the table.

I get distracted by birds outside of our windows.

I get distracted by cars driving down my street.

I get distracted by my kids games and silliness.

This is another level of distraction.

It would be hard to keep a conversation going while this was going on in the background.

The Pharisee is not just distracted, he is angered by it.

Verse 39, **"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."**

The Pharisee doesn't like that Jesus is allowing this to happen.

He is offended by it and he cannot understand why Jesus is allowing it.

The Pharisee appears to be spiritually interested in Jesus.

He doesn't outright reject Jesus.

He is interested enough to invite Jesus to his home in order to learn more.

But he is not a disciple of Christ.

This time together was a probably a test.

And to Simon the Pharisee, Jesus has failed.

Because he believes that if Jesus was really a prophet, then He wouldn't let this happen.

Jesus would know all about who this woman was.

Jesus wouldn't allow a sinful woman to touch him in this manner.

Remember the story opened in verse 37 to tell us she was **"a woman of the city, who was a sinner."**

We don't know what kind of sinner she was.

People often assume she was a prostitute, but that might say more of our assumptions of women than it does about her.

Because Luke doesn't tell us.

She could have been a thief.

She could have been an idolater who worshipped the Roman gods.

She could have been a gossip and a liar.

She could have been someone who cursed God openly.
We don't know the details and we don't need to know.
But the Pharisee does.
Her sin was public in some way.
The Pharisee cannot believe that Jesus does not know.

But the reality is that Jesus does know.
Jesus knows far more than Simon thinks.
Remember what the woman at the well said about Jesus,
"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did." John 4:29
Jesus knows everything about this woman at His feet.
Jesus was there the moment she was born.
Jesus knew what her name would be before it left her parents lips.
Jesus knows exactly how many hairs are on her head.
Jesus knows every single mistake she has ever made.
Jesus knows the things she did in anger.
Jesus knows the things she did out of desperation.
Jesus knows all the things she wishes that she could take back.
Jesus, the Holy of Holies knows exactly how unholy she is.
He knows the true depth of her sins.
The sins that she thinks no one knows about, Jesus does.

And Jesus allows her to remain in His presence.
Jesus does not send her away.
Jesus does not reject her.
Jesus does not tell her to stop touching Him.

The Bible does not tell us what this woman's sins are on purpose.
We are meant to see ourselves in her place.
To recognize her sins as our sins.
To know that the way Jesus receives her, is how He will receive us.

This is true of you and me.
Jesus knows everything about you.

Jesus knows your deepest darkest secrets.
Jesus knows and understands things about you that you don't.
Jesus knows our shame.

And Jesus will not send you away either.
Jesus will not cast you out.
He will include you.
He will welcome you to sit by Him at the table.

Many people do not become Christians because they assume their sins are too great.
They think that they are too broken.
They have made the same mistake far too many times.
Or they believe that if God knew all that they have done, then they could never be welcome.
But we can.
Because Jesus lets every sinner come and find forgiveness.

And despite knowing all of these things, Jesus loves us.
Jesus died for us.
Jesus came to offer us forgiveness and new life.

We are included not just in the room, but in God's family.
The forgiveness of Jesus does not just give us a clean slate.
Christ's work on the cross adopts us into His family.
The blood of Christ includes us in the Kingdom of God.
And no one is too far gone.
No one's sin is too great.
Even the worst sinners can be included when they come in faith.

Point 2: Jesus honors women (7:40-50).

Jesus is in the home of an important Pharisee.
But instead of honoring this man, He honors the woman of the city.

Instead of honoring the outwardly righteous man, He honors the sinner.
And we will see that Jesus honors her because of her faith.
Her faith is not expressed in the legalistic manner of the Pharisee.
Her faith is a humble sinner seeking Jesus.

And Jesus sees it.

The Pharisee wants to send her away, but Jesus brings her forward.
Jesus honors her by using her as an example.
She is an example that all of us should follow.

Verse 40, **"And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."**

Jesus knows Simon's thoughts about the woman.

And now Jesus is going to prove His prophetic status.

He begins somewhat ominously. **"I have something to say to you."**

I would be nervous if I was him.

You'll notice that Simon responds in a way that is nervous as well.
Not just here, but after Jesus tells him a story.

He says, **"Say it, teacher."**

He gives Jesus a title of respect.

Simon gives Jesus the right title.

He verbally acts as if he respects Jesus.

Like a true Pharisee his outward actions are technically correct, but his heart is far from loving Jesus.

So, Jesus tells him a story.

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

Two people are in great debt.

And this is a lot of debt.

A denarii is basically a day's wages for someone in the middle class.

So one person owes about 2 months of their whole salary.

The other person owes a year and 3/4 salary,
So, close to 2 years worth of salary.

And remember they owe this money not to their friends or family.
They owe it to a money lender.
They owe it to someone who will charge them interest.
And the interest rate is going to be high.
Every day the debt is going to get bigger and bigger.

Would you be able to pay a debt like that?
If you owed someone two years worth of your salary?
Or even just two months?
Either one would be incredibly difficult if not crushing.
Because you still need your daily wages to survive.
You have to pay your normal bills and feed your family.
It would take you months to pay the first one and decades to pay the second.

Yet, "**When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?**"

The moneylender shows unheard of and uncommon grace.
What bank would randomly forgive some mortgages?
The moneylender cancels the debt in full.

The question is which person would love the moneylender more?
Which one would be more grateful?
They both should be grateful.
But the person with years worth of debt will be the most grateful.
The trajectory of their entire life has just been changed.
Instead of years of this debt destroying them and their family, they are free.

The answer should be obvious.
But notice how Simon answers.

Verse 43, **"Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."**

Simon senses that this is a trap.

He knows Jesus has a reason he is asking, but doesn't know what to say.

So, Simon gives a careful Pharisee answer.

He basically says, it seems like you want me to say that it should be the person with the largest debt.

Now we should give Simon credit for answering the question.

Most of the times the Pharisees just stay quiet and refuse to say anything.

Simon hedges, but he answers the question.

And Jesus tells him that he is right.

Then Jesus shows the punchline.

Verse 44, **"Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman?"**

Of course Simon has seen this woman.

He has not been able to stop watching her wondering what is wrong with Jesus and her.

Simon sees her, but he does not see her like Jesus does.

Verse 44, **"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. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment."**

This woman has gone above and beyond in hospitality.

Jesus says, that this woman is worthy of honor.

This woman has done what Simon could have done.

Some say that this list are things that Simon would have been expected to provide as a gracious host.

So, Simon's failure to do so is an indictment of his hospitality.
I don't think that's right.
These are not things that a host would be expected to do for their guests.
They are things Simon could have done for Jesus.
They are things that if Simon was a true disciple and follower of Jesus He could have done.
But he doesn't.
Instead this unlikely Woman does.

Jesus compares their actions to each other.
Simon didn't offer Jesus any water to wash his feet.
Yet, the woman washed Jesus' feet with her own tears and hair.
I don't think Simon was expected to offer feet washing water,
But it would have been something an extra gracious host could have done.
But the woman humbles herself to do so.
She not only offers the water, she washes His feet herself.
She does what Jesus will do for His disciples.
But she does it first.

"You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet."

You didn't always greet everyone with a kiss.
It was usually something between friends or a disciple and his rabbi.
Simon not doing so shows that he keeps Jesus at arms length.
But the woman is willing to humble herself and kiss Jesus' feet for hours.

The kissing is not romantic nor does it have any sexual overtones.
Luke uses the same word for kissing in the parable of the prodigal son.
It describes the Father kissing his son when he returns home.
Luke also uses it in Acts 20:37 to describe the elders of the church in Ephesus kissing Paul when he leaves them.
Clearly this is a word to describe a deep love and devotion.
For this woman it is an act of respect and worship.

They are not the kisses of a host going through the motions.
They are the kisses of a woman who has been forgiven.

"You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment."

Sometimes at rich feasts a host might offer oil to anoint his guests heads.
Simon didn't do that.
But the woman did.
She anoints even Christ's feet.

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

The woman is the one with the greater debt.
And she knows that Jesus has forgiven her debt.
All of those sins that the Pharisee and everyone else around the table is
judging her for,
they have all been wiped clean by Jesus.
And she understands what a profound gift that it is.

And her display is one of love.
Her devotion to Jesus is because He has forgiven her.

The Pharisee has not acted like that towards Jesus because he doesn't
love him.
and even if he did love him he loves him way less than this woman.
He has been forgiven little and loves little.
He is the man with the small debt.
Or at least he believes that he is.

And he has only been forgiven little because he only thinks that he has
sinned a little.
He is proud of how righteous and good and awesome he is.
He believes that he is so much more righteous than everyone in the room
especially compared to this woman.

He is only asked for a little bit of forgiveness.
He only needs a little bit of God's love.
He only needs a little bit of God's grace he can handle the rest.
And so he loves little.

Verse 48, **"And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."**

Jesus forgives all of her sins.
He doesn't forgive her because of how clean His feet are.
He doesn't do so because the ointment was very expensive.
He forgives her because of her faith and love.

This is not just about her receiving salvation.
This is also Jesus honoring her publicly.
The woman who has been known around town as a sinner.
We only know this woman by her sins, but Jesus wants us to know her by her faith.
Jesus pronounces a new status for her.
No longer is she the great sinner, now she is a great saint.
Now she is immortalized.
Before good righteous people never wanted this woman to touch her.
Now Christians are supposed to want to be her.
We call her the woman who washed our Savior's feet.

Verse 49, **"Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?"**

People are angry.
It is bad enough that Jesus included this woman, He honored her,
Know He dares to proclaim her as righteous.
What gives Him the ability to forgive sins?

The fact that He is God.
The fact that He is the only one in the room who is righteous.
The fact that Jesus was there before the foundations of the world.
The fact that He could kill everyone in the room with a thought.

That is who Jesus is.
And Jesus is gracious.
He can and does forgive sinners.

Because the self-righteous always despise forgiveness.
The gospel is offensive.
Because grace does not go to those who deserve it.
Grace goes to the undeserving.
Grace goes to the worst among us.
Grace goes to those who should face the wrath of God.
Grace goes to anyone who has faith and begs for forgiveness.

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

Jesus has heard their thoughts, He can definitely hear their words.
He hears the slander.
He hears their doubts and questions.
And what does He say to the woman?

"Go in peace."

Your enemy the devil slanders you day and night before the throne of God
He questions who God is to forgive horrible sinners like us.
He reminds Jesus of all our mistakes and sins.
But Jesus says **"Go in peace."**

This is one of the reasons I end each benediction with these words.
We should leave God's house in peace.
Knowing that we have been forgiven by the blood of Jesus and by the pronouncement of God Himself.

Point 3: **Jesus disciples women (8:1-3).**

Women are invited to come and be disciples and followers of Christ.
They are included and named in places of honor.

This is why Luke includes this section right after the story of the woman.
We are meant to see the connection.
The focus here is on how Jesus treats women.
And they are not excluded from being disciples.
They are not given minor roles either.
It is not as if Jesus only includes men as His apostles then women get minor insignificant roles in the background.
They have special significance in His ministry.
They are a part of what Christ is doing.

8:1 "Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities"

The twelve also refers to Christ's primary disciples.
The men who will become the apostles and founders of the church.
But right alongside them are women.
Women who have been healed and forgiven.
Women like the one we have just met.
They also traveled with Jesus as He preached the gospel.

We then hear the names of three particular women.
First we have **"Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,"**

Luke is the only one to give us this detail from Mary's life.
Being possessed by a demon must have been a horrible existence.
I cannot imagine what being possessed by 7 was like.
But we are not told to judge her.
We are told so that we can no our sin can't keep us from being a disciple.
There is no woman too far gone that she cannot be a follower of Christ.

Alongside her we have **"Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager,"**

We have a powerful and well connected woman.

She is the steward and manager of Herod's house.
Yet she is willing to follow Jesus.
She leaves behind a lucrative career to be Jesus' disciple

The rich and powerful are welcome to come be disciples.
But they have to be willing to leave it all behind to follow Jesus.
Just like the disciples left their nets and boats, Joanna left a palace.
What a woman she must have been.

We have an ordinary woman named **Susanna**.
We don't know anything about her other than her name.
Maybe there wasn't that much remarkable about her.
But the most remarkable thing was that she followed Jesus.
And God wants us to know her name.

In Susanna we are reminded that ordinary people can be Christ's disciple.
It is not only the powerful and connected.
Nor is it the people with the most amazing testimony's like Mary.
Susanna may have felt like us when people asked how she started following Jesus.
"Well I wasn't really possessed by 7 demons, He just called and I came."
She is an example of ordinary faith.

Along with **"and many others"**

There was not only these three women, plus the handfuls of others whose names we know.

There were many women that Jesus disciplined.

Wives and widows

Mothers and daughters

Rich and poor

Ordinary women who followed Jesus.

They have always been there welcome at His feet.

"who provided for them out of their means."

This women bankrolled the ministry of Jesus.
If you have ever wondered how Jesus and the disciples provided for themselves, here is your answer.
Women provided for them.
They gave financially.
They made meals and opened their homes.
Jesus could not have had a ministry without women.
They were far more than honorary disciples.
The woman helped make Jesus' ministry possible.

This is still true today.
Churches are often provided for by women.
But the point is not what these women provided for Jesus.
It is what Jesus did for them.
They were His disciples.

The highest calling a woman can have is being a disciple of Christ.
It is the highest calling any of us can have.
The world and culture will tell you a lot of things about what it means to be a woman.
The culture will give you plenty of options of what women should do.
But above everything else, women should be followers of Jesus.

The way Jesus treated women made them want to be His disciples.
The way we as Christians treat women should make them want to be disciples.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Jesus includes, honors, and disciples women.
2. [Challenge] We should treat women how Jesus does. And our churches should be filled with women who follow Jesus. Let us pray.