

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 10: Faith, Compassion, and a Forgiven Woman -- Luke 7:1-50

A Roman officer stands in the middle of an occupied town, a man with a hundred soldiers under his command and the full weight of the empire behind him, and he is afraid for a slave. Not a son, not an officer, a servant who is dear to him and now lies dying. The centurion has heard about Jesus, and so he sends the Jewish elders to plead his case. But before Jesus can even reach the house, the soldier sends a second message that stops the Lord in His tracks: do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Only say the word, and let my servant be healed. Here is a Gentile, an outsider to the covenant, who understands something about Jesus that most of Israel had missed. He understands authority. And Jesus, who is rarely surprised by anything, marvels at him.

From there Luke walks us straight into a funeral. At the gate of a town called Nain, two crowds meet. One follows Jesus, full of life and wonder. The other follows a coffin, carrying out the only son of a widow who has now lost everything. No one asks Jesus to act. No one bargains or pleads. He simply sees her, and Luke tells us that the Lord had compassion on her. He touches the bier, the dead man sits up and begins to speak, and Jesus gives him back to his mother. Fear seizes the crowd, and they glorify God, saying a great prophet has arisen among us. They are closer to the truth than they know, and not yet close enough.

Then the questions begin. John the Baptist, now in prison, sends word to ask whether Jesus really is the one who is to come, or whether they should look for another. It is an honest question from a faithful man in a hard place, and Jesus answers it not with a lecture but with evidence: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news preached to them. These are the very signs the prophets promised the Messiah would bring. Jesus praises John as the greatest born of women, then turns and rebukes a generation that would dance to no tune, that called John too strict and called Jesus too loose, that simply would not be pleased no matter what God did.

Finally the chapter brings us into a Pharisee's dining room, where a woman known in the town as a sinner does the unthinkable. She comes in uninvited, stands behind Jesus weeping, wets His feet with her tears, wipes them with her hair, and pours out expensive perfume. The host is scandalized. Jesus tells a short story about two debtors, one forgiven a little and one forgiven much, and asks which will love more. The answer exposes Simon's cold heart and the woman's grateful one. Her many sins are forgiven, Jesus says, and the proof is the flood of love pouring over His feet. Then He speaks the words she came for: your faith has saved you, go in peace. Read this chapter slowly, and watch how faith looks from the outside, in a soldier, a grieving widow, a doubting prophet, and a weeping woman, and ask what your own faith would look like if Jesus described it out loud.

Group Discussion: When the centurion sent word to Jesus, he did not ask Jesus to come and touch his servant or perform some ritual. He simply said, “only say the word, and let my servant be healed” (v. 7), because he trusted the sheer authority of Jesus’ word. Where in your own life is it hardest to take Jesus at His word, and what would it look like to trust that His word alone is enough? Share a time when you simply believed what He said and acted on it.

Personal Reflection: The woman in Simon’s house had a past that everyone in town knew about, and she let her tears and her worship be seen anyway, because she knew how much she had been forgiven. Is there a part of your story you keep hidden because you are ashamed of it, or have you let the wonder of being forgiven become ordinary to you? What would change this week if you felt the weight of your forgiveness the way she did?

Read Luke 7:1–50

Study Questions

1. When the centurion sent friends to say, “I am not worthy to have you come under my roof,” and “only say the word, and let my servant be healed” (vv. 6–7), Jesus marveled and said, “not even in Israel have I found such faith” (v. 9). What does this Gentile soldier understand about who Jesus is and the authority of His word, and what does it teach us about the true nature of saving faith?
2. The centurion built his confidence on Jesus’ authority, reasoning that just as his own word commanded soldiers, so Jesus’ word commanded sickness (vv. 7–8). In what specific area of your life are you still trying to manage outcomes yourself rather than trusting the authority of Christ, and what would surrender look like there this week?
3. At the gate of Nain, “the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her” and raised her only son before anyone asked Him to (vv. 12–15). What does this unrequested act of mercy reveal about the heart of God toward the broken and the grieving, and how does it deepen what we know about Jesus’ character?
4. The widow of Nain had no one to plead her case, yet Jesus saw her in her grief and acted (v. 13). Where are you carrying a sorrow you have assumed God has not noticed, and how does this scene change the way you bring your grief to Him?
5. When John’s disciples asked, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” Jesus answered by pointing to His works: “the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed... and the poor have good news preached to them” (vv. 19–22). Why does Jesus answer a question about His identity by pointing to these particular signs, and how do they confirm that He is the promised Messiah the prophets foretold?
6. John the Baptist, the faithful forerunner, asked an honest question from a prison cell when his circumstances did not match his expectations (vv. 19–20). When God’s work in your life has not matched what you expected, how have you handled your doubts, and what do you learn from the way Jesus responded to John with evidence rather than rebuke?
7. Jesus compared that generation to children in the marketplace who would not dance to a happy tune or mourn to a sad one, saying they rejected John as too strict and the Son of

Man as too loose (vv. 31–34). What does this teach about the hardness of a heart that has already decided not to believe, and how does it warn us against setting our own conditions for accepting God's truth?

8. Jesus said that even the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John, who was the greatest born of women (v. 28). What does this say about the immense privilege of belonging to the kingdom Christ established, and how should the greatness of your place in that kingdom shape the way you live, even on an ordinary day?
9. When the sinful woman wet Jesus' feet with her tears and anointed them, Jesus told of two debtors and concluded, "her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much" (v. 47), then said to her, "your faith has saved you; go in peace" (v. 50). How do faith, forgiveness, and love relate to one another in this scene, and how does this guard us against thinking either that our love earns forgiveness or that mere belief without a changed, surrendered heart is enough?
10. Look back across the whole chapter, at the centurion's trust, the widow's restored son, John's honest question answered with evidence, and the forgiven woman's tears. In each scene Jesus reveals His authority, His compassion, and His power to save. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Luke 7:1–50 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Isaiah 35:5–6, the prophecy that the blind will see and the lame will leap, which Jesus claims as His credentials; Isaiah 61:1–2, the Messiah anointed to preach good news to the poor; Romans 6:3–4, baptized into Christ's death and raised to walk in newness of life; Ephesians 2:8–10, saved by grace through faith, created for good works; 1 John 4:19, we love because He first loved us, the proper order of grace and grateful love.