

The Joy of Being Forgiven

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Scriptural Text: Luke 7:36-50, ESV

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ 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, ³⁸ 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. 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." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ 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. 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. ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

A respected religious leader named Simon invited Jesus to dinner at his large home in Galilee. The dinner parties in this day were extravagant and public affairs. A large, low table would be set with fine foods for the invited dignitaries and guests. The invitees, when they came, would be arranged around a u-shaped table. The guests would sit on the floor, on cushions, reclining with their feet facing away from the table. In these particular dinner parties, others in the community were also allowed to come and observe and perhaps they might get some leftovers. They were allowed to come and observe the great event at a wealthy individual's home.

Simon invited Jesus to his home for dinner out of curiosity. He had heard about Jesus' miracles and may have listened to a sermon or two Jesus had taught in one of the local synagogues in Galilee. This rabbi, Jesus, taught with authority. He taught like none other. He taught as though He, Himself, had come from Heaven. Yet, all of Simon's friends and all of his pharisaical brothers hated Jesus. They called Jesus wicked names, such as "glutton" and "wine fibber" and "friend of sinners" and "friend of tax collectors".

Most recently Simon had passed through the village of Nain and the village was absolutely enthralled and could not stop speaking about the miracle Jesus had just performed. Jesus had raised a widow's son from the dead.¹ So, Simon was excited when Jesus accepted his dinner invitation.

Jesus arrived that evening and Simon showed Jesus to His seat at the table. The evening began rather strangely for Simon. He found himself conflicted. He was very self-conscious of the opinions of his friends and his fellow Pharisees. He did not want them to think less of him as a result of having invited Jesus, so for this reason Simon was a little standoffish to Jesus. He did not welcome Jesus with the customary kiss. He did not offer Him a basin of water to wash His feet. He did not offer to anoint His head with scented oil. Simon did not want others to think he was a "follower". While he had not yet concluded Jesus as a fake, he certainly was not yet a follower.

¹ Luke 7:11-17

Jesus arrives and the dinner progresses with a rather awkward stiffness and a tense feeling. Suddenly, Simon received the shock of his life: a woman of the city entered his home, a prostitute, a harlot. Such a woman had never, ever come to his house before. How embarrassing this was. Everyone in the room looked at her with discomfited and instinctively flinched away. They drew a little bit aback from her, everyone except Jesus.

She then approached Jesus. She drew nearer and nearer and He looked at her with warmth and welcome. He was going to receive her. She took out an alabaster jar and snapped the ceramic top. Immediately the fragrance of the scented oil filled the whole house. It was a very expensive jar of ointment. As she approached Jesus she began to weep and she began to shake and tremble. She knelt down beside Him and let her tears pour over Jesus' feet. Washing them with the water of her tears, she took her hair and she began to dry Jesus' feet. Then she kissed them. Over and over and over she kissed Jesus' feet.

She took out a flask and she poured the entire contents on Jesus' feet. It seemed as though it went on and on and on. Simon thought to himself, "Oh, brother, if this man were truly a prophet of God, he would know who this woman is. She is a sinner! She is a woman of the city!"

Simon was rather rattled though. Just as he thought this Jesus looked at him. It was as though Jesus audibly heard Simon's inner thoughts. He looked right at him and He said, "Simon, I have something to say to you." Simon was rather sheepish as he said, "Okay. Say it teacher." Jesus said, "There was a money lender who had two debtors. One owed him \$70,000.00 and the other owed him \$7,000.00. Neither of these debtors had any money to pay their debt. The money lender forgave both of these men their debts. Now, Simon, which debtor do you suppose will love this man more." Simon did not take long to think about this and he said, "I suppose the one who owed him more, the one who is forgiven more." "Yes," Jesus said, "that is right."

Then Jesus turned to the woman, even though he was still speaking to Simon, and looked at the woman, "Simon, do you see this woman?" Simon had not really given her a good look. He did not want to. It was embarrassing she was there. He was not going to look upon her, but for the first time he looked and, indeed, he did see her. He saw her with great clarity. Jesus then said to Simon, "Simon, I entered your house and you did not do what hosts are supposed to do. You did not wash my feet before dinner. You did not even offer me a basin of water in which to wash my own feet. But, this woman wet my feet with her tears and she wiped my feet with her hair. You did not give to me the customary kiss as a greeting. You would not approach me, but this woman approached me and she kisses and kisses and kisses my feet. She has not stopped from the moment I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with fine, expensive perfume and she used the entire jar. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, Simon, are forgiven. That is why she shows me such love. The one who is forgiven little loves very little."

When Jesus finished speaking to Simon the other Pharisees at the table, as they had been listening to Him, erupted with displeasure, "Who is this guy who pretends to be able to forgive sins?" Jesus heard them, but he paid them no attention. Instead, He looked at this dear woman full in the face, and he looked deeply into her eyes, and He said, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

What a story! The parable found within the story received second notice to the story itself. It is a story filled with drama and intrigue and conflict and joy, deep happy joy. In this study I want us to focus on the simple joy of this sinful woman who worshipped the One who had forgiven her. He gave her all new life. I believe this woman of the city, this prostitute, teaches us so much about the nature of joyful worship.

The great question this story calls us to answer for ourselves is not, "Do I love other sinner?" Many take that away from this story and, indeed, I believe that is a subtext of this story. This story focuses our attention upon a different problem. The great question this story asks us to answer for ourselves is: Do I worship with the joy and devotion this woman chose in her worship of Jesus? Do I worship with the same devotion and joy this woman worships as she approaches Jesus?

If we confess, "No, I do not believe I come on Sunday morning and give to Jesus that same kind of joyful, public worship", we must ask the question: Why don't I? What is wrong, because something is wrong. Even more importantly, "What can I do about it? How can there be a change in my life?"

The central idea of this passage is: The one who is forgiven much loves much. That is to say, the one who loves much unleashes their heart in joyful worship to God. That is the whole point behind the story and the parable.

We will discuss four traits of joyful worship. **The first trait of joyful worship realizes the gravity of our own sin.** In Luke 19, just a little ways past this study, Jesus is at Zaccheus the tax collector's house. There He tells us the purpose for His coming into this world,

¹⁰ *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

Jesus accepted an invitation to Simon's house because Jesus is in the business of seeking and saving lost people. Who is spiritually lost in this story? Clearly, the woman is. Clearly, this prostitute who had been selling her body day-in and day-out to different men is a person who has lost her way spiritually. She is not right with God. We would all agree with that.

But, what about these others in the room, the respectable, religious leaders? They seem to be on a right path with God. At least the people in the community thought so. These are moral people and they are the kind of people one would want to have as neighbors; they would not steal, they deal fairly, and they would be kind. They are people who pray. They go to church every week. They fast. They give tithes and offerings to help the poor. They read their Bible and they know their Bible better than anyone else in the community, and they really to attempt to live by the Ten Commandments.

Is that not enough? Are they not really right with God? Surely they are not spiritually lost.

The story tells us, “No, they are lost.” In fact, they are just as spiritually lost as this woman is. The only difference between this woman and the Pharisees is: the woman who is spiritually lost like them knows it. She knows she is lost and they are oblivious to that fact.

The Pharisees think of themselves as clean, but they thought this because they read their Bibles wrongly and poorly. They believe if a person could be religiously clean then they are clean before God, and if they are clean then they are accepted by God. There is no problem. They are not lost. They are within the fold.

They failed to realize, by the reading of their Bible, spiritual cleanness is first and foremost a matter of the heart. In Luke 11, the Lord says to the Pharisees,

³⁹ *“Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.”* ⁴⁰ *You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?”*

Jesus is not arguing having dirt on the outside of the cup is not a problem. No, it is a problem, but why would we wash the outside of the cup and not pay attention to the inside? In Matthew 15, Jesus is going to describe the problem of the Pharisees more deeply when He says,

⁷ *“You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:”* ⁸ *“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;”* ⁹ *in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”*

Their worship is not heart worship; it is not joyful worship. It is only external and empty.

For sure, the woman and the Pharisees had different kinds of sin, but they are both unclean before the Lord. The woman's sin is from her flesh in a way that can be seen by everyone in the community; it is on the outside. The Pharisee's sin is in their spirit and in that way it was hidden and on the inside, concealed from others and even from themselves.

This woman's sin was sensual. The Pharisee's sin was self-righteous and both stood condemned by God. Self-righteousness – what a hidden sin. Self-righteousness is the sin of believing one's own righteousness is good enough to be accepted by God. Confident, the one has lived up to God's standards. It is a sin which hides the deep, sinfulness

of our own soul from our eyes so that we do not even recognize it. It is a sin which condemns respectable people in the Day of Judgment. That is what self-righteousness is.

Do you believe your good works, religious acts, or loving attitudes might bring acceptance from God and cause you to be in a better position than this sinful woman, this prostitute?

Who is not condemned by God as a result of being a grievous sinner? The answer is: No one. The Bible tells us there is none righteous, not even one but together we have all become worthless and there is not one, no one, who does good, not even one.²

The Bible continues to tell us, in Isaiah 53,

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way...

We have all lost our way and we all have become spiritually lost. Some turn to the way of the prostitute. Others turn to the way of respectable, religious persons. Each one of us has turned to our own way and as a result of turning to our own way we are not in God's way. Not being on God's path means we are lost and we stand of future of certain condemnation.

Some read this story and assume Jesus must have considered this woman's sin of sensuality to be a mere trifle, something hardly even to bring up to her. No, do not read the Bible wrongly here because we will miss the truth. Jesus forcefully condemns this woman's sins. He says, in Verse 47, "her sins, which are many...". Jesus is not light on any sin. In Mark 7, Jesus will say,

²⁰ ...*"What comes out of a person is what defiles him."* ²¹ *For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,* ²² *coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.* ²³ *All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."*

Jesus is not afraid to confront sexual immorality in the prostitute. Envy, slander, and pride are the self-righteousness of the Pharisees. He is harsh when He calls them "evil things" and they make them unclean and unfit to stand before God and worship.

Many today believe Jesus does not have a problem with certain sins and because Jesus is a friend of sinners, that means Jesus hangs out with sinners and He does not ever confront them. That is not the Jesus of the Gospels. The Jesus of the Gospels calls sinners to repentance and somewhere, before this story happens, Jesus called this woman to repentance, whether it was through a public sermon or a private conversation. This woman, when she came, came as a repentant sinner because she had heard the holiness of God spoken by Jesus and she had heard the call of her need to fall before God and repent of sin and believe in a Savior.

In Verse 49, Jesus does not say, "Your sins are trifling. Go in peace." He says, "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace." Peace is available to every sinner when they believe in Jesus as their Savior. That is the Gospel. I do not know your sins and I do not know how deep they are, but I can tell you, regardless of how deep they are Jesus' mercy and grace and forgiveness will reach you if you call out to Him. That is the kind of Savior He is.

The main lesson Jesus is teaching Simon in this story is: Simon does not see Simon's sin and he needs to. As we read stories like this it is important for us, as we read the Bible, to ask the question: Who am I in this story? Who represents me? Who do you connect to?

In this story we often stand outside of it as though we are observers. We are not the prostitute. We are not the Pharisee. We know we are not Jesus. So, who are we and we put ourselves outside the story. That is a very unhealthy way to read the Bible. God always puts us in the story. We are in there somewhere. We are either the prostitute with our sins being on the outside, or we are the Pharisee with our sins on the inside and in need of a Savior. We are one of those two people who need a Savior. Who are we?

² Romans 3:10

Simon, because his sin was pride and it was all stuff on the inside of him, suffers a malady many, if not most or all people who are like that suffer, and it is the ability to see clearly other people's sins but fail to see their own. Because of that, we naturally believe our own sins as very small and minute to the point of nothing.

I love the story of a dad who had some mischievous boys. He was taking a nap one afternoon and his boys took some limburger cheese and rubbed it into his mustache. Soon he woke up and said, "This couch smells!" He got up and walked around the room and said, "This whole room smells!" He walked throughout the house and said, "This whole house smells!" Finally, deciding to get out of there, he walked outdoors and said, "This whole world smells!" Little did he know the smell was right underneath his nose.

That is how we often are. We see sin and we say, "This whole world is full of sin!" We do not realize the very source, the greatest source, is right underneath our nose and inside of us.

Why is it so important I see my sin as a big problem? Until we believe we are great sinners we will not throw ourselves at Jesus' feet for mercy.

In Luke 5, Jesus comes to Matthew and Matthew decides to become a disciple. He comes to Matthew's house and we remember Matthew is a tax collector. The Pharisees were grumbling about Jesus going to the house of a tax collector,

³¹ And Jesus answered them, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."*

No one goes on a search unless they are convinced there is something wrong and no one seeks after a Savior unless they are convinced they need saving and their sin is great.

Secondly, joyful worship recognizes the greatness of our Savior. No one worships Jesus joyfully until they recognize He is fully God of very God. Jesus is not merely a great man. That belief will not bring us to a heart of joyful, devoted worship. We must believe He is a great Savior. He is God come in the flesh.

This woman recognizes Jesus is God as she believed Him to be great enough to forgive her sins. She had heard Him claim to be able to forgive sins and even she understood what that meant for no one can forgive sins but God alone. She believe Him.

What is forgiveness? I love God's own description of forgiveness. There are many pictures but I want to think of three pictures God presents to help us understand what God's forgiveness of us is. Forgiveness is, first, soul cleansing. In Isaiah 1, we read,

¹⁸ "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Is it not awesome to take off a heart which has been defiled and dirty and to be clean. It is not because we cleanse ourselves, but it is because we have a Savior who has made us clean. We can never wash and wash and get the dirt of our sin off of us. Jesus does! We stand before God faultless and clean.

The other idea of forgiveness God brings before us is: it is not only soul-cleansing, but it is record-erasing. In Isaiah 43, we read,

²⁵ "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins."

Here is a record God keeps of each one of our sins. Do you know what it means to be forgiven? The record is expunged and erased. There is no more record. "What has this person done wrong?" "There is nothing in the record book. There is nothing to bring up because this person has been forgiven." Is that not awesome!

The third picture I want to share of God's forgiveness is it is guilt-removing. There is a weight sin brings upon our soul and upon our conscience which weighs heavy and the older we grow the heavier the weight seems to be, as we approach that day of standing before God, weighing our thoughts and relationships down. Guess what God's forgiveness does? The burden is rolled away.

And the burden of my heart rolled away
It was there by faith I received my sight
And now I am happy all the day³

Psalm 103 tells us,

¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

All the guilt of our sin is rolled away from our soul. Are you forgiven?

Who can forgive sins and wash the soul clean? Who can erase the record of our sins? Who can remove the guilt that weighs upon a soul? Only God can. He and He alone, for He is Judge. He is the only One to whom we will give an account.

People talk in an odd fashion today, in a odd mixture of Bible and psychology, I believe. People talk today about forgiving themselves. Is that not an interesting turn of phrase, “I need to forgive myself.” People talk like that but God never does. You can read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and never find that kind of phrase used in Scripture. God never talks about us needing to forgive ourselves. He talks about us needing forgiveness. He talks about Himself offering forgiveness. He talks about us believing in Him and enjoying His forgiveness, but He never talks about us forgiving ourselves. That is a silly kind of concept if we think about it.

Imagine committing some grievous crime and being before the court of law. After having been found guilty, this is the sentencing part of the trial. We stand before the judge and he is about ready to sentence us and we look at him with a big smile and say, “Judge, I have forgiven myself.” The judge will tell us we have no right to forgive ourselves. We did not sin against our self. We sinned against the law of the United States government. We cannot forgive our self and it does not relieve us of any of the consequences.

What we need to do at that point is recognize we cannot forgive ourselves, but the judge might be able to pardon us. The judge might be able to show us mercy so we plead upon the mercy of the court, “I have sinned,” and if the court pardons us, we receive it gladly and enjoy it. That is what God does for us.

Who has the right, the power, and the authority to forgive sin? It is God alone. This why the Pharisees, at the end of the story, were so aghast when Jesus told this woman her sins, which were many, were forgiven, “What! Who does he think he is?” The Pharisees were right to ask this question. They are theologically correct. If Jesus were merely a good teacher or a great moral leader, this would have been blasphemy. The only kind of person who could ever possibly say this and say it rightly without committing the sin of blasphemy is the person who is God, God man, and they did not believe Him to be God man so they were aghast because they did not know Him. They did not know He was God’s very Son, God of Very God, existing throughout all of eternity, who created this world through the word of His mouth. They did not know this about Jesus, so in outrage, they asked, “Who is this?”

Beloved, only God can offer the forgiveness of sins and that is why He sent His Son Jesus. This is such a big application: we love others in our life and we want them to experience the blessings of forgiveness, but we cannot shade others from God’s wrath. As much as we would love to protect our children on the day of God’s wrath, as much as we want to protect our spouses, as much as we want to protect parents or our beloved friends, we cannot shade them. That is the reason why evangelism is so important. The one thing we can do to help them, on that day we can bring them to the One who can shade them on that day and that is Jesus.

As long as we are concerning about whether a friend, a relative, a neighbor is forgiven, the thing we can do is to bring them before Jesus in prayer and through the Gospel witness. We must bring them before Jesus because this is the only thing we can do to shade them from the severe consequence of condemnation forever and ever and being cast out from God’s presence.

³ “At The Cross,” Michael Robert.

What a miracle the forgiveness of sin is, to wash spotlessly clean a heart that is soiled by sin. That is God's greatest miracle. Warren Wiersbe points out that in Luke 7, three miracles take place. The great miracle is Jesus' healing of the centurion's servant.⁴ The greater miracle is Jesus raising the widow's son from the dead.⁵ But, he says the greatest miracle is reserved for the end of this chapter, this story, and that is the miracle of Jesus forgiving sin. That is the greatest miracle God can ever do in a life.

All sin is infinitely evil because it is against the infinitely great God. There is no little sin because there is no such thing as a little God. The miracle of forgiveness required God come from Heaven in human form and die upon a cross. That is how deep our sin is: it required God to take on human flesh and offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Only in this way could God's justice be satisfied and forgiveness offered.

The point of the story we are dealing with is: when Jesus claims to forgive sins, He claims to be God.

Third, joyful worship receives grace from our Savior. Forgiveness is a free gift from God. It is not earned and it is never merited. We do not have the ability to make amends to God for our sins and to pay Him a small measure of the debt accrued against God which we owe to God as a result of our sin.

Notice, in the parable of the money lender, the money lender cancelled the debts of the man who owed him \$70,000.00 and the man who owed him \$7,000.00. Both of these debts were equally great to the individuals because neither had money to pay it. No matter what the difference was between those two debts, neither had the ability to pay. Who suffered the debt? Who paid it? It was the money lender. When God offers us forgiveness, He is offering us grace, a gift, by saying, "I will pay the debt you owe and I will pay it by suffering under the just condemnation of the Father." That is what Jesus does; that is how He cancels our debt, by paying for the debt in His body on the cross. In Ephesians 1, we read,

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses...

That is why we sing that great hymn,

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.⁶

Beloved, no one can truly worship God in joy until they receive the grace of God which brings forgiveness. Worship does not happen in anyone's life apart from the reception of the grace of God which brings forgiveness. No one wants to worship God.

It appeared the Pharisees worshipped God if one looked at their life. They went to church. They prayed. They went through rituals, but they did not worship. They sang songs, but they did not worship. Why not? They were not forgiven because they did not think of themselves as sinners and they did not think of Jesus as being Savior and being great.

In Verse 50, Jesus tells us how we receive this gift through faith,

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

Please understand, and this is important, the woman was not forgiven because she wept, poured out her tears upon Jesus' feet, or because she wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. She was not forgiven because she kissed Jesus' feet or because she poured out the ointment upon Jesus' feet. It is important to understand when this woman was forgiven. This woman was forgiven before the dinner began. The reason she wept, the reason she poured out the ointment, the reason she kissed Jesus' feet was because she had been forgiven by Jesus. That is Jesus' whole point. He said,

⁴ Luke 7:1-10

⁵ Luke 7:11-17

⁶ "Jesus Paid It All," Alvina M. Hall, 1865.

“Simon, why does she worship me in this way? It is because she was forgiven. That is why. Her debt was cancelled. This is a response elicited as a result of her joy in the forgiveness.”

The woman’s love for Christ did not cause God to forgive her. God’s forgiveness caused her to love Christ. It is important for us to get the order correct. Joyful worship is the evidence of new life; it is not the requirement for new life and we need to understand that.

If you are born again, if you have new life, if you are forgiven we will not need to say, “Let us be joyful in worship today,” and have that spark us up. That is only external. What we need is a heart that says, “Wow! I am forgiven and I am always ready because I recognize how great the debt is God has paid for me.”

Fourth, joyful worship revels in gladness for our salvation. Simon asked the question of Jesus, and this is how all of this begins, “Why would you let this unclean woman approach you?” It is interesting how Jesus answers this, when we think about this text. Jesus does not answer the question and He almost ignores it. Instead, He answers a different question. The question Jesus answers is: Why would this unclean woman want to approach me? Simon why would you not want to approach me? Those are the questions Jesus answers. He does not talk about why He accepts this woman. He only talks about, “why she wants to approach Me and why you do not.” That is the whole point.

This woman’s worship was spontaneous and it was joyful and it was sacrificial. She is overwhelmed, as she approaches Jesus, by the magnitude of Jesus’ gift to her. Joyless worship reveals we have not been forgiven much. Joyful worship reveals we have. Simon had missed the grace of God as Jesus was offering it to him.

Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith in Me as your Savior has saved you.” Then He says, “Go in peace.” In the Greek, it literally means, “go into peace”. There is a sphere of peace the life has been lacking and now she is entering into that peace and that is where she will reside all the days of her life.

The whole idea of this story is about those who are forgiven much love much. Who am I and who are you in this story? There are two necessary discoveries to make in order to love much. The first is the discovery of the depth of our own sin. We must come to grips with that. Secondly, it is the discovery of the forgiveness offered by Jesus. Are you forgiven? Have you become a joyful worshipper, not out of obligation but because of what Jesus has done for you and you cannot stop thinking about it? Are you forgiven?

If you say, “No,” think about the offer Jesus makes to you. He is a Great Savior. He is God and He offers forgiveness for your sins.

Perhaps you may say, “Pastor, I am forgiven and I am joyful, but I need to continue to work.” That is exactly right. This issue of entering deeper and deeper into our own sin and deeper and deeper into the grace of God is the Christian life everyday for us. The way we worship is the barometer and the measure of where we are and what is happening.

Ask God to reveal, first, the depth of your sin and, secondly, the greatness of our Savior. God will minister to us and I believe He will change our hearts as we do.