



God is spirit, and those who  
worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:24

**On Worship**  
with Pastor Steve

## **Worship is a Love Thing**

In his gospel, Luke records a story of a woman who was not ashamed to display her affection toward Jesus.

*One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. 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, 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. 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. And Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he answered, Say it, Teacher. A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon answered, The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt. And he said to him, You have judged rightly. 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. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little. And he said to her, Your sins are forgiven. Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, Who is this, who even forgives sins? And he said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.*

Luke 7:36-50 ESV

Before we look at the act of love this woman lavished upon Jesus, let's take a look at the inaction of Simon the Pharisee.

Jesus, to some degree, rebukes Simon for his omission of three things; for not washing his feet, for not kissing him and for not anointing his head.

The Jews in those days did not wear shoes like we wear today. Their shoes consisted of a soul that was strapped on with thongs around the foot and ankle. When a guest entered a home it was customary for them to remove the shoe and the host to have a servant to wash the guest's feet since they would have been exposed to outside elements. This would have been especially necessary before they ate a meal as we will see later. Secondly, Simon did not greet Jesus with a kiss. A kiss was an emblem of love and a common salutation used among Jewish men. And thirdly, Simon did not anoint Jesus' head with oil which was also a courtesy shown by a host to their guests. Simon, therefore, neglected all the courtesies he should have shown to Jesus.

As Jesus and those with him were reclined at the table to eat, a woman entered the house and stood behind Jesus at the table wetting his feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. This was possible because Jews reclined on couches lying on their sides when they ate. Their knees would have been bent to make more room and their feet would have been behind them making

them easy to approach. That too was a one of the reasons it was necessary to wash the feet before dining.

The woman's name is not mentioned in Luke's account, however we do know that Simon considered her a sinner and felt that her touching Jesus was improper. Perhaps Simon knew her by reputation or by the fact that she had let her hair down to wash Jesus' feet. It was custom in those days for women to wear their hair up with their head covered. The only time a woman would let her hair down was in the privacy of her bedroom with her husband or in the case of a prostitute when she was conducting business. In either case we know that Jesus' assessment of the woman and Simon's assessment were completely different.

As the woman wept on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair she also repeatedly kissed Jesus' feet. In Jesus' words, *she has not ceased to kiss my feet*. In humility she lowered herself to show the love and affection toward Jesus that Simon had failed to show. She also anointed the feet of Jesus with fragrant ointment. The ointment she used was most likely an expensive ointment unlike the oil used for anointing the head of guests. The oil used for guests was made from a sweet oil or olive oil which emitted a fragrant smell and made the hair smooth. The ointment used by the woman most likely consisted of various oils making it a more valuable. Jesus made the distinction by saying to Simon, in essence, "You did not even anoint me with the common oil, but this woman has anointed my feet with an ointment which is far more valuable." Perhaps the woman had obtained this valuable ointment in the process of earning her livelihood. That being the case, she poured on Jesus' feet all that she had to show her gratitude; all that was valuable to her.

Why such a lavish expression of affection? Jesus explained it to Simon by using a parable. It was because she loved much. And the reason she loved much was because she had been forgiven of much. Simon didn't even recognize that he was in need of forgiveness, however, this woman lavished her love upon Jesus, not in response to a command, but from a heart that was overflowing with gratitude for the forgiveness she had received. And she wasn't concerned what those sitting at the table thought of her.

This woman's selfless act of love was evidence that she had been forgiven of her sins. Should not we as Christians lavish Jesus with the same expressions of affection? Have we not been forgiven of much? Like the debtors in Jesus' parable who were unable to love the moneylender until he had forgiven their debt, we too were unable to love God until we had been forgiven. Now having been forgiven it seems the natural response would be an outpouring of affection upon the one who has forgiven us of much.

God is to be loved and adored for who he is, not merely for what he has done for us. However, it is proper to display our affections toward him for the goodness he has shown to us. No expression of our affection toward him goes beyond what is worthy of him, even to the laying down of our very lives (Romans 12:1).

Is Jesus of more value to us than our very lives? Are we willing to display our affection for him to prove his worth?