

Seeing Jesus: Meeting Our Deepest Need
Luke 7:18-23, 36-50
Sermon Outline

Introduction: We sometimes find ourselves wondering with John the Baptist if Jesus is “the one who was to come, or if we should wait for another.” The answer to this question will depend largely upon what we see our greatest need to be.

I) Three perceived needs

A) For action: John the Baptist

Luke 3.9: The ax is laid at the root of the trees

Luke 3.16: I baptize with water, but he is mightier than I...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

- John’s disappointment
- Ours

B) For enlightenment: Simon the Pharisee

Luke 7.39: If Jesus were a prophet, he would have known...

- Simon’s disappointment
- Ours
- Damning Jesus with faint praise

C) For forgiveness: The woman

Luke 7.38: and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears

- Extravagant and embarrassing request
- Astonishing response

The deeper point: The woman “gets it” and Simon does not.
What we need the most is what Jesus has come to give: forgiveness

II) What can we become more like the woman and less like Simon?

A) Admit that sin is the problem and forgiveness the gift

1) Push against the notion that God has ceased to care about goodness

Romans 3.19: ...so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God

2) Stop pointing the finger

Luke 7.39: ...she is a sinner

3) Do a sin debt inventory of your life

Forgiveness means release

B) See that forgiveness is what Jesus came to give

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) John the Baptist wanted action and justice from Jesus: instead he got imprisonment. Simon wanted new insights from Jesus; instead he got insulted. Has Jesus ever disappointed you? If so, what happened and why was it a disappointment?
- 2) Simon's attitude toward Jesus was like ours sometimes. He invited him over, but was not very hospitable towards him. How are we sometimes like Simon? Why?
- 3) Reflect on the following statement: "The woman's behavior was over the top, socially degrading to Jesus, almost obscene. And yet not once did Jesus push the woman away or urge her to stop. Rather he commended her behavior in the strongest possible terms." What does this reveal about Jesus? What sort of encouragement does it give to you?
- 4) The point of Jesus' story in vv 41-42 is not that the woman has a greater sin problem than Simon. It is that Simon can't see that his sin problem is as bad as hers, and as a result Jesus does not matter all that much to him. For Simon and his guests Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness is a theological problem. For the woman it is an unspeakably wonderful relief. Who are you more like—Simon or the woman? Why?
- 5) Hebrews 12 (in the New Testament) commands us to "worship God in reverence and awe, for God is a consuming fire." Elsewhere Scripture declares that God is full of lovingkindness but that he will in no way clear the guilty. Jesus himself spoke frequently of the coming judgment of God. What difficulties do you have with the notion of God's judgment?
- 6) Bearing in mind that sin can be described as (1) wrong actions, (2) failure to do right actions, (3) the attitudes of unbelief and independence from God that give rise to wrong actions and the failure of right actions, and (4) indifference to the fact that we repeatedly offend and wound God, do an inventory of your sins over the past week. Talk to Jesus about them. Thank him that he bore God's wrath for them in your place and that as a result you have been released from the guilt and bondage of those sins.