

Title: A LESSON OVER DINNER, LUKE 7:36 – 50
(Chatham, NJ; 06/12/16, AM) [Pd – Didactic by Contrast]

Theme: Jesus takes the occasion of a dinner party to teach us about love, forgiveness, and self-righteousness.

Purpose: To draw out Jesus' lessons on the connection between love and forgiveness.

Introduction:

1. Jesus goes to a dinner party.
2. His disciples, and apparently a crowd, are present in the scene though the narrative focuses only on Jesus, Simon, and an unnamed woman.
3. Many of Simon's Pharisee friends are around the table, 49.
4. A woman is the focus of attention; Simon's thoughts prompt Jesus to speak—explain.
5. This becomes a teachable moment: what can we learn from it?
6. The lessons come alive in contrasts.

I. A Contrast of Two Debts, 41-43

A. Two different debts

1. 500 denarii = \$80
2. 50 denarii = \$8
3. Could be more in today's dollars
4. One is 10xs the amount of the other
5. A denarius was about a days wages
6. Considering that payments would be made from a portion of each day's wages—the rest spent on living expenses—the larger debt could take years to pay off

B. Two different experiences of gratitude

1. Both feel relieved of their debt
2. Jesus asks Simon to draw the conclusion
3. Simon judges correctly that the one with the larger debt will experience a greater love for the moneylender
4. Why love? Why not gratitude? Are they related?
5. Jesus has a perfect teachable moment for Simon, the disciples, the crowd, us

II. The Woman Contrasted to Simon, 44-47

A. Who They Were

1. Simon, a Pharisee, fastidiously religious, attention to the minutiae of the Law, prone to self-righteousness
2. His associates were critical of Jesus, 7:34-35, and perhaps it is surprising that Simon invited Jesus to his home
3. The woman: "a woman of the city who was a sinner"
4. We can only speculate what she was: she is nameless but she is not Mary Magdalene or the sister of Martha
5. She shows up without an invitation
6. Who she was or what her sin was has no bearing on the lesson
7. She becomes a mere representative, and image of the repentant sinner
8. We don't know if Jesus had encountered her before the dinner

B. Their contrasting behavior becomes the teachable moment

1. Simon: no water for his feet; the woman: wet his feet with her tears
2. Simon: no kiss of greeting; woman: kissed his feet
3. Simon: not anoint head with oil; woman: anointed his feet
4. Simon had kept his distance from Jesus; the woman had clung to him

5. Simon may have invited Jesus for show; perhaps it was the right religious thing to do; or perhaps he was feeling Jesus out to see if he was a “true prophet”

C. The lesson

1. According to the story of the debtors, forgiveness breeds love
2. Love seems to be equated with gratitude
3. We need a detailed recognition of our sin to fully grasp the significance of forgiveness
4. Once we see that and once the sin is forgiven, we can respond accordingly
5. Small forgiveness produces small love; big forgiveness produces big love.
6. Some of this may be in the perception of sin of each individual
7. In any case forgiveness, gratitude, and love are intertwined.

III. Sinners Contrasted with the Self-Righteous

A. Shades of Luke 18:9-14

1. Pharisee vs. Publican
2. He who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted

B. Lesson

1. We are debtors in the eyes of God
2. Get rid of all vestiges of self-righteousness
3. Not righteous because you are more holy than others
4. . . . because you are more right
5. . . . because you go to church
6. Humble yourself: our righteousness and confidence comes because of Christ

Conclusions:

1. We live between two contrasting worlds.
2. First, we are called to come out from among the sinful ways of those around us, 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1. We are a people set apart.
3. Second, we are called to live among sinners, acting as salt and light, holding out the message of the Gospel, not elevating ourselves above them but humbling ourselves and befriending sinners, 1 Corinthians 5:9-10, 1 Peter 2:11-12.
4. We love because we are forgiven not because we have earned it.
5. Recognize your sin, accept God’s forgiveness, and walk humbly with Him.