



During this short series we're examining a number of passages from the gospels that expose something of the 'latent Pharisaism' in many of our hearts. Each week as that comes into focus we're then applying the glorious gospel afresh, as we're convicted of our need to trust Christ again and thankful for his goodness. This week we looked at an encounter that Jesus had with a sinful woman, whilst at Simon the Pharisees dinner party.

We began by looking at a recent 'Barna Study'¹ from the US that sought to (rather crudely) examine whether Christians are *more* like Jesus, or *more* like the Pharisees. The answer (unsurprisingly from the weighted questions) was the Pharisees, and yet before we tuttingly point the finger at them – that seems to match up with what we've experienced week by week through this series. Our hearts veer towards legalism.

The study this week finds us at the house of a Pharisee where Jesus is confronted, at a dinner party, by a 'sinful' woman. We noted that Jesus, the Son of Man who came 'eating and drinking' (v34) was often to be found at dinner parties in Luke (or telling stories about them) and here he did his ministry. This was not Jesus relaxing and having a bit of a wind down – it was him sharing life, asking questions, loving people and showing grace.

We noted 2 key things about Pharisees from this study, and then looked at her response:

- 1) **Pharisees clearly the sin in others.** Like Simon we're very good at spotting sin in others from 50 paces. He knew what kind of a woman she was – almost certainly a prostitute... and so he judges *her* – and as she cleans Jesus' feet, judges *him*. We saw a parallel with Matthew 7 as Jesus points to the fact that often we judge others – removing their speck, instead of removing our plank first. It's as if we have a pair of binoculars – and look out and everyone else's sin looks enormous and ugly, whereas with ours, we turn the binoculars around and our sin seems miniscule.
- 2) **Pharisees do not see the sin in themselves.** This was Simon's house and Simon's dinner party – he was the host. But was he? He had not acted as such, with none of the social and cultural etiquette of the day being adhered to. No greeting or cleansing or thanksgiving, which in a shame culture, was a big deal. And so *she* comes as the host, washing his feet with tears and hair – and then with perfume. As Simon inwardly judges Jesus for letting her do that, Jesus tells a story. 2 people were in debt,

both had their debt removed and both were thankful – the one with the bigger debt more thankful. The problem at root, was Simon did not think he was in debt, or if he was it was very very small. He could not see the sin in himself.

- 3) **The right response to Jesus.** The woman, unlike Simon, knows her need of forgiveness, and (by action) asks for it from Jesus. She models the right response to him.

Here are questions that might get things going, feel free to ignore / adapt for your group:

What do you make of this idea of 'missionary meals'? Why are meals such a great way of modeling grace? Are there opportunities that we have to do this? Why not...!

How does Simon feel about this woman coming in & gatecrashing the dinner party? How would you feel? What would the equivalent be in our day?

Why does Jesus tell the story that he does? Explain his point(s).
How does Simon view the sin in the woman?
How does Simon view the sin in himself?

What is the woman doing? Why does she do it?
In what way does the woman model 'repentance'? Is it possible to repent without words?
What does this account add to our understanding of who Jesus is?

Why do we find it easier to see in others, than in ourselves?
How can we help each other to be honest about our own sin and stop ignoring it?
What ways do you see in your life, your ability to see sin in others?

How does this impact our marriages / parenting?

Why do you think Luke keeps bringing up tax collectors and sinners?
What's he getting at?

Who will grace not extend to you in your framework?

For info here are all the passages / topics we'll be considering / have considered...

...We build foundations upon what we do. (Matthew 7v24-29)

...We compare ourselves with others. (Luke 18v9-14).

...We love money. (Luke 16v13-31)

...We do not see our own sin. (Luke 7v36-47)

...We feel like slaves rather than sons. (Luke 15v1-2, 11-32)

¹ <http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/619-are-christians-more-like-jesus-or-more-like-the-pharisees>