



-- Introduction

-- Trunk-or-Treat Slide Show – A wide variety of costumes were on display.

-- In a similar way, people of all stripes come to Christ dressed in all sorts of ways.

-- Big Idea: How we come to Christ will determine whether or not we are changed by Him.

-- Read Luke 7:36-50

-- Pray

To begin this morning, we are going to review briefly the first half of this message, which we began last week. And if you will recall, we are examining this passage in a somewhat unusual way. That is, we are considering its verses in reverse order. Therefore, we began last Sunday by looking at the end of the passage first, and in so doing, we observed from the last few verses, verses 44-50, how immensely different this encounter with Jesus turned out for the two main people involved. Whereas Jesus rescued the woman from a hell-bound highway of sinful living, Simon yet remained on that dreadful path, dead in his sins and separated from the life of God. Indeed, two more diametrically opposite outcomes are virtually impossible to imagine.

As we consider these two outcomes, we are so very blessed to remember that the vast difference between the two had very little to do with *who* came, but everything to do with *how* they came. Therefore, our text shows at least six critical ways that we should come to Christ if we hope to be truly transformed by Him for His glory. First of all, we said that we must...

1.) Come unassuming.

Sadly, Simon came to Jesus assuming that he was o.k. Like so many of the Jews of his day, he seemed to believe that his deeds were good enough for God, and because of that prideful preconception, he was blinded to the manifold marvel of Christ's mercy. On the other hand, because this woman looked beyond the shallow assumption of Simon, she began to see the tremendous depth of her own depravity. Because she was unassuming about her sin, she was unhindered by pride and unleashed to rejoice in the unlimited mercy that God has unveiled through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And that is the essential point that Jesus makes in verses 40-43, when He tells the Parable of the Two Debtors. Through that parable, Jesus urges both Simon and us to understand that "*The one who has been forgiven little loves little.*" True transformation, therefore, comes only to those who come to Christ unassuming.

The other point we made last week is that true transformation comes to those who...

2.) Come unashamed.

We made this point by observing the remarkable humility with which the woman in our passage fell before Christ to wash His feet and kiss them over and over again. Well-respected Pharisees like Simon, on the other hand, would simply never have engaged in such unpopular behavior, because their lives were completely wrapped up in the opinions of people. Thus, if you and I are going to allow God to transform our hearts for His glory, then we simply cannot live for the praise of people. Rather, to be conformed to Christ, then we must live our lives to bring delight to Him, and not ourselves, and we must come to Him unashamed.

That brings us to the third way in which we must come to Christ. To be changed by our encounter with Him, we must...

3.) Come undaunted.

This point really goes hand-in-hand with the previous one. What I mean is that anyone who is really ready to come to Christ unashamed must be just as ready to come to Him undaunted, because, in this fallen world, unashamed love for Christ will undoubtedly inspire the taunts, insults, and persecution of those who don't understand or appreciate unashamed devotion for Christ.

-- Song – Fence Riders – Jimmy Needham

Am I foolishness to you? And is it laughable the things I do?
Can your callused minds see past yourselves to His divine?
Am I foolishness to you?
Can I sing about my maker and have you not roll your eyes?
Can I weep about my Savior and the way He died?
I know it don't make sense to those who ride the fence,
But I'm sold out to Christ.

Just as Jimmy Needham relates in his song, sold-out affection for Christ will not only not make sense to a world full of fence-riders, but it is also certain to illicit its insults and jeers. You know, Paul isn't kidding in 2 Timothy 3:12, when he writes, “*Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*” The Bible makes abundantly clear that, if we will genuinely come to Christ both unassuming and unashamed, then we had better come undaunted by persecution as well, because the hatred of a self-justifying world will inevitably fall upon us. Unless you and I are prepared to come to Christ undaunted, then we will surely come to Him unprepared.

We see this undaunted love for the Savior in the actions of the woman in our text this morning. Please read with me again verses 37-39:

When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.'”

The first important detail that I want to point out from these verses is the fact that this woman is described by Luke as “*a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town.*” In other words, her disgrace—probably the disgrace of a prostitute—was quite well known to the people of that town, including Simon the Pharisee. The second detail upon which we ought to focus is Luke's revelation of Simon's private thoughts in verse 39, where we hear what Simon really thinks of this woman. He clearly doesn't like her and, moreover, he clearly doesn't think that Jesus should have any contact with her at all. Finally, we ought to understand that

these details would certainly have come as no surprise at all to the woman in our text.

And in these details is seen her undaunted love. Surely, she knew that the people at Simon's house reviled her very existence, and, yet, she came any way. Surely she knew that she was not welcome there, but she was so unsatisfied with her sin and so hungry for new life, that she could not stay away. Surely, she knew what they would be thinking, and what they would be saying, and the dirty looks that she would receive. Yet she came nonetheless. She was so broken over her sin and so unashamed in her love for Christ, that she came to Him undaunted by any persecution this world could bestow.

Listen: Far too many Christians undergo far too little change in our lives because we are far too afraid of what others might think or say. Let me give you an example from Scripture, as we consider the case of the "Judiazers" that the Apostle Paul condemns in Galatians 6:12. The Judiazers were a sect of teachers who believed that converts to Christ were not really saved unless they were also circumcised. Listen to Paul's condemnation of their fear of persecution. He writes, *"Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ."* Please do not miss the critical truth that Paul is revealing here. He is telling us that the fear of being persecuted because of Christ can devastate our doctrine and overwhelm our witness.

Unlike these Judiazers, however, and unlike Simon the Pharisee, the woman in our text was monumentally and eternally blessed because she loved Christ more than she loved the praise of people. She may have been rejected by all of the other people at that dinner that night, but she was forever accepted by the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Although her actions may have provoked painful worldly consequences, her undaunted love was rewarded with unrivaled joy. Let us, then, come to Christ undaunted, so that too will know the fullness of the life that Christ calls us to lead.

In addition to coming to Christ unassuming, unashamed, and undaunted, we must also...

4.) Come unsatisfied.

-- The pilfering of my Musician's Friend order.

-- I really wanted the new pickup that I ordered for my new guitar.

- I have every intention to exhaust every option until it is delivered.
- Dissatisfaction can be a tremendous motivator.

And we see that very motivation at work in our verses for today in a glorious way. You see, the woman in our text did not come to Simon's house so that she could eat fancy food or hobnob with the social elites of her town—they wouldn't have welcomed her anyway. Neither did she come to protect her image or to keep her foot in the door of some worldly opportunity. And it certainly wasn't personal contentment or a lofty view of herself that convinced her to crawl through Simon's door to see Jesus. No, she was so blessed because she came in that same way that anyone who really understands the perfect holiness and authority of God must still come today. She came dissatisfied with her sin.

In fact, so dissatisfied was she that she dropped every façade and came to Christ as she was—sinful, wretched, and desperately longing for mercy. Her sinful condition had inspired such sorrow within her that she entered enemy territory, bowed down at the feet of our Lord, and wept abundant tears of repentance. So abundant were her tears, in fact, that she washed Jesus' feet with them as with fresh water from a deep, dark well. So dissatisfied was she with herself and with her sin that she knew just how she must come to Christ. And how did she come? She came unassuming enough to be broken over her sin... unashamed enough to wash His feet in humility... and undaunted enough to take upon herself freely the harsh insults that she knew would come. You see, true dissatisfaction with her sin produced within her an insatiable hunger for righteousness—a hunger that could only be fed by the sinless Son of God.

Let me ask you: Are you *that* hungry for righteousness today? Does your soul humbly crawl before the throne of God, bow at His feet, and cry out Him who alone is able to keep you from stumbling? Are you amazed by God's amazing grace, and desperately thirsting for the new life that is offered only by the living water of Jesus Christ? Do you come to Christ like that? Or do you come to Him like Simon—satisfied with yourself and lackadaisical about your sin? Do you come with authentic repentance in your heart, or do you come with the apology of a politician?

“The apology of a politician?” you may ask. Well, I use that phrase in this context because I am fairly certain that most of us have grown rather weary of hearing what seem to be insincere and self-indulgent apologies from politicians who get caught in adultery. We have seen a lot of these apologies lately, as

adulterous politicians have been getting “caught with their pants down.” Surely you have seen their press conferences on T.V. where they gather together all of the media outlets, drag their wives in front of the crowd, and tell their constituents how much they regret their behavior. While I certainly cannot know or judge their hearts, and while this situation certainly does not apply to every politician, doesn't it seem as if the majority of these apologies are almost completely insincere? In fact, they usually seem to be a lot more about reelection than repentance, don't they? Aren't you just tired of this whole scene?

In any case, I mention these political apologies because I think they are especially helpful in emphasizing an issue of crucial relevance to us, which is his: If you and I have so quickly become weary of the artificial contrition we hear from politicians, how much more must God be grieved when He hears insincere repentance from us? Jesus warns against this type of hypocritical religion in Matthew 9:13. Responding to criticism the Pharisees were making about His habit of eating with sinners, Jesus says, “*But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*”

You see, our Lord is simply not interested in the outward acts of insincere religion. In fact, in this verse He says that He doesn't even want them. As He declares here, Jesus has come to call those who know that they are sinners, not those who think they are good people. Therefore, He desires followers who repent because they hate their sin, who are sorry because love their God, and who come to Him entirely dependent upon His mercy. Let us understand that sacrifices devoid of mercy will be sacrifices devoid of grace.

Thus, the question for us resounds this morning: How is it that we are coming to Christ today? Are we desperate for His mercy, or are we secretly satisfied with our sin? Are we craving to be changed by Him, or are we really content just the way we are? Now, please don't misunderstand me: Those of us who have been truly born again by the name of Jesus Christ have already been awarded a salvation that we cannot lose. In addition, know that none of us will ever reach the Christlike perfection in this life. However—and here is the point—we should never be content with less than God's best.

That is Paul's basic point in Philippians 3:12-16, where he exhorts:
Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me... Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on

toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus... Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

With those words on our hearts, let us ask ourselves: Do we come to Christ unsatisfied? If we will, we can be sure that He stands ready, willing, and more than able to change our lives in wonderful ways that we have not even imagined. If we would be transformed by Christ, then we must come to Him unsatisfied about our sin. Finally, we ought to...

5.) Come unreservedly.

Listen: If the grace of God has been so kind to us as to lead us to the place in our lives where we are so unsatisfied about our sin that we are ready to come to Jesus unassuming, unashamed, and undaunted, then we really have no other choice but to come unreservedly as well. Just as the bankrupt debtor does not come to the forgiving moneylender with conditions, so the poor in spirit must not come to Jesus halfway.

To see this point in our text we need only look at the last seven words of verse 37: *"She brought an alabaster jar of perfume."* In this gift, we can truly see the unreserved character of her coming to Christ, for this was no ordinary jar of perfume. When we think of a jar of perfume, we probably envision a \$12 special from the glass case at Wal-Mart. This woman's jar of perfume, however, was quite different. In fact, it was probably worth an entire year's wages. A similar jar of perfume shows up in a similar—but different—passage from John 12, and in verse five, Judas objects to the use of the perfume, complaining, *"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."* This was a rather kingly gift from such a lowly woman.

Thus, unlike Simon, who seems to have invited Jesus to dinner in order to check Him out Him in a safe environment and from a safe distance, this woman came offering our Lord the most costly thing she had. Whereas Simon had not even offered Jesus water or oil, she had lavishly poured out her most valuable possession upon His feet. She didn't come halfway; she came offering Jesus her all. Nothing was held back. She laid down her most precious treasures at His feet even as she wet them with her repentant tears.

With that thought in mind, let me ask you: Are we coming to Christ unreservedly, or are there certain areas of our lives that we are trying to keep for

ourselves? Have we laid all of our worldly crowns before His feet, or are we attempting to keep some of them tucked away in private corners of secret rooms? For example, is He the Lord of your pocketbook, or are you keeping that treasure for yourself? And as an important election approaches, let me ask you: Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your vote, or does your vote blindly belong to a political party? Are you, as Jimmy Needham sang, sold out for Christ, or are you vainly attempting to meet Him halfway?

Please do not be deceived, lukewarm religion will never please God, nor will it ever bless you. Just in case you are not convinced, listen to this warning from Revelation 3:15-16: *“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”* Lukewarm religion, it turns out, turns out to be lifeless religion. Therefore, if we would be truly transformed by Christ, then we must come to Him unreservedly.

Why, then, was this same encounter, in the same place, at the same time, with the same Jesus so drastically different for this woman versus Simon? The difference is not to be found in who came but in how they came.

Simon came to Christ with every advantage that first-century Judaism could offer. He was one of the elite of society, and he was regarded as a religious leader among the people. The very title he held as a Pharisee, which means “set apart,” speaks to the perception of his superiority over the “ordinary Joe.” The woman, on the other hand, came with every disadvantage. She was a notoriously sinful woman, probably a prostitute, despised by a legalistic, patriarchal society. But, to Jesus, those details were of little importance.

You see, our Lord was not nearly as interested in the “who” as He was the “how.” That is, what really mattered to Jesus was not who had come to inquire of Him but, rather, the manner in which they came. Whereas she came unassuming about her sin, Simon came unaware of his great depravity before God. Whereas she came unashamed, he came unaffected. While she came undaunted by insults, He came afraid of the jeers, and while she came to Jesus unsatisfied about her sin; he came unconcerned about his. Whereas she came unreservedly, Simon was merely checking out the scene from a safe distance.

How will you come to Christ?

And with that question in mind, I want to close with this final observation from the text about how we ought to come to Christ, and that is this: We ought to...

6.) Come today.

Surely, there must have been better times for this woman to come to Christ. Right? I mean, why did she come to Him in the middle of a dinner to which she wasn't invited held in the home of a Pharisee who really didn't like her? Could this possibly have been the best time to come to Christ?

Well... Yes... It was. You see, she didn't make the mistake of waiting for the so-called "perfect moment." She understood her desperate need, and she behaved as any truly desperate person should. She came right away, all the way, and so should anyone here today who understands our great need for the great mercy of our great God. // Will you come to Christ today?