

Have you ever had the experience where the debt on your credit card or bills is starting to pile up, but then you’re able to pay your debt? Maybe you saved up some money or you had a good tax return and you are able to pay that debt. Doesn’t it feel good to pay off that debt? It feels really good to see that the balance is at \$0.00 because you paid the debt.

Has it ever happened that someone else paid the debt for you because you were unable to pay it yourself? How do you feel towards the person who paid your debt? Very thankful, right? And if the amount of debt was great, then you will feel especially thankful towards that person. That’s the point that Jesus is making in the Gospel for today. You had a debt of sin, but, my friends,

### Jesus Paid Your Debt!

- I. Therefore, Do Not Look Down on Others.
- II. Therefore, Honor Him with Works of Love

First, **Jesus Paid Your Debt. Therefore, do not look down on others.** Our passage begins, **“When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table.” (Luke 7:36)** One of the themes in Jesus’ ministry is who Jesus eats with. He was famous for eating with tax-collectors and sinners. In Luke chapter 15 it says, **“The Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them’” (Luke 15:2).** In Luke chapter 19, Jesus goes to Zacchaeus’ house and it says, **“All the people ... began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’” (19:7)** Jesus ate with sinners.

And still today Jesus is the guest of sinners. You might know the common table prayer: “Come Lord Jesus be our guest.” Every time we pray that, we are asking Jesus to come and be the guest of sinners. To come into our homes with all of our problems and all of our sins, to come to our tables and be our guest. Still today Jesus is the Guest of sinners. In our passage today, he doesn’t eat at the house of a notorious sinner, he eats at the house of a Pharisee. That’s pretty surprising because the Pharisee’s were generally very hypocritical and antagonistic towards Jesus. But Jesus wants to reach out to the Pharisees too and so he accepts the invitation to come to the house of a Pharisee. Jesus wants to reach both the notorious sinner and the self-righteous sinner.

As Jesus was eating a woman came into the house. She was crying and she started kissing Jesus’ feet. The Pharisee, whose name was Simon, saw this and 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” (Luke 7:39).** The woman apparently was known in the town as someone who had lived a sinful lifestyle and the Pharisee had a self-righteous, judgmental attitude towards the woman. We all tend to have a self-righteous, judgmental attitude towards other people. If we’re honest we do look down on others, like Simon looked down on this woman. It’s easy for us to say, “Well, I’m not a really bad sinner. I stay away from the really bad sins.” But when we feel that way it’s helpful for us to remember that we usually sin within the bounds of what is socially acceptable in our circumstances. If we were to go beyond that, it wouldn’t be advantageous for us. I’d like to read you something from one of my favorite writers, a man named August Pieper. He says, **“In regard to sin there is only a superficial difference between people, caused by their different ... outward circumstances, family background, and the different temptations they are exposed to. The heart is the same in all cases.”**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> August Pieper, “The Three Chief Parts of a Christian Sermon According to the Account of the Sinful Woman, Luke 7:36-50,” in *The Wauwatosa Theology* vol. 2 (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1997), 338. Other parts of this sermon are inspired by Prof. Pieper’s article.

What he's saying is that our circumstances make it very unlikely that we would commit certain sins. So we can't pat ourselves on the back for staying away from them. To honestly examine ourselves we have to look at the sins that we have the means and the motive and the opportunity to commit. We have to look at the way that we talk about other people behind their backs. We have to look at our ungratefulness and how easy it is for our love to grow cold. We have to look at the way we spend our money and the things we watch on TV. When we examine our lives in these areas we see that we too owe a great debt to God.

But Jesus forgave your debt. Listen to his parable, **"Two people owed money to a certain money lender. One owed him five hundred denarii and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both" (Luke 7:41-42)**. No matter how much of a debt of sin you have racked up, whether it's five hundred or fifty, you're not in the positive. And you're not able to pay God back. **"Neither of them had the money to pay him back."** But no matter how big your debt of sin is, Jesus paid your debt. **"Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both" (Luke 7:41-42)**. Jesus paid your debt by dying on the cross. Your debt is zero. Jesus paid it. Embrace that fact in faith. Jesus said to the woman, **"Your faith has saved you, Go in peace" (7:50)**.

**Jesus Paid Your Debt. Therefore do not look down on others.** And, secondly, **Jesus Paid Your Debt.**

**Therefore, Honor Him with Works of Love.** We Christians should not be afraid to let our emotions show. This woman let her emotions show. It says, **"As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears" (Luke 7:38)**. She was crying so much that the tears dripped down onto Jesus' feet. Were these tears of sadness or tears of joy? Perhaps both. She was certainly sad and sorrowful over her sin. And it's healthy for us sometimes to reflect on how our sin has hurt other people and even to let that cause us to be sad sometimes. But let always be followed up by the Gospel. Jesus has paid our debt. This woman's tears were also tears of joy and thankfulness that Jesus sinners does receive! Jesus has forgiven my debt. I want people to be able to see that on my face.

I also want people to see that in my deeds. Jesus said to Simon, **"Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not pour oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet" (Luke 7:44-46)**. The woman focuses her attention on Jesus' feet. Why? Because she's humble. She knows. I'm not on the same level as Jesus. I'm going to stay at his feet. John the Baptist said, "I'm not worthy to untie his sandals." What humble works of service can we do to show Jesus how much we love him? This woman also poured perfume on Jesus' feet. She gave Jesus her best. Let's not give Jesus the leftovers of our time and energy and money. Let's show our love for him by giving him our best.

And this is all out of love because Jesus forgave our debt. Jesus said, **"Which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.' 'You have judged correctly,' Jesus answered ... 'Therefore I tell you, her any sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown.'"** (Luke 7:42-43, 47). What's the key to living the Christian life? Its thinking about how much we've been forgiven. The key is believing the Gospel, believing how much you've been forgiven and letting that permeate your whole life. Jesus Forgave Your Debt. Therefore, Do Not Look Down and Other and Therefore, Honor Him with Works of Love. Amen.