

Discovering God

Part 3: What Does God Really Think About Sinners?

Luke 7:36-50

Summary: Jesus reveals God's radical forgiveness.

Main Ideas:

Jesus' interactions with people revealed God's heart toward people.

Sin separates and kills

Jesus came to bring forgiveness.

We'll never experience the joy and freedom of forgiveness if we insist on calling ourselves mistakers.

Jesus' harshest rebukes were not for sinners but for those who claimed the right to judge sinners.

Love is the response to and proof of forgiveness.

One of the most offensive things about Jesus was and is his forgiveness.

God loves sinners so much that he died for them.

Forgiveness isn't something we earn it's something we accept.

Jesus didn't reject sinners. He forgave people.

Invitation:

Read Ephesians 4:31-32

Pray: Jesus thank you for forgiving me. Help me forgive others today.

Discussion Questions:

1. What initial thoughts come to mind when you hear the word "sin"?
2. How do you see Jesus' approach to sin and sinners differing from the way we often see it in religious or cultural settings?
3. Read Ephesians 4:31-32. What holds us back from offering forgiveness as freely as Jesus does?
4. What is one step you can take this week to acknowledge and accept God's forgiveness? How can you show that forgiveness to others?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

ME: We're in 3rd part of a series called *Discovering God*—

B/c for 1000s of years, humanity has been wondering: If there's a God...

- What is He like? What does He want from us? What happens if we don't do what He wants?

Around 30 AD, on the edge of the Roman Empire, a man named Jesus of Nazareth claimed not only to know the answers to these questions but to *be* the answer.

- He said he was God, a crazy claim, and then he claimed he'd die and rise again.
- And then he did.
- Proving his claim to be God

So to discover who God is and what he thinks of us, we look to Jesus, — Jesus' interactions w/ people revealed God's heart toward people.

WE: And this includes God's attitude toward everyone's favorite religious word... **SIN.**

You're safe. Stick w/ me... it'll get better.

Sin is a weird word... we only use it in a religious context.

- You don't apologize to your boss for "sinning" on a late project
- Or ask an officer to forgive your "sin" of speeding.

It's an uncomfortable word... brings a mix of guilt, shame, and even anger.

So we use a nicer/kinder/more palatable word... **Mistake.**

Mistakes are OK... everyone makes mistakes.

- Mistakes are cute little accidents we didn't mean to happen.

But think about your biggest "mistake."

- Wasn't it a choice you made? Something you meant to happen?
- This goes deeper than an accidental "oopsie."

We can fix mistakes... But when people have been hurt, relationships have been broken...

- There's no eraser, no do-over... it happened- the hurt and damage are there for good.
- We have to admit... We're not just mistakers... We're sinners.

We see the results all around us even in our own lives, daily... Sin separates and kills

- Relationships, joy, peace, unity
- And we keep doing it over and over

No matter how many books we read, how many religions we try, what rules we follow, no matter who we vote for... we keep separating ourselves and killing relationships.

It's why Jesus talked about sin... pretty often.

But when Jesus talked about sin... it was different than we would expect.

He didn't come to condemn/reject sinners...

- He didn't preach fiery sermons to make sure everyone knew just how horrible they were so they stopped being so bad.
- He didn't give us a new list of rules that would make everything better
- He didn't even bring us a new philosophy on life.

Jesus came to bring all of humanity the one thing we all need, the one thing we can't do for ourselves, the one thing every sinner is longing for...

Jesus came to bring forgiveness.

Forgiveness: freeing someone from guilt (being guilty) and its consequences.

- What was done is no longer being held over you.

Jesus didn't waste his time deciding who's in and who's out based on some sliding scale of least sinful to most sinful...

- He spent his time loving and forgiving people.

He didn't just talk about sin; he showed what God's response to sin looks like in real life w/ real people.

- See one example is a beautiful scene recorded by ancient historian Luke.

GOD: As the scene opens... Jesus has been healing people and teaching about the KoG he was bringing to earth.

- He's started claiming he's the Messiah, the savior God promised to send to his people.

He's caught the attention of all kinds of people... including the religious leaders, the Pharisees...

One day he's invited to dinner at a Pharisee's house...

- Pharisee wanted to know if Jesus was something more than a teacher... "could he possibly be a prophet?"

Jesus goes to dinner and reclines at the table... lying down and resting on an elbow next to a low table.

These types of gatherings were usually open to whoever wanted to watch/listen... as they were eating someone unexpectedly showed up...

V. 37 "A certain immoral woman."

- In other words a well-known sinner
- Everyone knew her reputation, probably knew her specific sins, some might even have committed specific sins w/ her.

Even though she knows they know who she is... she walks into this gathering carrying a very expensive bottle of very expensive perfume... presumably to anoint Jesus... a sign of deep respect.

And what happens next shocks and offends everyone... everyone except Jesus.

V. 38 She interrupts this important gathering w/ her overly emotional display...

- Comes to Jesus and is so overwhelmed she starts sobbing, her tears (maybe more) drenching Jesus' feet...
- She's probably frustrated/mad that she can't stop crying
- She tries to fix her mess by letting down her hair to wipe up the tears
- But this only makes things worse b/c no respectable woman would let her hair down like that in public
- And she can't help herself and starts kissing Jesus' feet.

What is this woman's story? Why is she so emotional?

- We don't know, but this scene follows a set of stories about Jesus' teaching and healing.

- Most likely she had encountered Jesus before. Either heard a teaching that transformed her life or maybe witnessed or experienced his healing for herself.
- Somehow she had experienced Jesus' love.

So she wants to honor/thank him by anointing him w/ the expensive perfume...

But when she finds herself in Jesus' presence again she completely breaks down.

And this display is too much for Jesus' host

V. 39 Pharisee thinks to himself...

- "If Jesus was the prophet I thought he might be he'd know who this sinner is"
- "Shoot if he was just a good teacher he'd give her some kind of rebuke"
- "But instead, he's letting this inappropriate display carry on."

"I should do something... someone has to uphold God's standard and obviously, Jesus isn't doing it."

But before he can take matters into his own hands... Jesus interrupts his thoughts.

As I read this next interaction, keep the scene in your mind... reclining at dinner, guests all around, and this woman is sobbing uncontrollably, wiping, and kissing Jesus' feet.

I hear Jesus saying this w/ restrained anger...

V. 40 Answered his thoughts... "I'm no prophet huh? Hold my wine..."

V. 41-43 "I know your thoughts... and I know this woman... I know her past and I know her heart..."

You judge her b/c you think she's an awful sinner.

Guess what... she believes that too... She knows who she is and what she's done.

And she knows I've forgiven her... for all of it.

- She is doing this b/c she is so thankful for what I've done for her."
- We'll never experience the joy and freedom of forgiveness if we insist on calling ourselves mistakers.

Simon saw himself as a 'mistaker,' but the woman saw herself as a sinner forgiven—and that forgiveness led to love.

Now watch this scene... this is Jesus revealing God's true heart toward people.

V. 44a [...kneeling here.] Jesus stops looking at his host and turns to the woman.

- What did she see in his face?
- Accusation? Anger? Disappointment? Annoyance?
- NO... She saw pure, powerful, unfiltered, and unconditional empathy and love.

Jesus- "Look at this woman, Simon... actually see her."

- She has infinite worth and value as a child of God created in his image.

Now I sense Jesus' tone shifts...

Jesus' harshest rebukes were not for sinners but for those who claimed the right to judge sinners.

V. 44-47 Simon, why are you judging her? Let's look at the facts...

You thought I might be a prophet yet b/c of your self-importance you didn't even think about giving me the common courtesy expected of hosts...

You didn't offer me water so I could wash my feet

- But she has washed my dirty feet w/ her tears and dried them w/ her own hair.

You didn't give me the cultural/expected greeting for a guest by giving me a kiss

- But she can't stop kissing my feet

You didn't give me oil for my hair...

- But she has anointed my feet w/ a rare and expensive perfume.

You didn't do the bare minimum... And she has gone above and beyond.

You think you are better than her b/c her sin is more known?

- At least she admits it.

She loves me b/c she has discovered and experienced true, real, unconditional, everlasting forgiveness.

Theologian NT Wright summed up this story this way: True faith is what happens when someone looks at Jesus and discovers God's forgiveness; and the sign and proof of this faith is love.

Love is the response to and proof of forgiveness.

V. 48-50 But the men at the table are so offended.

"Who does this guy think he is... he thinks he can forgive sin... only God can do that!"

Jesus: "Exactly. The same God who knew your thoughts and this woman's sin."

One of the most offensive things about Jesus was and is his forgiveness.

There is so much power in Jesus' kindness/gentleness w/ this woman.

He basically says, "Don't listen to those jack-wagons. Just trust me. You are forgiven. We're good. Go in peace."

Literally “Go INTO Peace”

- Continual.
- Peace: Shalom- tranquility/wholeness.
- You’re forgiven... God will never hold your sin against you.
- Go be who you were created to be. Free from fear/condemnation/guilt...
- Go and enjoy God and the life he has given you.

YOU: This woman is amazing b/c we all want to hide from the “sinner” label.. But she acknowledged it and embraced true forgiveness.

It’s scary to admit we’re sinners b/c one thing everyone thinks they know about God is he hates sinners.

But Jesus proved the exact opposite.

- **God loves sinners so much that he died for them.**

That’s why he came to earth and died on a Roman cross... He paid the debt owed by all of humanity...

As the representative of all humanity, he took our sin onto himself, and put it to death... destroying the power sin has over us.

Now we are free to step away from a life controlled by and covered in Sin.

God’s forgiveness is there, ready for us. We just have to accept that we need it and then simply accept his offered forgiveness.

- Nothing we do to earn it. Don't have to prove we deserve it...

Forgiveness isn’t something we earn it’s something we accept.

- Jail cell door unlocked example.

How accept it... First, have to acknowledge the fact that there is something to forgive.

- We haven’t just made mistakes... We’ve sinned.
- We’ve purposely chosen to hurt others.
- We said w/ our words and choices... “What I want is more important than this person/relationship.”

Then just accept his forgiveness by telling him...

- I need your forgiveness. I accept it.
- Thank you for dying for me.
- I pledge allegiance to you as my king.
- Make me yours now and forever.

And as you live in his forgiveness... you begin a new life where you are free to offer others the same forgiveness you have experienced.

Listen... Let me say it again... as you live in his forgiveness... you begin a new life where you are free to offer others the same forgiveness you have experienced.

This goes beyond just knowing about the forgiveness of God. I'm talking about EXPERIENCING it.

Ephesians 4:31-32.- When we experience the true love and forgiveness we can't help but want to offer it to others.

So this week...

Read Ephesians 4:31-32

Pray: Jesus thank you for forgiving me. Help me forgive others today.

Real quick... What if you know/believe all that but still feel guilty... What then?

Question: Do you love Jesus? Has that love translated into a love for others?

- That's your proof. Remember: Love is the response to and proof of forgiveness.

- **1 John 3:19-21**

WE: In Jesus, God offers peace, forgiveness, and love—no condemnation.

That's what this is all about. **John 3:16-17**

Those who have experienced his forgiveness are free from condemning others and can lovingly offer his forgiveness to everyone around them... even their enemies.

That's what has been changing lives for the last 2000 years. That's what changed my life and that's what can change your life...

Accept God's forgiveness and Enjoy God. Embrace a life of knowing you are fully forgiven and can freely offer forgiveness to everyone else.

Jesus didn't reject sinners. He forgave people.

Jesus doesn't reject sinners today, He doesn't reject you or that other person you question. He lives to love and forgive you... and everyone else around you!