

Honour for the Shamed

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Date: 30 November 2025

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[0 : 00] Before Corrie comes to bring God's word to us, I'm going to invite Anne Norrie, one of our congregation, to come and to read the scriptures to us from Luke 7, verses 36 to 50.

Amen.

When the man who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this was, touching him, for she is a sinner.

And Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he answered, say it, teacher. A certain money lender had two debtors.

One owed 500 denarii and the other 50. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both.

Now which of them will love him more? Simon answered, the one, I suppose, for whom he canceled the larger debt.

[1 : 23] And he said to him, you have judged rightly. Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, do you see this woman?

I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet.

You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.

But he who is forgiven little, loves little. And he said to her, your sins are forgiven. Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, who is this and who even forgives sins?

And he said to the woman, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Amen. Today we turn towards the Christmas season.

[2 : 34] And Advent is the word that's normally used throughout church history to talk about that. Advent comes from a Latin word, Adventus, which is just a word used in the Latin translation of the Bible lots of times.

And it means arrival. So the word Advent means arrival. And so all that it means is the season where we particularly think about the arrival of Jesus, the baby. So all in the Old Testament, you have these prophecies like Isaiah 9 of the coming of a Redeemer, a baby.

And we read one of those in the call to worship David did. Isaiah 9, for unto us a child is born. And in the beginning of Isaiah 9, it talks about how the people in that time were walking in darkness and despair and grief because of their exile.

And then for unto us a child is born, a son will be given, a baby. And his name will be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God. And this next four weeks, we're going to look at a series called Wonderful Counselor that takes that name, the name of the one who is to come, the baby, and says he's Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God.

Now, wonderful there is the classic sense of the word wonderful. So something that actually makes you full of wonder. You look and say, you look in awe. You look in an unexpected way.

[3 : 53] Wonderful. And then Counselor is a person who comes into your life to bring wisdom and to talk to you about who you are and what you're walking through to bring wisdom, the treasures of wisdom. The Old Testament says Jesus Christ, the one who was to come, the baby, the Redeemer, is Wonderful Counselor.

We all need counselors in our lives. We need friends. We need biblical counselors in our lives to talk to us about what's going on in the bottom of our souls. But the Bible says there is no counselor like Jesus.

And so one of the questions of this series, the question of the series, maybe just as simple, simply this. Do you go to Jesus Christ for counseling? And the Bible says you should. And Jesus comes

into the world to treat all of who you are, your psyche, your heart, your intellect, your will, your emotions, to be your Redeemer and to transform you from the inside out.

So Jesus comes to treat the inner self, the self at the bottom, the who that you really are. He's a Wonderful Counselor. He's a Wonderful Counselor because he is Mighty God.

And there's no Counselor like Mighty God. And so last year we did this as well. If you were here in December, we looked at four negative emotions that Jesus treats in the Gospels.

[5 : 11] Loneliness, anxiety, boredom, and sadness. This year we come back to see four more negative emotions. There's nothing like the Christmas season. Nothing about the Christmas season more than saying let's talk about negative emotions.

But Christmas really is a time of sadness for lots of people. And in the midst of joy there's also a lot of grief and a lot of pain. And we see that all throughout the Gospels. And today we begin the first, and that's shame.

Now Jesus encountered a lot of people that carried a lot of shame in his time. The woman at the well, shame because of her adultery. The woman who was bleeding in public for so many years. Men with leprosy. Zacchaeus, the wee man who was shamed. Not because he was wee. No. Come on. But because he's a tax collector.

That's why. Peter who betrayed Jesus and carried the shame of that. And then this woman. This woman of the city that Anne just read about for us. So what is shame, number one.

[6 : 12] Secondly, the final healing of shame. And then thirdly, the ongoing path of healing shame in our lives. So first, what is shame? Now it's hard to define, but this passage moves us toward a definition as we look at the story.

In verse 36, there's a Pharisee who invites Jesus into his home. His name is Simon. We learn later. And he's a religious leader. He's a lot like Nicodemus.

He must be because he's open to having Jesus in, to conversing with him. He's not just pushing Jesus away. And that's probably because in this chapter, just before, Jesus had raised a boy from the dead.

And everybody saw it. And everybody said, what kind of a prophet is this man? And later in this passage, Simon says, what kind of a prophet? He refers to Jesus as a prophet.

You see, he's investigating Jesus. He's open to that. He's willing to investigate, is this really a great prophet? So he comes into his home. And then verse 37 comes and says, behold, Luke's signaling, behold.

[7 : 19] And it's a statement of awkwardness. He's saying there's about to be something very awkward happening. And that's this woman. She comes and she stands at Jesus's feet. The reason for that is because he was reclined at table.

And so in the first century, you would come to a dinner table and you would lay on your side. So you'd be on a small couch or a pillow and you would put your feet behind you and put your elbow on the table.

We don't do that. We're not allowed to do that anymore. But so Jesus's feet were behind him. So they weren't under tucked underneath. So a woman could come and stand at his feet at the table. She does that. And then we learn she is, quote, a woman of the city, a sinner.

And a woman of the city, a sinner is code language in the Bible for a prostitute. And everyone in the room knows that. In Roman law, prostitution was not technically illegal.

But in Jewish law that had developed in the intertestamental period, because they were occupied by Rome, they couldn't say it was illegal. But a woman or a man involved in this wouldn't be allowed to be married.

[8 : 26] And they would, of course, be in the lowest rung on the social ladder. And obviously she was. So she comes in. We know that she's experiencing shame because it says she comes in weeping. So she's carrying the weight of the shame of her status in public.

She walks into a group of men and notice that she has no name in the passage. She is nameless. Because to everyone in this room, she is nameless. And immediately what happens is the internal shame that she feels then becomes objective shame, external shame.

And, of course, what we see here that Simon says, and I'll probably have to say that several times, Simon says, So we'll just get that out now. What Simon says is probably something she heard so often.

And what does Simon say? He says, If this man were a prophet, he would know what sort of woman that is. So immediately what happens in this area is that he heaps objective shame, external shame, upon her in that setting.

And the shame is not just intended for her. Who is it intended for? The prophet, Jesus. You know, he's saying if he really were who he says he is, he would not associate with her.

[9 : 40] Therefore, he should be shamed. And he should be ashamed. And so Simon the Pharisee is heaping shame upon both the woman of the city and Jesus at the very same time. Now, this is a prestigious dinner.

A great religious leader invites this great prophet in. There's men around the table. And the behold says this has become incredibly awkward. And what we see, obviously, is that Simon wants to shoo her away like a dog.

And this is where we learn how Jesus Christ, the wonderful counselor, deals with both people who are struggling with shame and people who heap shame externally and objectively.

And this is what happens. In verse 40, he tells a parable. And he turns to Simon and he says, Simon, I have something to say to you. Now, when Jesus turns and says, I have something to say to you, you need to start shaking in your boots.

And that's Simon's in trouble. And he tells him a parable. And the parable is about a man, a moneylender, who gives two people money, one owing 500 denarii, one 50.

[10 : 51] That's in the first century Greco-Roman context, about 20 months worth of wage and two months worth of wage. And so he says, the moneylender forgives both of them outright, the debt.

Simon, who do you think loved the lender more? And Simon says, of course, the one who owed 20 months of salary, not two months. And he said, Simon, you're correct. Now, what is he saying the point?

He's trying to get Simon to realize, awaken to the fact that, Simon, you, like her, are in debt as well. You bear debt or guilt and therefore also shame in your life.

You just don't see it. And she has 500 denarii against her, but you've got 50. And before the moneylender, you're both debtors. And you've got to wake up.

And the difference in the two here is that Simon invites Jesus into the house wanting to investigate Jesus, wanting to put him in the dock like Simon's the judge and say, let me take an intellectual approach at this and say, is this really a prophet like he says he is, where this woman comes in the total opposite way towards Jesus.

[12 : 03] And she's weeping. You know, she, the woman, this woman of the city comes weeping at the feet of the great physician. She comes looking for a redeemer. She comes looking for a better groom.

And Simon comes intellectually curious, but no more. Keeps him at a distance. She's transformed and he's not. And he's trying to get Simon to see you are in the same position as she is, bearing guilt and shame in your life.

Now, here's what we learn about the wonderful counselor. The wonderful counselor, Jesus Christ, is the most compassionate and understanding person in the entire universe. And he's meek here with the broken.

He's gentle with the bruised. He's meek and lowly, gentle and humble with the woman who's coming, bearing public and very great shame because she's coming with need.

And so he's very soft with her. And to the man who then turns to heap shame upon her, he is very, he is severe and he is strong.

[13 : 07] And he won't tolerate shame being heaped upon a person who comes to him with guilt and need in their life. Knowing that, knowing that, having their neediness come before him.

You see, he's strong with those who would weaponize shame to throw stones at a person who's coming looking for help. And he is so gentle here with the lowly. Now, that brings us to ask, what is shame?

And I think if you look at all the details, there's no definition here. But if you look at the details, it emerges. And we've just got to simply imagine that this woman has lived her life thinking of words like inadequacy, worthlessness, unlovable, never enough, an underlying sense, steady day by day, of being a failure, a failure, a failure in relationships, a failure in all of our lives.

It would have shame a failure, a sense of inadequacy and failure in relationships and work, in being human and meeting expectations. And it's a spectrum that can spiral and spiral and spiral until we

start to say things like, if anyone knew me, they would never love me.

And that's the growing sense of shame. Now, she bore this. Carl Thompson, one great writer, he's a Christian psychologist, he talks about the human shame attendant.

[14 : 32] I think what he means by that is there's a shame concierge in everybody's soul. And the shame concierge is always whispering in the bottom, in our hearts, in our ears, in the ears of our hearts, words like worthless, inadequate, unlovable, and really in a small, simple way, just asking the question all the time, putting the question back into your soul, what do they think of me?

Every space you walk into, every relationship you have, the shame concierge says, what do they think of me? And so here's a definition from one counselor. He writes this, shame is the deep sense that you are unacceptable because of something you did, something done to you, or something associated with you.

It begins with feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, and leads to, in our modern age, cancellation, a deep sense of inadequacy. Second, the final healing of shame.

And that word final is very important. Now, the parable that Jesus tells Simon and the woman here is about debt. He says 500 denarii, one person owes, 50 denarii, the other person owes.

And they both have debt before a money lender. Here, debt before the money lender is obviously, allegorically, debt before God, debt before the Son of God. And that means that debt here is standing in the place of guilt, the concept of guilt.

[15 : 57] So he's pointing out that both of you in your lives have the problem of guilt. Guilt is not first a feeling. Guilt is a fact in the Bible.

So in the Bible, unlike the modern world, guilt is not something we first feel. It's first a status. And so guilt is a status of debt. Debt to the money lender, debt to the law giver.

In other words, guilt is objective, forensic, legal standing. It is a standing where we say, I am not right with the judge. That's guilt.

It's outside of us. It's objective. It's a way we stand in relation to God. Then when we experience guilt in our lives because of things we do wrong to God and others, what happens?

We then start to feel that. So if you've ever felt your conscience pricking you and telling you there's something wrong here, the feeling that you have with the debt, with guilt, that is shame.

[16 : 57] Guilt is first objective. It's forensic. It's legal. It's outside of you. It's not being in right standing. Shame is the feeling that arises from that guilt. And that is what we call good shame.

In contemporary culture, when asked, what do I do with my sense of shame? Sometimes the answer is you've got to grow your self-esteem. You've got to think positively.

You've got to know that the desires that you have in your life are not bad desires. The things that you do do not make you a bad person. And so self-esteem or shamelessness is all around in our culture. The Bible doesn't do that.

Instead, the Bible does something that's far more true. And that's say that there really is something called good shame. That when we bear guilt, the feeling that arises in us of wrongdoing, shame is something we need.

If you don't have good shame in your life, that's when things really go off the rails. No sense of shame. No sense of ever doing anything wrong. There is such a thing as good shame.

[17 : 57] But at the same time, what we're seeing here in this passage is bad shame being heaped onto this woman. And what is that? What's the difference? Good shame says, I know I'm a sinner.

I know I'm in debt to God and other people. I know I've done wrong. But bad shame is this spiral that goes beyond debt that begins to say, it's not just that I'm a sinner.

It's that I am a mistake. I do not have value. I cannot be loved. If anybody really knew me, they wouldn't love me. And so bad shame is this spiraling spectrum that goes down, down, down until one of the ways you know that you're struggling with bad shame is when you have this feeling that if the people closest to you knew you more, they would start to dissociate.

And so a person that's really experiencing the spiral of bad shame never feels safe with anybody. And so bad shame, for that reason, tends to cause us to dissociate, to pull back from people, to hide.

People who feel a lot of shame tend to disconnect. And if you think about Genesis 3, Adam and Eve, the very first sin, it said that they sinned, they realized they were naked, and they were ashamed.

[19 : 15] And so the very first move they made was to hide and to disconnect and disassociate. That's what shame tends to do. So let me give you a thesis for this sermon, and it's really simply this.

There is a good shame, and it's associated directly with objective guilt in our lives. Because we bear guilt before God and others, we feel that, and that's good shame.

And there is a horrific bad shame that says that even when the guilt has been dealt with, you still continue to tell yourself you're a mistake, you're not lovable, you don't have value, you're inadequate, you're worthless.

And that's the spiraling sense of bad shame. Now, is there healing? Can there be healing from this? Every single person in this room has a shame concierge.

And in big ways and small ways is always telling you in some way that relationship, that person never thinks, I'm never going to be enough for them. Everybody has that.

[20 : 16] Is there healing? And look at, boy, here's what Jesus does. In this passage, Simon the Pharisee says, Do you know what sort of woman this is?

And then in verse 39, Jesus says, This woman, this woman, look at her. In other words, this woman becomes a model for what to do with your shame. This woman of the city, nameless woman.

She becomes a model, and this is what she does. She comes to Jesus weeping. She comes to Jesus letting her hair down, wiping and kissing his feet with her tears and oil.

And that simply shows us that she becomes vulnerable. What do you do with your shame? You've got to come to Jesus, the Son of God, the wonderful counselor, with vulnerability. With a sense, a real sense of good guilt, good shame, because of real guilt in your life.

And there's something so striking here that as modern people we don't see at first, and this is what it is. When she comes to Jesus, she takes off an alabaster jar, which alabaster is a type of stone, and she breaks it, and these wouldn't have had a hole in them.

[21 : 27] There's no pouring. She breaks the stone, and then she anoints his feet with her tears and with the oil. Well, why? Boy, because we're modern people, we don't see what it was like in the first century.

But in the first century, wearing an alabaster jar around your neck was something that prostitutes did regularly. This was perfume. It was a way of attracting people.

And in the first century, women in the city do not let their hair down. And the women that did let their hair down in the first century were signaling their role in society.

And what does she do? She takes the very instruments that were commonly used to signal prostitution, and she uses them to anoint and kiss the feet of Jesus Christ.

And you see what she's doing? She's not trying to hide. She's coming bearing the public shame, the guilt that she's incurred from her life. And she's saying, I give it away to him.

[22 : 28] She's actually taking the very instruments that were used in the lifestyle that she lived, and she's saying, I'm not hiding anything. I have a good sense of shame. I know who I am. I know what I've done. People have heaped other things on top of me, but I give it all away to Jesus today.

And Jesus looks up, and he honors her for that. And so, boy, it's so striking in this passage how Simon had invited Jesus in because Simon is intellectually curious.

I'm not sure what I think about this man Jesus. She comes in giving away her entire history to Jesus and saying, take my guilt and my shame.

I need a physician. I need my redeemer. I need my true groom. And then Jesus says to Simon in verse 44 to 46, Simon, this woman, the woman of the city came, and she anointed my feet with her tears.

You didn't, I came to your home. You didn't anoint my head. You didn't greet me with a kiss. You didn't wash my feet. But she did. And what is Jesus saying? He's saying, look at this woman, Simon.

[23 : 34] You need to be doing what she did. You need to realize that you have debt, guilt, and shame in your life. You need to come and kiss the feet of the master. In other words, the difference in a transformed life where your guilt and shame can be truly dealt with is that transition where you stop coming to Jesus just out of intellectual curiosity.

And you actually come to him with utter vulnerability saying, I have guilt and shame, and I need you to take it away from me. And so Jesus looks and says, go in peace.

Your sins are forgiven. You can't heal shame finally and forever without coming to receive forgiveness from Jesus Christ. The only way to heal shame finally forever is to come and receive forgiveness from Jesus.

Why? Because when objective guilt is dealt with, the shame that is real, that's associated with that guilt, is also dealt with. If your debt is paid, if your debt is forgiven and cleansed, then your shame has also been dismissed.

Therefore, thirdly, the ongoing work of healing shame. Now listen, I know that in my role here as a pastor, from conversations that I have with people quite often, it is so common and normal to believe in Jesus and to follow Jesus and to continue to struggle with shame.

[25 : 07] So many of us can say, my debt is paid, it's paid in full. Therefore, the shame that's associated with real guilt has been dismissed. And yet, to struggle for the rest of our lives with lingering shame, lingering inadequacy, lingering sense of worthlessness, of being unlovable.

And we've got to imagine that in the story of this woman. Can you think about it? The woman of the city, you know, we don't read anything more about her, but at the very end, at the very end of the story, she would have gone out of Simon the Pharisee's house and she would have gone to live the life that she was known for.

Redeemed, forgiven, changed. But when she walked out of the room, everybody would have still seen her the same way. You know, it's not as if all of a sudden everybody in the city celebrated this story.

No, everybody in the city would have seen her and said, that is the woman of the city. That is the nameless woman. And what she would have had to do, I would imagine, over and over again, is she would have had to really focus the eyes of her heart back onto Jesus over and over again and meditate over and over again on what he said to her and how he approached her.

Christian friends in the room, we have to squelch the shame concierge in our hearts every single day by doing something so simple yet so profound.

[26 : 38] And that's coming back again to the Redeemer and letting Him tell you once more what He thinks about you. The biggest pathway of healing shame in our lives is coming over and over and over again and realizing that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the wonderful Counselor, says, I honor you.

No matter what you've done, no matter what you did to him or her, no matter what this pattern that's going on in your life today, right now, where the shame attendant keeps coming back up, the best way to fight that is to come over and over again and hear the Redeemer say, I love you, I value you, I honor you.

So this woman of the city came to honor Jesus. He turned around and He honors her. Now let me show you one way that that happens in the passage as we finish. In verse 47, Jesus says to Simon, And therefore, in verse 50, Jesus pronounces, Your sins are forgiven.

Go in peace. And that means that because she came to Jesus with her need, Jesus forgave her and He sent her away with peace. Peace is really what we want, right? In the midst of shame. And the way He talks about it, though, He says, She loved much.

Why? What is He talking about? He's talking about the parable and He's saying she owed so much debt, internal shame and public shame, that when she was forgiven every bit of it, she was enabled to love much.

[28 : 11] Love who? And He's talking about the lender, God Himself. She owed so much that when God forgave her, when Jesus forgave her, He's saying she was able to turn around and love her God so much more, so much more than Simon could see in this moment.

Now, what is the secret? What is the secret of lingering shame? It's, what are we being drawn back to? She loved much. What did she love? She said, in other words, the more she saw her need, the more she saw her need, the more she realized how much God loved her.

And it's something so simple, but it's saying that every single day, over and over again, you've got to say, I look at my need, I look at who I am. Not ignoring, not saying self-esteem. No, instead saying, I know my guilt, I know my debts that I have before God and others.

Yet, Jesus Christ has said, your debt is paid, therefore your shame is dismissed. So, Jesus says, I honor you, I love you, I value you. Over and over again, meditation.

Therefore, she could love much. And what we're being told here is, because she knew she was loved so much by her Redeemer, she was enabled to go and love other people so much.

[29 : 21] There was, I was reading this week, a story, I was reading a couple texts about shame this week, and one of the psychologists I was reading, a Christian man, told a story from his childhood.

When we realize how much we've been loved, it enables us to love the one who's forgiven us, and then go love other people well. But when we take the shame in our lives, and we suppress it, and we push it down, it tends to come out.

It tends to become incarnated some way. And this man tells the story, when he was a child of, a teenager really, of playing basketball. I know basketball is a growing sport in our country now here, so many of us may have not had basketball experience in our lives, but I think you can relate nevertheless.

Nevertheless, he made the team. The team was very good, but he set the bench the whole season, basically. And the coach, the coach's son was the all-star player, superstar basketball player, and he carried the team, and he scored all the points, and they had come all the way to the championship game.

And the coach's son had carried the team up to the point, this one point in the game, but then all of a sudden, he missed a layup. And a layup in basketball is one of the easiest shots.

[30 : 40] It's routine. It's so simple. But this superstar basketball player, he misses the layup, and the coach, his dad, calls a timeout, and he gathers the team over, and he, you know, you can't hear what he's saying, but everybody in the whole arena is watching, and he's got his head down face to face.

And then all of a sudden, and this is many, many decades ago, in a very different time of culture, the dad slapped the boy across the face, and then he sent him back out to play.

And, you know, the boy comes out with his head down. Now, look, they won the game. They won the championship. After the game, they're all gathered around the trophy. Everybody's in the huddle. Everybody's got their hands on the trophy. And this man telling the story, who sat the bench his whole time, he said, I was with the team, and I had my hand on the trophy.

And what happened? Boy, you can predict this. The boy, the superstar, who had been shamed publicly by his dad, turned and did what? He pushed the bench warmer out of the circle and said, don't touch the trophy.

You didn't, you set the bench, you've never contributed. You don't deserve to be here with us. Now, you want to grab the boy, you know, you want to get on to him, but far more, you want to go, you want to go, you want Jesus to go talk to the dad.

[31 : 54] Right? Why? Because people who experience shame have to get rid of that, and they go and shame often others. You see, we do two things.

We either take our shame and we hide, we disconnect, because we don't want to be known in case we might be shamed more. Or, we tend to give that shame to other people. The shamed, often shame.

But this woman, the loved, turn and love much. You see, the shame, shame, but the loved, love. And that's the cycle.

So, what's the cycle of breaking shame in your life? It's to come to the one who says, I love you and value you so much that what? Christmas, in the Christmas baby, we see that a wiggly little, the son of God became a wiggly little baby.

This was our theme last year. In order to get close to you, because he wants to say, he loves you and he values you. And where do you see that? You've got to look at the cross today.

[32 : 57] And you've got to see that Jesus Christ, how does the New Testament talk about it? Hebrews 12 and 13. He went to the cross and he bore your shame. He was disgraced, is the language of Hebrews 13.

He was naked. He was spit upon. Why? Because the objective guilt that he carried, your guilt, also led to objective shame that he carried. You see how they're closely together?

So therefore, if Jesus Christ really has borne your guilt at the cross, he's also therefore dismissed your shame. Jesus Christ breaks the cycle of guilt and shame so that the shamed can stop shaming.

They can be loved. And we can love much in return. Look at this woman. That's what Jesus says. Verse 39. This woman, look at her. She's a model. Bring your guilt and your shame to the feet of Jesus.

Kiss his feet. And look at the redeemer, the physician, the true groom who says, I love you. You're valued. When everybody else in every room you walk into, you think, what are they saying about me?

[33 : 57] You've got to turn and say to yourself, the wonderful counselor says, I love you. I honor you. I value you. And he showed us that in his cross. Let us pray.

Father, break the cycle of shame today. Some of us come struggling so much with shame in our lives. We think we are worthless, valueless, some in big ways, some in small ways.

We thank you that King Jesus says exactly the opposite in the cross. Lord, we look to you today, your love for us displayed in that old rugged cross. And we ask that you would destroy the shame concierge, the shame in our heart, the objective shame, the internal shame, because you've taken our guilt.

So Lord, give us good shame where we need it, but bring us right back to your mercy. Cast away the bad shame. I pray for some individuals today in this room, Lord, I don't know who they are, but you do, that are really, really under the weight of shame.

So meet with them right now as we sing. We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.