

# TAKEAWAY

**Collide**

Part 2 – Luke 7

November 8, 2009

## He's Worth the Risk

Imagine a man walking through a dangerous neighborhood when suddenly thugs jump out, grab him, and take him into an alley toward some fires burning in barrels. Others around the fires look up and watch the scene. Some join the group as they strip the man and begin to mock him with rude and profane comments. After a few moments, a woman (previously unnoticed) steps quietly from the darkness with an expensive cloak, which she gently wraps around the man. Weeping, she kisses the captive's hand and then withdraws to her place in the darkness. The crowd returns to quiet conversation around the fires. The gang is furious. The woman honored the captive they wanted to humiliate. As she compensated for their offensive behavior, they were the ones who were humiliated in full view of others.

This same dynamic occurred in Luke 7:36-50. Simon and his guests planned to humiliate a young, upstart rabbi who was going around forgiving people's sins. That simply wasn't done. Only God could forgive. They refused to offer the traditional courtesy of foot washing. They wanted to set Jesus straight and put Him in His place.

What was the woman thinking? What motivated her to stand up to Simon and his cohorts' effrontery? Apparently, she was well known as a sinner. But, somewhere she had heard Jesus preach the message of grace for sinners, and she trusted Him. (What does her acceptance of forgiveness from Jesus say about who she thought He was?) When she heard that Jesus would be eating at Simon's house, she decided to bring Him a present to express her gratitude to Him. (It wasn't unusual for poor people to be allowed to sit on the floor along the walls during dinner parties of the rich. After the meal, the leftovers would be distributed to the gathered needy. So she came and sat on the floor with the others.) She probably arrived before Jesus and was horrified when she observed the disrespect He was shown. She began to cry at the injustice and quickly rose to right the wrongs done to her Lord and forgiver by these powerful religious leaders.

The Pharisees had not given Jesus the most basic civility of providing water to wash before dinner, but she wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. She kissed His feet and rubbed them with the perfume she had brought as a gift for Him. To the religious leaders, this was scandalous. The Pharisees began to murmur among themselves about the sinner's actions. Jesus should rebuke the woman. If He were really a prophet, He would know what kind of woman was touching Him. But Jesus did know. He not only didn't stop her, He commended her in front of them all. She had shown true love to Him in her gratitude for forgiveness. How did the story Jesus told Simon make it clear that both he and the woman needed forgiveness (see v. 42)? Why do you think Simon didn't realize his own neediness?

Who would you be in this story? Would you be the woman, the Pharisees, or the observers against the wall? Have you recognized that you have a debt you are unable to pay? This woman took a big risk in a room crowded with powerful men. She made herself vulnerable to Jesus. She opened herself up to potential rejection and ridicule. What risk might God be calling you to take? How does trusting Jesus' love allow you to overcome your fears?

## Radically Undone

What if you gave God everything you had? I'm not talking about some marginal expression of gratitude: a praise and worship song on Sunday, an offering of 10 percent, or a bit of time on Sunday morning. What if you literally gave Him everything?

Time and time again, we see Christ asking...not for a piece of a person, but for everything. We see His disciples answer the call, leaving it all behind—even their nets, their only means of income and survival. "*Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.'* At once they left their nets and followed him" (Matthew 4:19-20 NIV). They left the lives they knew to follow Christ and serve beside Him. Jesus came up to Matthew while he was in the process of collecting taxes and said, "*Follow me.*" Matthew got up, leaving it all on the table, and followed Him. However, the rich young ruler refused the call. Jesus lovingly

asked the young man to “go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21 NIV). But, the rich young man just walked away—the price was too high.

Again in Luke 7:36-50, we see a woman of low means, a “sinner,” come to Christ with all she had. Most agree that this perfume would have been her dowry, worth about a year’s salary. It was probably all she owned that was of worth. She brought herself, just as she was. Literally, she anointed Him with all she had and all she was. She would walk away penniless, yet filled in a way most cannot imagine. Simon was appalled by these actions. The irony is, he was only giving Christ dinner; the woman was giving Him everything. Jesus openly rebuked Simon, but praised the woman for her actions and selflessness.

Christ took each and every person as they were. He forgave this woman and loved her, allowing her to give freely to Him. He accepted the fishermen. He embraced the tax collectors, the lepers, the blind, the deaf... He loves each and every one of us in spite of our current circumstances. He sees beyond our weakness and our sins, asking only that we follow.

What if we gave Christ more than the typical gestures we are accustomed to? What if we laid our entire lives at His feet, without reserve or hesitation? For the woman, once the jar of perfume was broken, there was no resealing it, no going back, no changing her mind. It was done—her earthly wealth given for eternal purpose. What if we were so broken for Christ and His Kingdom, so sold out, that there was no return to normalcy? What if we were radically undone and gave it all to Christ? Luke 9:62 says that no man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God. Christ is not looking for another dinner. He is seeking your soul, your service, your very life. What are you giving Him? An old hymn states:

*I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back, no turning back. Though I may wonder, I still will follow. No turning back. No turning back. The world behind me, the cross before me. No turning back. No turning back. Though none go with me, still I will follow. No turning back. No turning back. Will you decide now to follow Jesus? No turning back. No turning back.*

Can you offer Him all and go with Him? Are you willing to leave it all behind, placing the cross before you, the world behind, and spilling the rich perfume of your life at the feet of Christ?

### **A Rose is a Rose**

A few years ago, my spouse and I attended a conference where a popular Bible teacher shared from the Song of Solomon. In the course of talking about love, sex, and marriage, he told a story about taking a friend to a rally that advocated abstinence. His friend had been very promiscuous but was now broken about it and seeking guidance. He took her to this rally in hopes of surrounding her with encouragement about the changes she wanted to make. At some point in the rally, the speaker on stage took a single rose and held it up for everyone to see. It was in perfect condition and beautiful. He told everyone in the crowd to think of the rose as one’s self and one’s purity. He proceeded to give the rose to someone in the front row and told them to pass it around to everyone. By the time the rose made it back onto the stage it was no longer in pristine condition. It had petals missing and it was drooping a little. The speaker held up the now sad looking rose for all to see. He equated it with what happens when you sleep around. He then asked if anyone would want this rose...after everyone had had their hands on it. The Bible teacher who had brought his friend was angry. He could only imagine what was going through her mind at that point. He wanted to shout at the speaker, “Jesus! Jesus wants that rose!”

Can you relate to this story? What character are you? The friend, trying to change? The teacher, trying to help? Or are you the speaker, thinking that you are helping but forgetting about grace? Read John 8:3-12. Do you think Jesus was being easy on this woman? Do you think she left her life of sin after her encounter with Jesus? After all, what really changes a life? A set of rules? A standard to shoot for? How about forgiveness? How about radical love that takes you in and wraps you in truth and grace?

If you don’t know Jesus and you think God would never accept you because of what you have done—or are doing now—think again. What if you could start over, with the understanding that every time you fell down, Jesus would be there offering His hand to pick you back up and dust you off before you began again? Does a love like that exist? If it does, wouldn’t you want to be surrounded by it, clinging tightly, knowing that this love would never let you go? Is that even possible? The clear answer is yes! As you read Romans 8:32-39, notice verse 34. Jesus holds out the same hope to us that He gave to the woman in John 8. If you accepted that hope, how could it change you?

**Q: How can I make sure I get the Takeaway every week?**

**A: (1) Sign up on our website to receive the Takeaway by e-mail, (2) download the Takeaway from our website, or (3) pick up a copy as you leave the auditorium on Sunday.**