
Life on Mission:

Do you see what God sees?

Rob Rogers July 31, 2022

Introduction

And what we've really pressed in this series is that while your neighbor does include people that aren't your literal neighbors, many of us tend to generalize this idea of "neighbor." What ends up happening for Christians is that we justify really not loving *anyone*. If everyone is my neighbor, then *no one* really is. So, not only are we not really loving our neighbors out there, we're also in many cases, neglecting and ignoring the people that live right around us.

We've had some simple and practical challenges over the past several weeks to make adjustments and tweaks in our schedules in our level of intentionality, as we press into knowing and loving the people that God has placed right around us. We've been challenged to just begin to pray for and know our literal neighbors. Last week we talked about making small adjustments in our frantic lives to slow down and make room for Loving God and Loving the people that are in proximity around us.

Today's message is entitled, "Do you see what God sees?"

Luke 7:37-50

And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that He was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee 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 is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And He said to him, "You have judged rightly."⁴⁴ 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. ⁴⁵ You gave Me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss My feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint My head with oil, but she has anointed My feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

THE CALL TO LOVE
THE VISION OF LOVE
THE COST OF LOVE

The Call to Love

Jesus is invited to a religious leader's house. The Pharisee is intrigued by Jesus, but he's skeptical. There is a gathering at his house, and a woman comes in... she's weeping over Jesus' feet. The religious leader looks

at her and calls her a sinner, most likely meaning she was a known prostitute in the community. She takes her most valuable possession, an alabaster flask and breaks and pours out the whole thing — all of her wealth — she gives everything she is and has to Jesus. She was showing her absolute adoration and devotion to this man that she believed was her Messiah — she is completely overwhelmed with love for Him..

And Simon, the religious leader, the Pharisee, is there witnessing this whole exchange.

Luke 7:39

Now when the Pharisee 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 is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.”

- In other words, “If Jesus was the real deal... even if he was just a prophet, he wouldn’t be allowing this to happen. He wouldn’t let this woman come anywhere near him, let alone touch and kiss and clean his feet.”

Here’s a man that is writing this woman off — he’s not jumping to conclusions about her — he knows who she is, and he’s thinking, “I don’t want to have any association with this woman because I have some ideas about who she is, what she’s like, why she does what she does.”

Here’s the hard thing about Jesus’ command to love. There are no caveats.

In Jesus’ sermon on the mount, He commands us to love our enemies — and then He adds this...

Matthew 5:46

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

- In other words, “If you only show love to people that can benefit you in some way, if you only love those that you get along with or like to be with, where is my grace in that?”
- Jesus is saying, “If you only associate with people that you like to be around, or that will help you advance in some way, or people at least that won’t harm your reputation — you’re actually not loving them for their sake, you’re loving them, or just tolerating them, for your own sake.” You’re loving your own ego and using people to affirm yourself and to build yourself up. Jesus is saying “If your love is limited to those who look like you, act like you, think like you, and love you in return — IF you only love those who love you, then what you have is not love.”

Simon, a religious leader who supposedly loves God, is at a deficit as it relates to love! He is incapable of showing grace to a woman who is extremely different than he is, on a totally different social level, she’s a poor prostitute, and because of all of that, Simon sees Himself as SUPERIOR, and views her with disdain, and totally unworthy of even the slightest amount of effort, kindness, grace, or love.

This week I met a man named Walt, an aerospace engineer... he’s going to be joining us in October to share his testimony of what God has done in His life — it’s absolutely incredible!

- During those darkest years of his life, after experiencing horrendous trauma as a child, Walt began identifying as a female at an early age; and then years later, was diagnosed with “Gender dysphoria” and was encouraged to begin hormone therapy at age 39. And he did.
- He lost his job, he lost his family — found himself, broke and homeless. He went to a church because he was curious about Jesus... he was exploring Christianity... looking for answers, for hope, for life. After the service the pastor came to his house, and Walt shared with me, he was thinking, “This is so great, I’ll get to know the pastor, I’ll be able to get some answers to

my questions about Jesus...” The pastor came to his house, Walt opened the door to welcome him in, and this is what the pastor said, “We don’t want your kind in our church. Don’t ever come back.”

I asked Walt, “What did you say?” He said, “I actually laughed and asked the pastor, ‘*What kind of people DO you want in your church?*’ He had no answer. Turned around and left.”

We’ll come back to this story in a minute — because thank God the story doesn’t end there.

What does that have to do with us? Maybe you don’t have people in your life that are struggling with identity confusion, and maybe you don’t live in the red-light district. I do know this, at the very least, you have people around you that are vastly different than you. You have people in your life that will require more grace, more patience, more time, more attention than you probably want to give. Maybe they have different political views than you do... maybe they hate Christians.

But just like **Jesus doesn’t say, “Love God and convert your neighbor,”** Jesus also doesn’t say, **“Love your neighbor as long as it’s easy.”** Or **“Love your neighbors as long as they like you.”** Or **“Love your neighbors that you have something in common with.”** He says, **“*Love your neighbors — even if they hate you and people like you. Even if they slander you, love them anyway. Even if they mock you, love them anyway. Even if they are angrily anti-church, anti-Bible, anti-Jesus — love them.*”**

Why? Because there is a story underneath that exterior that is driving that behavior.

No one believes what they believe or behaves the way they behave for no reason! Knowing and loving our neighbors means that we are curious enough about them that we’re willing to see beyond whatever callous or indifferent exterior and realize that there’s a story underneath that’s driving their life.

It doesn’t mean we condone or affirm sinful behavior. *Let’s see the distinction from the passage.*

The Vision of Love

The passage tells us that Simon is *thinking to himself* that if Jesus really were holy, he wouldn’t be letting this woman anywhere near him. The next verse says that Jesus *answered his thoughts*.

Luke 7:41-42

“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

- In modern terms, one person was \$5k in debt, the other was in \$5mil in debt. The president of the bank they owed money to calls and says, “*Don’t worry about it, I’ve taken care of it all — as of this moment you owe the bank no money.*”

Jesus turns to Simon and says, “*Which of these people are going to be so filled and overwhelmed with gratitude and joy, and love toward the person who cancelled the debt? Who is going to be changed the most?*”

Luke 7:43

Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And He said to him, “You have judged rightly.”

Now, up until this point, the conversation has been just between Jesus and Simon. Then Jesus turns the attention toward the woman, and he looks back at Simon and says this...

Luke 7:44

Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, **“Do you see this woman?”**

“Do you see this woman?”

Simon didn't see **her**. Simon saw a problem. A law breaker, and heathen, someone that was beneath him, somebody that he'd be perfectly happy not having in his world, somebody that could ruin his upstanding reputation, his social status. Somebody that, in Simon's opinion, didn't matter, not only to himself and his peers, but somebody that didn't even matter to God.

Jesus is exposing the fact that Simon doesn't see HER. Jesus is saying, *“No, Simon you don't see her. You see your presuppositions about her. You see what you want to see, so that you can be justified in writing her off, dismissing her, distancing yourself from her. You don't see her, but I do. **And I see YOU too.**”*

Look what Jesus says!

Luke 7:44-46

“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. ⁴⁵You gave Me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss My feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint My head with oil, but she has anointed My feet with ointment.

- *It was proper for the host to offer water for the guests to wash their feet.*
- *It was proper to greet your peer or equal with a kiss on the cheek.*
- *Even anointing a Rabbi's head with oil, she used her most prized possession not on My head, but on My feet.*
- *“Simon, you show Me no kindness, no respect, no love... but she has not stopped lavishing Me with her utter devotion since the moment she came near to Me— this woman you've written off, this woman you've judged incorrectly.”*

Simon, do you see this woman?

Here's where Jesus wants to press us this morning.

Do you see?

Do you see the individuals, the adults, the children, the lost, the broken, the hurting, the confused, the addicted, the people that live all around you?

Do you see THEM!?

OR, are you like Simon, trusting in your presuppositions, stereotypes as a means to justify your distance from people you feel are inferior to you?

- A little secret about the human heart is we don't see people that are different than us as simply different. If we're not careful, we see people that are different than us as not just different, but inferior.

Jesus' question to Simon and his question to us... “Do you see these people?” Not what they've done, or what they do... do you see who they are? Do you see them the way that I do?”

If Jesus has placed you right where you are —
if he has appointed you to live right where you live —
and he has orchestrated who your neighbors would be —
or who you'd work with —

His invitation to you today is to open your eyes and SEE your neighbors the way He does.

With HOPE! With LOVE! With COMPASSION!

And CURIOSITY!

- *To see past your presuppositions, see past your predetermined conclusions, to see the people around you that you've written off, or distanced yourself from, not for what they've done or even what they might do... but for who they are.*

God is asking us today, **“Do you see? Do you see people the way I do?”** Because if we justify keeping a safe distance through our assumptions, predetermined conclusions, broad brush stereotypes, there's no way we can love those around us.

**Do you see the people that are different from you with suspicion, scorn, judgment?
Or do you see what God sees?**

The Cost of Love

What would it have cost Simon to move toward this woman with compassion?

What could He have lost had he abandoned his own superiority, and placed Himself in her shoes?

Moved toward empathy and compassion, grace and mercy?

What would it have cost him?

- Reputation among his peers?
- Misunderstood
- Loss of control and certainty...
- Loss of employment/social standing
- Loss of future opportunities in his religious career

There's no question it would have cost him at least some of the things that were most dear to him.

And Jesus could have told Simon... “You know Simon, you're right. This woman is a sinner... she's a prostitute... yeah, she really shouldn't come near me.”

And some of you feel that God views YOU that way. That He wants to keep His distance from you. Or maybe others of you have the attitude of Simon, or the attitude of the pastor that told Walt, “We don't want you kind in our church...”

Jesus could have shared Simon's sentiment toward this woman... in the same way He could have viewed you and me saying, *“You know all those human beings I created — they hate me. They don't want anything to do with me — maybe I should just keep my distance and give them what they want. Maybe I should just abandon them to fend for themselves...”* He could have left us helpless, isolated, and hopeless, lonely, broken, bound in shame, and eternally lost... **but he refused!**

God entered into the HUMAN story, not with condemnation and scorn, but with gentleness, kindness, and humility. Why? Because He saw not your rebellion against him, not your animosity toward Him, he saw YOU. The real YOU. The YOU underneath the masks you present. He saw ALL OF YOU and He came for YOU!

- **While the world might say, “You’re damaged goods,” Jesus says, “you’re my treasure.”**
- While the world says, “You’re a nothing, a nobody, a failure, an outcast... Jesus says, “There’s no condemnation for those that belong to Me. I knew you before you were born, and YOU, my son, my daughter, are MY MASTERPIECE, my poem, my tapestry, woven together with such intricacy, and beauty, and complexity and purpose.

The gospel story tells us of a God that moved into the neighborhood. Left heaven and descended into the brokenness of the human story. THIS GOD knows your name, knows your story, knows the most intimate details about your life, all the good, all the bad, the ugliest things about your life that you don’t want anyone to know about, HE KNOWS IT ALL... He sees beyond all it and sees YOU!

The God of the universe moved in your direction, he laid down His life, to rescue you. He gave up everything, to have you, not just a piece or a part of your life but your whole life! Regardless of what you’ve done, or how angry you’ve been with God... or how distant you FEEL from Him... He is SO FOR YOU. He SEES you with eyes full — not of scorn, or disdain or disgust. But with kindness, with grace, with mercy, with insane generosity, and a radical, unwavering, sacrificial love.

He’s asking us the same question today that He asked Simon 2,000 years ago.

**Do you see the people around you the way that I do?
Do you see the opportunities to love others the way I have loved you?**

Back to our friend Walt (who by this time had become Laura) — after his encounter with the first pastor... a number of years later, he ended up having lunch with another pastor... and in this meeting Walt said, “Listen, if all you’re going to do is try and change me, I’m not interested in meeting with you.” You know what the pastor said? “It’s not my job to change you. I’m going to love you. It’s up to God to change you.” Walt will share his story with us when he’s here, but he ended up surrendering His life to Jesus... he gained enormous clarity on who GOD says he is, God delivered him, He’s since remarried and has helped over 10,000+ people who are struggling with gender identity.

You know what made the difference for him? Someone seeing beyond the pain and trauma he was trying to solve from outside-in — **and saw Walt how God sees Walt.**

Do you love people like that? Do you love your enemies like that? Do you love those that are different than you like that? Not condemning, not scornful, not hatred, not anger... but self-sacrificing curiosity and love?

Because that is what it looks like **to follow Jesus, be changed by Jesus, and live on mission with Jesus.** Because when you look at Jesus... *it’s living like this that caused the religious leaders to kill Him.*

At the end of our passage there’s the little line that Jesus says that is so profound... He says...

Luke 7:47
“But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

The reality is, we're all the one with the 5-million-dollar debt. There's not one follower of Jesus that's been forgiven little. We've all been forgiven of a debt that we could never repay even over 1,000 lifetimes. If you have no love toward your neighbor, love for "the other," love toward those that are different, even love for your enemy, *it's a sign that you don't truly understand how much YOU'VE been forgiven.*

We're going to end today by recentering ourselves again on the beauty of the gospel and the forgiveness of sin that's been made available to every single one of us through the finished work of Christ on the cross. This morning we're going to take communion together. Because this is what love looks like.

May we remain enthralled and overwhelmed by what it cost Jesus Christ to welcome us in. May He give us the love, the joy, the patience, the longsuffering, the vision to see and love others the way He does.

Discussion Questions

1. What were the differences in the way the Woman and the Pharisee treated Jesus?
2. What does it mean that "there are no caveats" in Jesus' command to love?
3. Do you know of anyone in your life that is struggling with gender identity? What is your relationship with them? Does this message change the way you look at them?
4. Do you know anyone who is angrily anti-church, anti-Bible, anti-Jesus? What is your relationship with them? Does this message change the way you look at them?
5. Who else has God placed in your life, who is "not like you"? Does this message change the way you look at them?
6. Discuss Luke 7:47, "But he who is forgiven little, loves little."
7. What opportunities do you have to love others the way Christ loves you?
8. What will you commit to do with your time, focus, and grace that requires intentionality?

NOTES