

# LUKE

## Chapter 7

### *The Faith of the Centurion*

**After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. 3 When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy to have you do this for him, 5 for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.” 6 And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. 8 For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” 9 When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” 10 And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.**

Luke moves from the Sermon on the Plain to further demonstrations that Jesus is the eschatological prophet. The next unit, 7:1–50, opens with a summary statement about Jesus’ teaching coming to an end and his movement into Capernaum (7:1), a significant locale for his miracles (4:23, 31–44). (Another summary statement in 8:1–3 begins the next unit.) There is a reminder of the beginning in Nazareth in the Isaiah citation and the beatitude in 7:22–23. (CC p. 302)

The major characters of this section come from the fringes of Palestinian society: a Gentile centurion, a widow, John the Baptist and his disciples, and a sinful woman. All manner of persons, from various levels of society, appear as the observers of Jesus’ ministry: the leaders of the Jews (7:3), the crowds following Jesus into Nain (7:11), the crowds attending the funeral of the widow’s son (7:12), the disciples of John the Baptist (7:18–23), the crowds that heard the teaching of Jesus (7:24), and the Pharisees who invited him to dinner (7:36). Thus, by the end of the section, Jesus has performed miracles and taught about himself so that the acclamation of the people rings true for Luke’s hearers: “A great prophet has been raised up among us” and “God has visited his people” (7:16). (CC p. 303)

**7:1** *hearing of the people* – ἀκοάς—ἀκοή is the faculty, act, or organ of hearing, “ears” or “hearing” (cf. Acts 17:20; 28:26). See comments at 3:1–20; 5:1; and 6:20–49 at the Sermon on the Plain on a “hearer of the Word” as a technical term for a catechumen. (CC p. 301)

The introduction to the section is significant: “After he had brought to completion all his words in the hearing of the people” (7:1). He said what he wanted to say, and they heard and understood the hardness of his words. The antecedent of the phrase “all his words” (πάντα τὰ ῥήματα αὐτοῦ) is the Sermon on the Plain (6:20–49); this emphasizes the significance of Jesus’ teaching in relation to his miracles. (CC p. 303)

*entered Capernaum* – Capernaum had become our Lord’s place of residence. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

**7:2** *centurion had a servant*. The centurion was probably a member of Herod Antipas’s forces, which were organized in Roman fashion, ordinarily in companies of 100 men. Roman centurions referred to in the NT showed characteristics to be admired (e.g., Ac 10:2; 23:17–18; 27:43). This centurion showed genuine concern for his slave, and he was admired by the Jews, who spoke favorably of him even though he was a Gentile (see vv. 5, 9). (CSB)

*servant* – δούλος—“Slave” (instead of “servant”) indicates that this person was completely indentured to his master. Slaves in the NT period were not mistreated as a rule, and this person is considered a valuable member of the household. (CC p. 301)

The section begins with two similar miracles with different accents: the Gentile centurion’s slave is at the point of death, but Jesus’ word heals the slave. The widow’s son is dead, and Jesus raises him to show that he has authority over death. These two miracles are part of a series in which Jesus will demonstrate his compassion toward fallen humanity by releasing people from their diseases (7:1–10), from death (7:11–17), from demon possession (7:21–22; cf. 4:33–37, 40–41), and from their sins (7:36–50; cf. 5:17–26). (CC p. 303)

The centurion was concerned for the servant as a person rather than as property. (TLSB)

**7:3-5** As one familiar with Jewish faith and practice, this official concluded that a pious Jew like Jesus would feel discomfort or even offense at being approached by a Gentile like himself. Instead, he asked some of his influential Jewish friends to intercede. (TLSB)

**7:3** *heard about Jesus* – The centurion and Jesus are the major participants in the story, with Jewish elders as intermediaries and the slave as the object of healing. A Roman centurion was in charge of a hundred soldiers, and there were sixty centurions in a legion. Centurions were career soldiers responsible for the discipline and administration of those under their authority. They were well paid and their position in Roman society was held in high regard. (Two other centurions are significant figures in Luke-Acts: the centurion at the cross, who is the first in the gospel to declare that Jesus is a righteous man (23:47), and Cornelius at the beginning of the Gentile mission (Acts 10–11). The centurion in this miracle has slaves and is wealthy enough to build a synagogue. His association with the synagogue might classify him as a God-fearer, a Gentile who was attracted to the teaching and worship life of the Jews without formally converting to Judaism. (CC p. 304)

*elders of the Jews*. Highly respected Jews of the community, though not necessarily rulers of the synagogue. They were willing to come and plead for the centurion. In Matthew’s account (Mt 8:5–13) the centurion speaks with Jesus himself, while in Luke’s account he speaks with Jesus through his friends. (CSB)

This refers to an official leadership group, like “members of the council,” the council of the Jews in Capernaum or of the synagogue. The elders “represented” one of the three groups on the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, along with Pharisees and Sadducees. (CC p. 304)

*come and heal* – διασώση—“Save” (instead of “heal”) accents the holistic ministry of Jesus to both body and soul, and the correlation between the two (cf. 5:20–26). In this case, the slave’s life is saved by the healing of his illness. The centurion’s faith in Jesus led the centurion to Jesus—for salvation for the slave and for the centurion himself. (CC p. 301)

In Mt 8:5–13, the centurion himself comes to Jesus, while Luke reports that the centurion spoke to Jesus through elders of the Jews (Lk 7:4) and friends (7:6) whom he sent. Perhaps the centurion first sent delegations and then followed in person, or Matthew may have omitted the mediating role of the messengers since they spoke for the centurion. “Either view will remove the apparent discrepancy” (W. Arndt, *Luke*, 201). (CC p. 301)

**7:4** *pleaded...earnestly* – παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν σπουδαίως—The imperfect implies continuous, urgent pleading. (CC p. 302)

*he is worthy* – ἄξιός ἐστιν ὃ παρέξιη τοῦτο—The centurion’s worthiness is emphasized by the qualitative-consecutive relative clause “which designate[s] a sort of consequence resulting from some quality”. Here the quality is worthiness—such worthiness that Jesus will do right to grant the request. (CC p. 302)

**7:5** *he loves our nation* – ἀγαπᾷ—The present tense implies that this is a continuing quality of his personality, as in the beatitudes (6:27–28). In Luke 7 the love of the centurion for Israel (7:5) is balanced by the love of the sinful woman for Jesus (7:47). Both the centurion and the sinful woman express their love in their deeds. (CC p.302)

*built us our synagogue* – Archaeologists patiently digging from 1969–81 under one of two synagogues in Capernaum uncovered an earlier synagogue that they believe was the one built by this Roman centurion. The find adds to our knowledge of synagogue worship in the NT era and provides confirmation of the historicity of Luke’s gospel, even down to the detail of the anecdotal comment made by the Jewish elders about the centurion (“he himself built the synagogue for us”) in order to illustrate their assertion (“he is worthy ... for he loves our people” [7:4–5]). “The researchers ... discovered the remains of the synagogue constructed by the Roman centurion (cf. Luke 7:5) atop a very ancient dwelling.” (CC p. 304)

The centurion had shown great commitment to the Jewish faith by paying for the construction of the local house of worship. He stopped short of becoming a full convert to Judaism, which would have created obstacles to his service in the Roman army. (TLSB)

The account is framed by references to the slave’s sickness and his healing. In between, the evangelist teaches the hearer about Jesus’ word and faith. At the heart of the passage is trust in the authoritative word of Jesus, which brings healing. Also important is the theme of Gentile-Jewish relationships, for it is a Gentile who expresses such trust. The Jewish elders (πρεσβυτέρους τῶν Ἰουδαίων), representing Israel, commend the centurion to Jesus. He “loves our people” and so is worthy (7:4–5). (CC p. 304)

**7:6** *went with them* – Strange disagreement! The Jewish elders declare that he is worthy, the centurion says that he is not worthy. They had intimated in their petition that it would be best for Jesus to come, and He, accordingly, went with them. (Kretzmann)

*sent friends* – φίλους—The double delegation expands the witnesses of the miracle. (CC p. 302)

The irony here is that Jewish leaders are sent by a Roman centurion—a Gentile—to Jesus, a Jewish teacher. Yet the greater irony is that Jesus perceives in this Gentile centurion a faith greater than that of anyone in Israel. The verb διασώζω, “save,” (7:3) suggests the entirety of

Jesus' work of healing bodies and forgiving sins as well. Through faith, salvation comes to the centurion and his household. (CC p. 304)

The centurion sent a second delegation because his sense of unworthiness deepened. Whether he considered himself unclean as a Gentile is not stated. Our whole attention is directed to his humility. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*Lord* – The centurion recognizes Jesus' authority, even over life-threatening illness. (TLSB)

*I am not worthy...under my roof* – The centurion shows awareness that he stands outside of God's covenant people and is considered a "Gentile sinner" by most Jews. Chrys: "Though having such great faith, he still accounted himself to be unworthy. Christ however, signifying that he was worthy to have Him enter into his house, did much greater things, marvelling at him, and proclaiming him, and giving more than he had asked. For he came indeed seeking for his servant health of body, but went away, having received a kingdom" (NPNF 1 10:180). (TLSB)

ἵνα ὑπὸ τὴν στέγην μου εἰσέλθῃς—The centurion is sensitive to the Jewish purity code, according to which it would defile a Jew to enter the house of a Gentile. (CC p. 302)

Still another irony is that the Jewish elders consider the centurion to be "worthy" because of his love and works (7:4–5), while the centurion considers himself to be most unworthy; he repeats his unworthiness in 7:6–7. In the language of John the Baptist, he is repentant, with love and good works as fruit (3:8). (He is similar to the people described in 7:29, not those in 7:30.) Jesus has the last word of evaluation as he commends the centurion's faith in 7:9. (CC pp. 304-305)

*7:7 did not presume* – διὸ οὐδὲ ἑμαυτὸν ἠξίωσα πρὸς σὲ ἐλθεῖν—The centurion's opinion of his own unworthiness stands in contrast to the Jewish elders' opinion of him as worthy to receive Jesus' gracious healing action. (CC p. 302)

The centurion expresses his repentant faith. He respects the Jewish laws of purity that would prevent Jesus from coming to his Gentile house. He is unworthy to receive such a visitation. (CC p. 305)

This reveals the centurion's respect for Jesus' divine power and purity. Had Jesus entered the centurion's Gentile house, most fellow Jews would have been aghast, taking this involvement as defiling (cf. Ac. 10:28; 11:3). (TLSB)

*but say the word* – ἀλλὰ εἰπὲ λόγῳ, καὶ ἰαθήτω ὁ παῖς μου—Here the word of Jesus precedes the miracle of healing. (CC p. 302)

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Therefore, he will be content with a word. For he recognizes the authority of Jesus over demons, disease, and death. He trusts Jesus. And thus he loves "Israel." He confesses his faith: "But say with a word, and my servant must be healed" (7:17). The centurion's humility in the presence of Jesus and his understanding of the power of Jesus' word to heal reveal that he understands who Jesus is and what is able to do. The word of Jesus is the vehicle of his miraculous power. The presence of God's salvation is in Jesus and is communicated through his word. The hearer sees in the centurion's faith the proper relationship between Jesus' teaching and his healing. (CC p. 305)

**7:8** *man set under authority* – εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν τασσόμενος/ἔχων ὑπ’ ἐμαυτὸν στρατιώτας—  
These two phrases are coordinate and describe the centurion’s situation: he understands what it means to be in a chain of command, to obey orders and give them. (CC p. 302)

He is stressing his inferiority. But despite that inferiority when he commands soldiers or slave, his word causes immediate obedience. The commands have a military snap to them. Note that the first and third commands are aorist. And note that all three responses are present tense denoting continued action. As Lenski states, this verse is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If he as an inferior, a mere human, under authority, can accomplish so much merely by speaking words, how much more can the Lord command all illness, near to death, cease and health be restored! Lenski is worth quoting here: “The greatness of the centurion’s faith appears in its HUMBILITY. The man, though a high military officer and great benefactor of the Jews, deems himself utterly unworthy. In the second place, this man’s faith centers in the WORD of Jesus, the very thing that Jesus had so much difficulty in attaining among the Jews. Of himself, merely from what this man had heard about Jesus, without further experience and teaching, he shows absolute trust in Jesus’ word and in its power. Thirdly, and as the basis of this humble confidence in the mere word, the centurion has proper conception of the EXALTED PERSON OF JESUS.” (Exegetical Notes – Bultmann)

**7:9** *he marveled at him*. The amazement of Jesus is only mentioned twice, here because of belief and at Nazareth because of unbelief (Mk 6:6). (CSB)

Verb used of Jesus only at this event (concerning remarkable faith) and in Mk 6:6 (in reaction to His hometown’s lack of faith). (TLSB)

And only once again do we read that Jesus praised faith as great, that of the Canaanite (Gentile) woman in Matthew 15:28. By the way, this verb clearly shows Jesus’ humanity. His reaction is very human. But the fact that He realizes the greatness of his faith indicates His divinity, His omniscience. Jesus is indicating its utter genuineness, not mere size. Read Luke 17:6 where faith is compared to a mustard seed. What is indicated is not its small size but its genuineness. Jesus is not saying that He did not find faith in Israel but He is saying that this Gentile’s faith is the greatest, even greater than that found in Israel. (Exegetical Notes – Bultmann)

ἐθαύμασεν—The word for Jesus’ amazement is usually used for those who respond to Jesus’ miracles. Here Jesus is the one amazed at a Gentile’s faith. (CC p. 302)

*even in Israel* – ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ—This phrase recalls that Elijah and Elisha were rejected by Israel and were sent by God to minister to Gentiles (4:25, 27), as Jesus is doing here. (CC p. 302)

Sounds anew the theme of salvation for the nations. (TLSB)

The significance of this pericope for the mission of the early church is both great and obvious. The breakthrough for the Gentile mission and the Jewish-Gentile problem in Acts comes through Peter’s witness to Cornelius, another centurion. For the first-century Lukan hearer, to deal with this problem was at the top of the church’s agenda (cf. Acts 15) and was one of the purposes for the writing of Acts. The references to the widow of Zarephath and Naaman in Jesus’ sermon in Nazareth (4:26–27) and Jesus’ healing of a Gentile centurion’s slave here both foreshadow the church’s mission to Gentiles. Faith in Jesus, rather than affiliation with ethnic Israel, is the key to receiving salvation. (CC p. 305)

*have I found* – εὑρον—A “complexive (constative) aorist” that indicates completed action “regarded as a whole.” (CC p. 302)

*faith* – The key to God’s kingdom is faith (trust) in Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

**7:10** *servant well* – The Greek word for “well” signifies being in good health. Not only is the servant saved from death, he is healed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 3)

**7:1–10** Jesus reveals His authority over every threatening foe, even death, by healing a centurion’s servant. How often we try everything else before turning to the Lord when we find ourselves in similar desperate straits! Through regular worship, devotional time, and the reception of the Sacrament, God’s Spirit brings us into a deeper and livelier trust in Jesus. • “May Thy rich grace impart Strength to my fainting heart; My zeal inspire! As Thou hast died for me, Oh, may my love to Thee Pure, warm, and changeless be, A living fire!” Amen. (LSB 702:2) (TLSB)

*Jesus Raises a Widow’s Son*

**11** Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. **12** As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. **13** And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, **“Do not weep.”** **14** Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, **“Young man, I say to you, arise.”** **15** And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. **16** Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, **“A great prophet has arisen among us!”** and **“God has visited his people!”** **17** And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

**7:11** *soon afterward* – By beginning the story “and it came to pass [καὶ ἐγένετο] soon afterward” (7:11), Luke connects this pericope with the previous one and signals that a significant event is about to happen. The raising of the dead is *the miracle* that demonstrates that Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT prophetic hope and that with him the messianic age has dawned. OT resurrections occurred in 1 Ki 17:22–24; 2 Ki 4:32–37; 13:21; and OT promises of resurrection include Is 25:6–9; 26:19; Ezek 37:1–14; Hos 6:2–3; Jonah; Dan 12:2–3; Pss 16:9–11; 23:6; 73:24. Luke is developing his prophet Christology. The structure of the story is simple, emphasizing the details of the miracle and showing the compassion—and power—of Jesus. The Creator has come in the flesh to re-create his fallen creatures. (CC p. 307)

WENT TO A TOWN – ἐπορεύθη ... συνεπορεύοντο – These words are part of Luke’s journey motif. Jesus is making his way toward his ultimate destiny in Jerusalem. The disciples are participants in this journey. (CC p. 306)

Nain is a village about six miles to the southeast of Nazareth. A large crowd accompanies Him – an indication of His great popularity (or at least celebrity) at this early point in His ministry. (Concordia Pulpit Commentary – Volume 8, Part 3)

**7:12** *behold* – This was no mere chance encounter. “Jesus, the Prince of Life, meets death, carrying away his helpless prey. Looked at thus, the scene becomes dramatic in a supreme way” (Lenski). The Greek idiom *kai idou* (“and behold!”) used to introduce this clause (but not translated in the NIV) is designated to catch the reader’s attention. Something important or unexpected is about to occur! (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

*only son* – As usual, Luke provides the framework of the place, the participants, and the time. A great crowd is following Jesus, and it meets up with the crowd of the city that is accompanying the funeral procession. Thus a great number of people witnessed this miracle, along with the disciples of Jesus. This miracle has great impact on the rest of Jesus' Galilean ministry. The Lukan eye for detail draws the hearer into emotional involvement in the story and highlights the significance of the miracle. The one who died was the *only-begotten* son of the woman, and she is a widow. Her son gave her some security within Israelite society, but without him she is bereft. Everyone else would likely ignore her, but Jesus does not. Luke describes well the scene that evokes Jesus' compassion. (CC pp. 307-308)

The woman's situation was particularly desperate. Her husband had already died, and now her only son as well. Her future was uncertain. Cf 1Tm 5. (TLSB)

Lenski says, "this is the stereotypical ancient example of the dire vulnerability – a widow whose only son has died. Since no family connection remained, such a woman's life expectancy was extremely short. In antiquity the closest emotional bond was often between mother and son, not husband and wife; a son was a mother's lifelong protector and her ultimate social security." (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

The Torah says God is particularly concerned about widows (Deut. 19:18), and stipulates some provisions for them (Ex. 22:21-23; Lev. 22:13; Deut. 14:29; 16:11 regarding the "Feast of Weeks," which is Pentecost; 16:14; 24:17-21; 26:12-13). The book of Ruth shows that at least some of these were practiced. The OT Messianic expectations included God visiting the poor and helpless, and widows were among the most destitute. The care of widows would become a central concern of the early church (Acts 6:1-7). We remember too that while on the cross Jesus made provisions for His own mother, since she apparently was a widow (John 19:26-27). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

**7:13 had compassion** – "The Lord had compassion ..." (7:13). This miracle is the first occasion on which Luke, as narrator, calls Jesus "Lord" (ὁ κύριος). The word for compassion (ἐσπλαγχνίσθη), used also in the Benedictus (1:78), is a graphic one that if taken literally would mean the complete outpouring of the inward parts. Some OT Hebrew words for compassion or mercy, such as רַחַם, מִיָּדָה, and מִיָּדָה, have a similar etymology. Here, as in the other Lukan passages, the word "compassion" denotes an outpouring of mercy. The Good Samaritan will show this kind of compassion in 10:33, as will the father of the prodigal son in 15:20. Compassion is an attribute of Jesus as he heals and releases from bondage—his programmatic mission according to 4:18–19. Compassion is the motive for the miracle. Miracles show that the inbreaking messianic reign of God is one of grace. Miracles testify to the presence of God for salvation. (CC p. 308)

Gk *splagchnizomai*. Lit, "his gut moved." Jesus experienced the same gut reaction as we sometimes do in sad situations. (TLSB)

The text does not indicate whether the widow had any prior knowledge of Jesus. Drawn to her by compassion, Jesus took the initiative to help without being asked. Contrast this to the miracle immediately preceding when the centurion begged Jesus to heal his servant. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

This emotion is ascribed to Jesus on eight occasions (Mt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mk. 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; Lk. 7:13). His gut-wrenching compassion at the sight of people's needs caused Him to

do such things as touch and heal lepers and blind men, feed hungry masses, cast out demons, and heal throngs of sick people. Henri Nouwen observes about the Greek word for compassion, “It is related to the Hebrew word for compassion, which refers to the womb of Yahweh. Compassion is such a deep, central, and powerful emotion in Jesus that it can only be described as a movement in the womb of God. There all the divine tenderness and gentleness lies hidden...There all feelings, emotions, and passions are one in divine love. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

*do not weep* – μή κλαίῃ—μή with the present imperative signifies here a prohibition of action already in progress. Her grief is understandable, but Jesus’ command to stop begins the miraculous removal of her grief. Jesus’ command in 8:52 is identical except plural. Contrast these two prohibitions of weeping with Jesus’ command to weep in 23:28. (CC p. 306)

**7:14 touched** – By touching the casket, Jesus risks becoming ritually unclean, instead of being defiled, Jesus cleanses and heals. The power of holiness and of life is in him. He brings purity to the unclean situation, not vice versa. This miracle fulfills 7:22 and OT passages such as Is 26:19 and Dan 12:2. Jesus releases people from demon possession (4:33–37), sickness (7:1–10), sin (5:17–26), and now from death. “In this healing, unlike the preceding one, no mention is made of anyone’s faith. This shows that Jesus’ healings ultimately were not dependent on the faith of the person being healed but on his own power and might. By his word alone the sick were healed and the dead raised.” (CC p. 308)

Provocative because it would render Jesus ceremonially unclean. (TLSB)

Interrupting a funeral was a blatant breach of Jewish law and custom; touching the bier exposed Jesus to a day’s uncleanness (Num. 19:21-22); touching the corpse exposed him to a week’s uncleanness (cf., Numbers 5:2-3; 19:11-20). Only the closest to the deceased were expected to expose themselves to corpse-uncleanness, the severest form of ritual impurity in Judaism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

*I say to arise* – Jesus is indeed the resurrection and the life (Jn 11:25). (TLSB)

Ylvisaker states, Jesus claims and wields authority that belongs to God alone – authority over life and death! He only needs to command it, and life will be restored. So shall the same Lord speak to all the departed at the sound of the trumpet (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16).” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

*bier*. The man was probably carried in an open coffin, suggested by Jewish custom and the fact that he sat up in response to Jesus’ command. This is the first of three instances of Jesus’ raising someone from the dead, the others being Jairus’s daughter (8:40–56) and Lazarus (Jn 11:38–44). (CSB)

**7:15 sat up** – ἀνεκάθισεν ... ἤρξατο λαλεῖν— The active verbs indicate that the young man is indeed alive. (CC p. 306)

*began to speak* – Irrefutable proof that he was alive. (TLSB)

The raising of the widow’s son at Nain comes at a climactic juncture in Luke’s Galilean narrative. A resurrection is the only kind of prophetic miracle that Jesus has not done, and it is the ultimate statement that he is the final, eschatological prophet and is therefore the Messiah. Jesus’ citation of Is 61:1–2 in Lk 4:18–19 implies release also from the bondage of death, and after he does

release from death there can be no doubt that his authority extends over all creation. Jesus reiterates this in the next passage (7:22), where he summarizes his ministry by quoting prophecies by Isaiah that he has fulfilled. John's disciples will report to John that this is true. (CC p. 308)

*Jesus gave him back to his mother* – ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ—The same phrase occurs in the LXX in 1 Ki 17:23 (καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ), and 2 Ki 4:36 is similar in thought. The context of 1 Kings 17 is almost the same as this pericope in Luke: Elijah has raised the widow's son. This is another Lukan detail that ties Jesus' miracles to the OT. Jesus' compassion is demonstrated in his giving the young man to his mother to support and care for her. Cf. Jesus' provision for his own mother in Jn 19:26–27. (CC pp. 306-307)

Cf 1Ki 17:17–24, where Elijah restores the life of a widow's son. Jesus is the long-expected prophet greater than Elijah. Cf 9:28–35. (TLSB)

**7:16** *all* – πάντας—Everyone was in awe at this miracle, including the crowd following Jesus and the funeral crowd. (CC p. 307)

*fear seized them* – They weren't simply "awestruck" although that meaning of "fear" is implied here, too. They felt genuine *fright* at the sight of a dead man coming back to life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

Understandably terrified and awestruck at first. (TLSB)

*glorified God* – Offered praise and worship. (TLSB)

*a great prophet* – The crowd reacts in fear and glorifies God. This fear is human awe in the presence of God himself, who alone has power over death. But what do they believe about Jesus? "A great prophet [προφήτης μέγας] has been raised up" (by God; 7:16). But they do not seem to understand that this same prophet must be crucified and be raised on the third day. They have not understood the psalms (e.g., Ps 16:9–11) and Is 52:13–53:12 about God's suffering, righteous one. If Jesus is *only* a teacher and miracle worker, the result is a theology of glory that imagines that Jesus has come for the sole purpose of alleviating human suffering. Only when they understand that Jesus must also suffer rejection to the point of crucifixion will they be able to voice the full messianic confession, the theology of the cross. The crowds acclaim Jesus as the great prophet and celebrate a visitation from God. The Christian *hearer* knows what kind of prophet Jesus is: a teacher, a miracle worker, *and* the one who will be rejected, crucified, and raised—God's final, eschatological prophet. Cf. Lk 4:14–15; 4:37; 5:15, 17; 6:17–18. (CC p. 309)

Because the coming Messiah was sometimes referred to as "the (coming) Prophet," the crowd's reaction to Jesus is stronger than may first appear. Cf Dt 18:15–20; Lk 9:7–9, 24:19; Jn 1:21; 7:40; esp Ac 3:22–23; 7:37. (TLSB)

They recognize Jesus as a "great prophet" but obviously not as THE Prophet (Deut. 18). *Ev* means "among" both in the sense of place and source. *Epeskepsato* (visited) is always used in the NT of gracious visitation and rarely in the LXX of a visitation of judgment. *IB* (exposition, not exegesis) remarks: "One remark emphasizes the human person; the other, the divine event. One answers the question "Who is this person?"; the other "What has God done?" But the commentators are unanimous in observing that these people did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. Hendriksen aptly remarks at this point: "Jesus performed His marvelous deeds of power and compassion not because of the recognition He received, but in

spite of the fact that He failed to receive what was His due. This enhances His greatness. It causes His glory to shine forth even more brilliantly.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

7:17 *report about* – Such news naturally spread rapidly by word of mouth. (TLSB)

The crowds, the religious and political authorities, Jesus’ disciples – and every other person – would soon have to address the question: “What do you say about Jesus?” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 8, Part 3)

7:11–17 Out of compassion for a widow who lost her only son, Jesus raises the young man back to life. Tragedy knows no bounds, striking people of every nation, age, and station in life. Thank God for His great compassion, that Jesus is the Savior for all people. The Gospel shows He has conquered every foe for us, even death and the grave. • “For us He rose from death again; For us He went on high to reign; For us He sent His Spirit here To guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.” Amen. (LSB 544:6) (TLSB)

*Jesus and John the Baptist*

**18 The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, 19 calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” 20 And when the men had come to him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’” 21 In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. 22 And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. 23 And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” 24 When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. 26 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is he of whom it is written, “‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’ 28 I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” 29 (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, ] having been baptized with the baptism of John, 30 but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.) 31 “To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, “‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’ 33 For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ 34 The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ 35 Yet wisdom is justified by all her children.”**

7:18 *John’s disciples*. Despite John the Baptist’s imprisonment, his disciples kept in contact with him and continued his ministry. (CSB)

Followers of John the Baptist. Cf Ac 19:1–7 regarding the persistence of John’s appeal, even after his death. (TLSB)

Many miles away from the event which took place in Nain a prisoner heard reports of what was happening in Galilee. The prisoner was John the Baptist. Herod Antipas had locked him up (3:20) in the fortress Machaerus, located on a solitary peak on the east side of the Dead Sea. Its ruins can still be seen today. (PBC)

John is in prison (3:20). John's disciples tell him about "all these things" (περὶ πάντων τούτων; 7:18). The antecedent of this phrase is crucial. It could simply refer to the raising of the widow's son at Nain and the healing of the centurion's slave. But is this all that John's disciples would have told him about what Jesus has said and done? More likely, it extends back to the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry in Nazareth and everything that has happened since (from 4:14 to 7:17). (CC pp. 313-314)

**7:19** *shall we look for another* – John had announced the coming of the Christ, but now he himself had been languishing in prison for months, and the work of Jesus had not brought the results John apparently expected. His disappointment was natural. He wanted reassurance—and perhaps also wanted to urge Jesus to further action. (CSB)

Much debate has raged whether John doubts that Jesus is the Messiah or only his disciples doubt. A straightforward reading suggests that not only John's disciples but also John himself questioned Jesus' Messiahship and that he sent his disciples to Jesus with the question for the sake of his own understanding as well as for the sake of the understanding of his disciples. Indeed, in the gospel all human observers of the ministry of Jesus struggle with the way in which Jesus demonstrates that He is the "Anointed One." In his first sermon, Jesus announced that he was present to set the captives free. Who is more captive than John the Baptist as he sits in prison (3:20) because of his ministry as the forerunner to Jesus? John was raised up to proclaim, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). But the progress or manner of Jesus' ministry has not been what John expected. (CC p. 314)

**7:20** *John the Baptist* – Because his ministry included the administration of a religious washing (Baptism), John became known as the "Baptizer" or "Baptist." Cf 3:1–22. (TLSB)

**7:21** *healed many* – Jesus either immediately began to work the messianic miracles before their eyes, or He pointed to the result of healing that He had been doing. (CC p. 312)

By highlighting the miracles, Luke affirms that the OT is being fulfilled. Thus the teaching of Jesus is certified as messianic. When John's disciples see the works of Jesus, they should interpret messianically both the OT prophecies *and* the teaching and preaching of Jesus since his sermon in Nazareth (4:16–30). (CC p. 314)

**7:22** *report to John what you have seen and heard*. In answer, Jesus pointed to his healing and life-restoring miracles. He did not give promises but clearly observable evidence—evidence that reflected the predicted ministry of the Messiah. (CSB)

ἃ εἶδετε καὶ ἠκούσατε—The miracles and teaching reinforce each other, providing two witnesses, as it were. Here, Jesus points to the miracles first (ἃ εἶδετε) and then to his teaching (ἠκούσατε). Matthew, in contrast, reverses them (Mt 11:4; ἃ ἀκούετε καὶ βλέπετε). Cf. Lk 2:20. (CC p. 312)

These are the same miracles Jesus promised in his Nazareth sermon (4:18–19). Now, however, the miracles are more than promises because Jesus has actually been performing them for some time, as recorded in the gospel from 4:31 on. (CC p. 314)

*dead are raised up* – νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται—This statement would have had great impact because of the previous passage, where the widow’s son at Nain was raised from the dead. (CC p. 312)

*the poor have good news preached to them.* In Jesus’ review of his works, he used an ascending scale of impressive deeds, ending with the dead raised and the good news preached to the poor. In this way, Jesus reminded John that these were the things predicted of the Messiah in the Scriptures (see Isa 29:18–21; 35:5–6; 61:1; see also Lk 4:18). (CSB)

**7:23** *who is not offended by me.* Jesus did not want discouragement and doubt to ensnare John. (CSB)

μακάριος— This beatitude is Christological; it speaks of blessedness for those who do not reject God’s saving work in Jesus. (CC p. 312)

Lk 7:23 anticipates the rest of this passage by introducing the theme of this section: the acceptance and rejection of Jesus and John. What is critical to Luke (and Matthew!) is Christology: What does one think of Jesus? This is the question Jesus will put to the disciples in 9:18, 20. At this point, responses must be on the basis of the first phase of Christology, Jesus messianic teaching and miracles. Blessed is he who is not scandalized at Jesus! The issue is Christology. (CC pp. 314-315)

There are, at this point, two possible stumbling blocks that could cause observers to be scandalized. First, the offense could come simply from identifying Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah prophesied in the OT. The miracles and teaching of Jesus identify Him as this prophet/Messiah. But not all are willing to acknowledge this. The people of His hometown, Nazareth, were offended because they thought they knew Him too well for Him to be the Messiah (4:22). (CC p. 315)

Second, the scandal could come because at His first advent Jesus reveals Himself primarily as a Messiah of mercy, compassion, and forgiveness (ἄφεσις – forgiveness, release – occurs twice in 4:18-19), and not one of vengeance. He has come to serve, to seek, and to save. His ministry now is not to execute judgment, but to absorb God’s eschatological wrath. This again goes back to Jesus’ citation of Isaiah in the Nazareth sermon. Curiously, He cut it off in mid-verse; he drew on Is. 29:18-19, He did not quote Is. 29:20, “For the ruthless shall come to nought and the scoffer cease, and all who watch to do evil shall be cut off.” By not citing these phrases, Jesus was saying something profound about the chief emphasis of His own ministry. Perhaps Jesus omitted those very aspects that were foremost in the expectations of John and his disciples. Many expected the Messiah to come in wrath to execute vengeance upon those they considered to be the enemies of God and Israel. Instead, Jesus comes in solidarity with all human sinners and bears in Himself the vengeance and wrath of God against His enemies, including us and our sin. That is why Jesus’ ministry is filled with miracles of forgiveness and release for those who are in bondage. Blessed is he who sees that Jesus is the Coming One who brings mercy, compassion and forgiveness! (CC p. 315)

Lit, “scandalized,” refers to rejecting Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. (TLSB)

**7:24-28** John is the hinge between the phases of salvation history. The period of OT Israel concludes with John’s ministry, and the new era of Jesus commences with the preaching of John. John was the last of the OT prophets, but he is the greatest prophet in that he announces the new era of salvation that comes in Christ. John’s announcement of the new era conforms to the

parables of 5:27-39, but John as a historical figure (born of a woman) is not part of the new era, since “even the most insignificant member of the kingdom ranks above the messenger who prepared the way for it.” Yet as a believer who, despite his doubts here, most likely died in the faith, he is part of the holy catholic church comprised of OT and NT believers alike. (CC pp 315-316)

**7:24** *What did you go ... to see?* John was not a weak messenger, swayed by the pressures of human opinion. On the contrary, he was a true prophet. (CSB)

A “yes man,” one who changes position with every shift in public opinion, unlike John who as stable and strong. (TLSB)

**7:25** *a man dressed in soft clothing* – John’s impact owed nothing to position or associations. Rather, his message drew people out the wilderness. (TLSB)

Had they gone out into the wilderness to find a man clothed in soft garments? There is a place for such people; they may be found among those that live in the houses of kings. There those living in luxury and clothed with splendid apparel properly belonged. But John was a poor preacher of repentance. The luxuries of life had no appeal for him; he spurned the delicate side of wealth. (Kretzmann)

**7:26** *more than a prophet.* John was the unique prophet sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. (CSB)

But now came the main question: Had they gone out to see a prophet? Then indeed they had not been disappointed. For John was a prophet, and greater than the prophets of old. (Kretzmann)

John is in the same category as all the OT prophets. (CC p. 312)

**7:27** *about whom it is written* – John prepares Jesus’ way, as Mal 3:1 predicted after the pattern of the exodus (Ex 23:20). In Luke’s geographical perspective, the way of Jesus is the way to Jerusalem and to the cross. Thus in this word of Jesus about John, Luke introduces and gives OT backing for the second phase of his Christology, the rejection of the Messiah, especially at the end of his journey. Just as Lk 7:18–23 reflected 4:14–21 as regards teaching and healing, now 7:24–28 parallels 4:24–30 in alluding to the rejection aspect of the prophet Christology. This sets the stage for 7:31–35, where the people of this generation reject Wisdom’s children, John and Jesus. John’s question as to whether Jesus is “the Coming One” receives a first-phase answer of wondrous deeds. But John (and everyone) is invited to recognize that since John prepared the way for the messianic new era, rejection is fundamental to both his ministry and that of the Messiah. His present imprisonment (3:20) and pending martyrdom testify to this. John probably realized that his imprisonment would end in death, and John was struggling to reconcile that with Jesus’ promise that he would release those in bondage (4:18–19). (CC p. 316)

*my messenger* – Jesus quotes Mal 3:1 to define John’s role as herald announcing the advent of the Messiah and getting the people ready to receive Him. (TLSB)

*your way* – ἡν ὁδόν—This draws on two OT passages. The first is a historical description of how God prepared the way for the Israelites to travel to the Promised Land (Ex 23:20; cf. 13:21–22). The second (Mal 3:1) is patterned after the first but is a promise that God will prepare the way of the Messiah to journey (to Jerusalem) to accomplish the world’s salvation. This complements Luke’s journey motif and places John in its context. (CC p. 312)

**7:28** *born of a woman* – ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν—Namely, those of natural birth (cf. 1 Cor 11:8–12). This would include those from the OT era as well as the current one. (CC p. 312)

Reference to John’s humanity, though this might also be taken as a subtle contrast with Jesus, who was not merely born of a woman, but of a virgin. (TLSB)

*none is greater* – John was the last prophet under the old covenant. His surpassing greatness was his close connection to Jesus. He announced Christ’s advent, baptizing Him, and then preceded Him in a martyr’s death. So closely related were John and Jesus, in fact, that Herod got the two confused (9:7-0). (TLSB)

*one who is least in the kingdom of God.* Some, including Luther, understand Jesus as referring to Himself as “greater.” However, because the Spirit dwells in the heart of every Christian, making present the risen Jesus and imparting His resurrected life, even the Church’s rank-and-file believers enjoy privileges that exceed any bestowed under the old covenant. (TLSB)

ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ—Namely, those born of God (cf. Jn 1:12–13; 3:6), or to use the language of the kingdom, those who see that in Jesus the kingdom of God is present. This also would include those from OT times and from the NT age. John would be one of the least in the kingdom. (CC p. 312)

Note from Matthew 11:11 – To be in the kingdom of God is to be a bride. John was only a friend of the bridegroom or best man at the very most.

**7:29-30** Luke introduces a different perspective in verse 29-30, one that fits well into his Christology. Luke 7:29-30 is his editorial comment upon John the Baptist and the reaction of the people and religious authorities to the ministry of John. It expands on the prophet Christology of 7:11-17, showing that both John and Jesus follow in the train of rejected OT prophets like Elijah and Elisha (cf. 4:22-30). But the vital question at stake here is this: Who are the opponents of Jesus and who are his followers? Growing in the Pharisaic camp is an opinion of Jesus that will ultimately lead to charges resulting in his death. Luke’s editorial comments in 7:29–30 demonstrate the polarization that now exists between the religious authorities and the people. The ministry of John the Baptist is the litmus test that distinguishes between those who are now accepting and those who are now rejecting God’s plan of salvation in Jesus, whose way he prepared. (CC p. 316)

**7:29** *all the people* – These are those ordinary Israelites who live in the tradition of the OT and its messianic promises. The word *laos* “people,” often denotes the faithful remnant of Israel (see 1:68, 77; 18:43). These people see God’s salvation in Jesus breaking into the world. Among the people, the tax collectors in particular represent sinners who accept the forgiveness that Jesus is bringing. Throughout the gospel they will be models of the spiritually poor, receptive beggars. (CC p. 317)

Likely comments on the dynamics of the crowd’s reactions. (TLSB)

*declared God just* – To declare “God is righteous” means to agree – confess – that God is true and every person is false. Thus their submission to John’s baptism of repentance to the forgiveness of their sins is their confession that God is just or righteous and that God justifies the sinner by grace alone. (CC p. 317)

People were affirmed in their belief that God was behind John's message of judgment, repentance, and Baptism. (TLSB)

**7:30** *lawyers*. A designation used by Luke (see 10:25, 37; 11:45–46, 52; 14:3; see also Mt 22:35) for the “scribes” (the teachers of the law), most of whom were Pharisees. (CSB)

*rejected the purpose of God*. Tax collectors had shown their willingness to repent by accepting John's baptism, whereas the Pharisees showed their rejection of God's message by refusing to be baptized. (CSB)

Some who heard John still rejected salvation by refusing to acknowledge their sin and undergo Baptism. (TLSB)

ἠθέτησαν—This important phrase summarizes Luke's portrayal of Jesus' rejection. Rejection by the religious authorities during his Galilean ministry will lead to his rejection by them in his trials during his passion (cf. 23:5). A similar word in Jesus' first passion prediction conveyed this same notion of rejection (ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι in 9:22). (CC p. 313)

The Pharisees and the lawyers stand in contrast to the people and tax collectors. They represent Jesus' opposition outside Jerusalem and are hostile to both Jesus and John. They reject the “plan” of God because they reject John's role as precursor to the Messiah and His call to repentance. If they are consistent and they reject John, they will also reject Jesus. The evidence of their rejection is their unwillingness to submit to John's baptism, which is a refusal to repent of their sin and receive absolution. They deny that a baptism of repentance to the forgiveness of sins is something they themselves need. (CC p. 317)

εἰς ἑαυτούς—The Pharisees and lawyers take the position that this plan of God (John's baptism) is not *meant for them* (εἰς, “meant for,” with the accusative of person, as in 1 Pet 1:10. (CC p. 313)

**7:31** *to what then can I compare the people of this generation* – Lk 7:18–35 reaches its climax in this fourth section. A parable (7:31–32), its interpretation (7:33–34), and a concluding wisdom saying (7:35) bring the theme of this section to its goal: the vindication of God's plan in (John and) Jesus. Jesus continues his direct speech to the crowds (7:24), but his words pertain especially to those who reject John and himself (cf. λέγετε, “you say” [7:33–34]). (CC p. 318)

Those rejecting John the Baptist and opposing Jesus. (TLSB)

“This generation” (7:31) is used of people who exhibit some particular characteristic; the context determines what that characteristic is. Luke elsewhere describes “this generation” as “evil” (11:29), unrepentant (11:32), and responsible for the shed blood of all the prophets (11:50). In 9:41 Jesus addresses an “unbelieving and perverted generation.” This epitomizes the response to John and Jesus by including Pharisees, Sadducees, elders, lawyers, and the foremost men (πρώτοι; 19:47). (CC p. 318)

**7:32** *like children sitting in the marketplace*. People had rejected both John and Jesus, but for different reasons—like children who refuse to play either a joyful game or a mournful one. They would not associate with John when he followed the strictest of rules or with Jesus when he freely associated with all kinds of people. (CSB)

This dismissively compares the criticism of Jesus' opponents with the childish chatter heard on the street corner. (TLSB)

*sang a dirge...did not weep* – Proverbial saying directed at those who criticized both John for being too stern and Jesus for being too easygoing. They rejected both the Law's condemnation of their sin and the Gospel's mercy. (TLSB)

These are the religious leaders of Israel, who are demanding that John and Jesus perform in a certain way. Playing the flute and dancing are activities characteristic of a wedding, where there is rejoicing over the presence of the bridegroom and his bride (5:34). Dirges and mourning are appropriate at a funeral, where one weeps over the fatal result of sin. (CC p. 318)

The first group may be a picture of the Jews who tell the ascetic John to dance and the joyful Jesus to mourn. Neither John nor Jesus will satisfy them." The men of this generation reveal the childish characteristic of insisting on their own way. John and Jesus are rejected by them, the religious authorities, those who reject "the plan [βουλή] of God for themselves" (7:30). (CC pp. 318-319)

**7:33** *come* – ἐλήλυθεν—The perfect tense (7:33–34) indicates that John and Jesus come at a particular historical moment and that their ministry has ongoing significance. (CC p. 313)

*no bread and drinking no wine* – μὴ ἐσθίων ἄρτον μήτε πίνων οἶνον—Lk 7:33 adds ἄρτον and οἶνον to Mt 11:18, emphasizing the character of the meal (cf. Lk 5:27–39). John is condemned for his ascetic table fellowship. (CC p. 313)

This is as Gabriel prophesied in 1:15, John led an ascetic lifestyle. Not surprisingly, then, Luke also connects him with the practice of frequent fasting (5:33). (TLSB)

*has a demon* – δαμόνιον ἔχει— To claim that someone has a demon is to regard that person as being hostile to the plan of God and exhibiting madness. The Pharisees will also accuse Jesus of being in league with Satan (11:15-19). (CC p. 313)

Those who rejected John's message actually attributed his unusual lifestyle and fiery preaching to the influence of an evil spirit. (TLSB)

**7:34** *a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."* Jesus ate and talked with people who were religious and social outcasts. He even called a tax collector to be an apostle (5:27–32). (CSB)

ἐσθίων καὶ πίνω – Jesus is condemned for His generous table fellowship, particularly for eating with tax collectors such as Levi (5:27-32) and associating with the tax collector Zacchaeus (19:5-10) and sinners such as the woman in 7:36-50. As the Pharisees will say of Him, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with the" (15:2). (CC p. 313)

*glutton and a drunkard* – As a glutton and a drunkard, Jesus would deserve death by stoning according to Deut 21:20-21. As a friend of tax collectors and sinners, Jesus will suffer death by crucifixion at the hands of the religious establishment. (CC p. 320)

In contrast to John's asceticism, Jesus regularly ate with all kinds of people. Though the accusers' characterizations of Jesus were lies, they reflected an important truth: much of Jesus' outreach and teaching ministry took place over shared meals (5:33–39; 7:36–50; 10:38–42; 11:37–54; 14:1–24; 15; 22:7–38; 24:28–31, 41–49). (TLSB)

**7:35** *wisdom is justified by all her children.* In contrast to the rejection by foolish critics, spiritually wise persons could see that the ministries of both John and Jesus were godly, despite their differences. (CSB)

ἐδικαιώθη— God’s wisdom is declared righteous by the children of Wisdom. Cf. 7:29. The aorist is gnomic, indicating the timeless truth of a proverb or comparison. (CC p. 313)

Wisdom (Sophia) is a synonym for “the plan of God,” and “the rightness of God’s plan” is wisdom personified. The plan of God in Jesus will be acknowledged by Wisdom’s children as just because of Jesus’ accomplishment of the world’s salvation, and Jesus will be vindicated in His resurrection from the dead. God the Father Himself will declare His Son to be in the right, and all of Jesus’ followers will acknowledge the rightness of God’s verdict in Christ. (CC p. 320)

Significant in this regard is the parallel theme in Proverbs. Lady Wisdom calls the general public—all people—to come to her (Prov 1:20–21). She sets her table, prepares food and wine, and then goes out to the streets, paths, and gates, sending her servants to invite all passersby to enter her house and dine with her (Prov 8:1–5; 9:1–12; see the close parallel in Lk 14:21–23). In particular, she appeals to the simple, the foolish, and the needy. The account of Wisdom’s role in creation in Prov 8:22–31 strongly suggests a Christological interpretation: Jesus, the agent of creation (Jn 1:2–3; Col 1:15–17) is Wisdom incarnate (1 Cor 1:18–25; Col 2:2–4). *Jesus fulfills Wisdom’s role in Proverbs by inviting sinners and the outcasts of society to table fellowship, where he teaches them divine wisdom.* In Proverbs, Wisdom repeatedly speaks to her “son(s),” E.g., Prov 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1, 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 20; 5:1; 6:1, 20; 7:1, 24; 8:32. who are the ones who listen and learn divine knowledge. Therefore, when Jesus speaks of Wisdom being acknowledged as just by her children, he is speaking of himself as the teacher of divine wisdom, and the sinners and outcasts who listen to his teaching and eat at his table as his/Wisdom’s children (cf. Lk 8:21). These sinners, justified by grace, are the ones who acknowledge Jesus as righteous—and thereby they confess Jesus to be their own Wisdom and righteousness (cf. 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21). (CC p. 320)

The focus here in Luke is on the rejection of God’s eschatological prophets, who come preaching a message that is contrary to the message of the Pharisees. Their message is scandalous and unpopular. God’s plan is hidden in the preaching of repentance by John, the ascetic, and the preaching of the kingdom by Jesus, the bridegroom (Lk 5:34). The children of Wisdom are all those who are willing to accept God’s righteous plan as it is manifested in the ministries of John and Jesus, including Jesus’ eating and drinking as a friend of tax collectors and sinners. The children of Wisdom turn out to be the most unlikely folk, and the most unpopular members of Palestinian society: tax collectors and sinners. For the Pharisees and the other religious authorities, *this inclusion of sinners in God’s plan of salvation, especially in Jesus’ table fellowship,* is the great scandal, and thus the coming of the new era through John and Jesus is hidden from them. This wisdom theme of table fellowship with sinners and righteousness for them by grace leads directly into the next pericope (7:36–50). (CC pp. 320–321)

**7:18–35** In response to doubt and criticism, Jesus affirms that He is indeed the Messiah announced by John and that John, who heralded His advent, is Israel’s greatest prophet. Yet, many will accept neither John’s thunderous warnings nor Jesus’ proclamation of the Good News of the kingdom. Such skepticism continues today. Thank God, conversion is God’s work through His Word. God’s Spirit continues to enlighten, sanctify, and keep us in the true faith. • “Holy Spirit, light divine, Shine upon this heart of mine; Chase the shades of night away, Turn the darkness into day.” Amen. (LSB 496:1) (TLSB)

## *A Sinful Woman Forgiven*

**36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. 37 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 canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he canceled 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." 48 And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" 50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."**

**7:36-50** The anointing of Jesus' feet by the sinful woman and the parable of the two debtors provide a fitting conclusion to the themes of this section of the gospel. This pericope dovetails nicely with the preceding one. It is a demonstration of Jesus' teaching about the forgiveness of sins in the context of a shared meal. (CC p. 325-326)

### **The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 6) June 12, 2016**

#### **"You Are Forgiven"**

*"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." (Luke 7:47-48).*

We are, by nature, addicted to keeping score. At work, we count up the hours we bill or the sales we make. In school, we monitor our GPA and measure our class rank. At home we read labels and count calories, we buy Fit Bits and add up our steps, and we even keep score in our relationships, building up invisible "points" so that we can cash them in when we want something from our parent or spouse. The truth is, in every aspect of life, we keep score. That's the way of the world, and yet, when we try to apply a scorekeeping mentality to our relationship with God, the results are destructive, if not damning, and, in the end, we only find ourselves farther from God and from each other.

In today's Gospel reading from Luke, we are introduced a group of Jewish leaders called the Pharisees, and these men were the ultimate scorekeepers. They dedicated their lives to watching and judging the actions of others. They guarded the Law of Moses, added their own rules, then highlighted and scrutinized even the most microscopic transgressions of their impossible moral

code. A note in the “Lutheran Study Bible” tells us that the original name of this powerful sect was actually a Hebrew phrase meaning “the separate ones” and these Pharisees did everything in their scorekeeping power to make sure that they stayed at the top of the moral pecking order in Israel.

Throughout the Gospels, we find these men monitoring the movements of Jesus; critiquing His Words; measuring His actions; scolding His acceptance of sinners (Luke 5:30) and yet, Jesus was a rabbi who was highly regarded by the people. The rumors of His miraculous signs most certainly accompanied Jesus wherever He went and He was a threat to this band of scorekeepers that did everything they could to show that they were “not like other men” (Luke 18:11).

It’s in this climate of arrogance and suspicion that the Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat with him and, as our text unfolds, we actually learn about the motives for this meeting from the things omitted from Luke’s account. Remember, the Pharisees were all about keeping the rules. Every detail of their lives was measured out and they didn’t forget *anything* when it came to social or religious customs. And yet, at this dinner party, the most basic etiquette is ignored.

As Jesus points out to them later in the reading, when He entered Simon’s house there was no official greeting. His dirty feet remained unwashed and no oil was offered for His head. In his book, “Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes” scholar Kenneth Bailey comments on this absence of hospitality by pointing out that, “As Jesus entered the house, all the traditional courtesies were omitted. Custom required a kiss of greeting, usually on the face. (Then) After the guests were seated on stools around the...dining couch...water and olive oil would be brought out for the washing of hands and feet...*Only then* could grace be offered” for the meal (Bailey, 243).

These Pharisees had neglected their very own laws for welcoming guests and this was no mistake. The reason was clear: Jesus had been asked there to be discredited and disgraced. The omission of basic hospitality in the presence of these Pharisees was a calculated and pointed insult...*and this is what makes the next part of the text so extraordinary.*

In verse 37, Luke tells us that a woman of the city – who was a known “sinner” – had learned about this bizarre invitation to Simon’s house. She somehow made her way into the dining room and before anyone could send her away, she began to offer the very hospitality of which Jesus had been deprived. And, make no mistake, this bold act of devotion would have been a scandal! Not only was this a woman of ill-repute in the community, but her incursion into this high-profile meal was a complete disregard of social order. Then, to make things worse, she actually unfurls her hair and uses it dry the tears from Jesus’ feet. To grasp the offense of this action, you have to understand the cultural connotations of such a gesture. Even to this day, Middle Eastern women do not let their hair down in public. This was a sign of intimacy reserved for marriage; in fact, rabbinic law actually stated that a married woman going about with unbound hair was a sin that justified divorce.

This was a big deal and must have been an utter outrage to the host and his scorekeeping friends and yet, no move was made to throw her out. You see, from Simon’s perspective, this lack of respect for the Law and the failure of Jesus to publicly condemn this woman removed any doubt that Jesus was a lawbreaker and a fraud. Luke writes that when Simon 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.”

And in response to this unspoken word of disgust and condemnation, Jesus told a three-sentence parable that changed everything: “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five

hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both.” And then Jesus turned to the host and head scorekeeper with one question: “Which one of them will love him more?” In these simple words, Jesus had completely turned the tables on Simon. This question confronted the Pharisee with simple math. It put his scorekeeping skills right into the spotlight and forced him to give the only answer he could and, with a reluctant start, Simon responded, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.”

And with Simon’s answer still in the air, Jesus went on the attack: “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.” In these words, Jesus condemned Simon’s lack of decorum, He unmasked Simon’s deceitful motives and He convicted Simon and his fellow scorekeepers of their rejection of grace...and my friends, Jesus’ assault on Simon the Pharisee is an assault on the scorekeeper that lives inside each one of us!

We are all natural-born scorekeepers. Sometimes, like the Pharisees, our work of judging sin is easy and even expected. Other times, we have to be much more subtle in the way we separate ourselves. Either way, we are always looking for reasons to divide, and we spend our energy counting up the transgressions of others, all the while justifying our own horrific and damnable sins. And to our natural, scorekeeping selves, Jesus is a deplorable scandal! He is an intolerable offense! In fact, He is the enemy of the “good” person that we think we are! As long as our inner scorekeeper lives, we stand against Christ and today, I’m here to tell you, that this is why Jesus came! He came to confront the sinner you are and to put your best self to death. He came to show us that we have nothing to offer before a holy, just and righteous God and on the Cross and, in the waters of our Baptism, He came to put us to death that we might live in Him.

The scorekeeper demands a pound of flesh from sinners...but Christ came to give His flesh and shed His blood for the sake of the sinners. The scorekeeper demands punishment for even the smallest transgression of the Law...but Jesus came to keep the Law for us and take the punishment for our most unspeakable sins. In the story of David from our Old Testament lesson we see the horrific sin of which we are all capable...and in the Cross of Jesus we see the horrific sin of which we have all been forgiven and by His death and resurrection we have eternal life!

The beautiful and scandalous irony of today’s parable is that, in His words, Jesus indicates that He had also forgiven Simon, and my friends, Jesus has also forgiven you. No matter what sins you have committed; no matter what sins you have tried to hide; the sin that you’ve struggled to justify, the sin that has destroyed your relationships and separated you from God...that sin and your scorekeeping hearts have been crucified with Christ and today – in Christ – you stand before God as one whose many sins have been forgiven. And now, you can go in peace and you can love much. Amen.

Pastor Thomas A. Eggold

**7:36** *one of the Pharisees*. His motive may have been to entrap Jesus rather than to learn from him. (CSB)

Given the opposition Jesus suffered from many Pharisees, it is notable that this one invited Jesus into his house. (TLSB)

One of the Pharisees—those against whom he has just been speaking—invites him to dinner. This is the second meal in Luke; the first was with Levi the tax collector in 5:27–32. Jesus does not shy away from using the sensitive, sacred context of a meal to teach boldly. (CC p. 326)

From what he had known previously from reports of events like those recorded in 7:1–35, Simon the Pharisee was ready to acknowledge Jesus as the eschatological prophet of the new era. He does, in fact, call Jesus a teacher (διδάσκαλε; 7:40), “a title revered in contemporary Palestine.” Simon’s difficulty with God’s plan (7:30) is that it includes sinners. (CC p. 330)

*asked him to eat with him* –This is the second meal in Luke; the first was with Levi the tax collector in 5:27–32. Jesus does not shy away from using the sensitive, sacred context of a meal to teach boldly. This meal is most likely a Sabbath evening Seder (Friday after sundown), which began the hallowing of the Sabbath day (the Third Commandment). With a Pharisee, it would also embrace the structure of a *haburah* meal, where, as at a Greek symposium, an opportunity for teaching by an invited guest was an integral part of the table fellowship. The Pharisees were careful about whom they would eat with. When they invite Jesus to eat with them, it indicates that in their eyes he is still worthy of table fellowship. There will be two more meals with Pharisees (11:37–52; 14:1–24), and in both cases, Jesus confronts them boldly. (CC pp. 326-327)

*reclined at the table* – κατεκλίθη—“Reclined at table” captures the full picture of this word. The posture of reclining was practiced at festive banquets. The same word is used in descriptions of people eating together at the feeding of the five thousand (9:14–15), the banquet parable (14:8), and the Emmaus meal (24:30). Cf. J. Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 688, who writes: “The verb *kateklithe* ... reveals that the dinner was a festive banquet, since reclining at table was practiced only for such occasions in Palestine of that time.” J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 126, has an interesting suggestion that reinforces the contention that teaching and eating go together: (CC pp. 322-323)

The meal to which the Pharisee invited Jesus is clearly a banquet (κατεκλίθη, v. 36); it is in honor of Jesus, since Simon is allowing for the possibility that Jesus may be a prophet, and that with him the departed Spirit of God has returned, bringing the New Age. [The rabbis held that the Spirit of God had departed from Israel at the close of the OT period (ca. 400 B.C.) since prophecy ceased then.] Since it was a meritorious act to invite travelling teachers, especially if they had preached in the synagogue, to a sabbath meal (cf., e.g., Mark 1:29–31), we may at all events infer that before the episode which the story relates took place, *Jesus had preached a sermon which had impressed them all, the host, the guests, and an uninvited guest, the woman* (emphasis added). (CC pp. 322-323)

**7:37** *a woman of the city who was a sinner*. A prostitute. She must have heard Jesus preach, and in repentance she determined to lead a new life. She came out of love and gratitude, in the understanding that she could be forgiven. (CSB)

Jesus says in 47 that her sins were many. That might indicate habitual sin. But we know not specifically what sin or sins. Most commentators suggest sexual sins. It is good that we don’t know for sure because the text can be applied to any repentant social outcast, guilty of public sin. What is certain is that her sin were public knowledge. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The introduction of the sinful woman into the scene with “and behold” (καὶ ἰδοῦ; 7:37) alerts the hearer to the significance of this moment. By describing the woman as sinful (ἁμαρτωλός), Luke indicates that she would be banned from eating with the Pharisees according to their table laws, for she is unclean and therefore unworthy of an invitation. But this sinful woman is the one who greets Jesus with signs showing he is a most honored guest. And she is the one who receives the forgiveness of her sins. (CC p. 327)

*he reclining* – κατάκειται—Luke switches his vocabulary concerning the description of reclining at the table from κατακλίνω (7:36) to κατάκειμαι in this verse. Perhaps he wants to make a conscious link back to the feast with Levi (5:29), the only other place this word is used for festive dining. (CC p. 323)

*alabaster flask*. A long-necked, globular bottle. (CSB)

Note Matthew 26:7 – Semiprecious stone often cut into beautiful containers to hold perfumes. *ointment*. Sweet-smelling oil used for anointing, much as perfumes and colognes are used today. *on His head*. People were usually anointed on their heads; Jn 12:3; Lk 7:38 mention that Jesus was anointed on His feet too. (TLSB)

*ointment* – μύρου— Matthew (26:6–13) and Mark (14:3–9) record a different incident, in which a woman anointed Jesus with an “alabaster of myrrh” with a view to his impending (death and) burial. Here in Luke, a woman who is identified as “a sinner” anoints Jesus’ feet. This shows her proper respect for Jesus and may perhaps also be understood as something that prepares him for his journey—into rejection and death. (CC p. 323)

**7:38** *stood behind him at his feet*. Jesus reclined on a couch with his feet extended away from the table, which made it possible for the woman to wipe his feet with her hair and still not disturb him. (CSB)

Scandalous behavior. In later Judaism, a married woman who let her hair down in public could be divorced. Nevertheless, Jesus interprets this woman’s behavior as reverent and appropriate. Augustine says, “She who had walked long in evil, sought now the steps of Uprightness. First, she shed tears, the heart’s blood; and washed the Lord’s feet with the duty of confession. She wiped them with her hair, she kissed, she anointed them: she spoke by her silence; she uttered not a word, but she manifested her devotion. (NPNF1 6:416) (TLSB)

The fact that she stood behind Him is the first indication of her humility. Not at His head, but rather at His feet, another indication of humility. Note that Jesus’ feet are mentioned three times in 38 and should be supplied twice in the third last and last clauses, a total of five times. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*weeping* – The woman’s tears indicate her repentance (as with Peter in 22:62), and her acts of love toward Jesus indicate that she welcomes him as a prophet from God, who has come to forgive even the worst of sinners. The Lukan theme of hospitality is also accentuated by the contrast between Simon the Pharisee and the deeds of the sinful woman. (CC p. 327)

The first thing she did after taking her stand was to weep, an indication of emotion. The word “hrzato likely indicates a heightening of emotion. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*wiped them with hair* – To unbind one’s hair before men in public was considered immodest by the ancients. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*kissed his feet* – The Greek for “kissed” means to kiss profusely, and is the very word used of Judas when he kissed Jesus. (Cf. Luke 15:20) The only recorded instances of people kissing Jesus are this account and that of Judas betrayal. Only the profusion is common to both. All other differences are vast. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

The Greek words for “wiped and kissed” could denote ingressive or repeated action. Out of love, this woman was oblivious to criticism. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*anointed them with ointment.* The anointing, perhaps originally intended for Jesus’ head, was instead applied to his feet. A similar act was performed by Mary of Bethany just over a week before the crucifixion (Jn 12:3). (CSB)

**7:39** *he said to himself* – This simply means that Simon witnessed everything this woman did. It means that this is what he thought. He said nothing audibly. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*man were a prophet* – εἰ ἦν προφήτης, ἐγίνωσκεν ἄν—This is a contrary to fact condition from the point of view of the speaker’s mind. The Pharisee has concluded that Jesus is *not* a prophet and so muses: “If he were a prophet—which he obviously is not—then he would have known ...” (CC p. 323)

Now comes a condition contrary to fact which denies that Jesus is even a prophet (much less the Son of Man) and therefore he also denies that Jesus has knowledge of this woman. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

If a ceremonially impure person such as this woman touched an observant Jew, the latter would be rendered unclean and would be unable to enter the temple area, celebrate festivals, or offer sacrifice. (TL SB)

He wouldn’t even allow, in his thinking, for Jesus to be touched by her because in his estimation that meant pollution from a social outcast. The love of this woman left Simon absolutely cold, our first proof that he was impenitent. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**7:40** *Jesus answering* Jesus was responding to Simon’s thoughts, clearly indicating Jesus’ divinity. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*I have something to tell you* – In this account Jesus speaks personally only to Simon and later to the woman. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Jesus responds to Simon’s dismay and concerns, even before Simon voices them. (TL SB)

*say it teacher* – διδάσκαλε—See comments at 2:46. This is the first time this title is used by Jesus’ opponents, but they will use it frequently later. They regard him as possessing the qualities of a “teacher,” which is a title of honor, but they also show in their discourse with him that they are not happy with *what* he teaches. John the Baptist was addressed by tax collectors as “teacher” (3:12), and it will be used of Jesus by others besides his opponents as either a positive or neutral greeting (8:49; 9:38; 12:13; 21:7). Jesus will use it in his own teaching at 6:40 and 22:11. It is used positively of Christian teachers at Acts 13:1. (CC p. 323)

Though still respectful in his address of Jesus, Simon seems skeptical. (TL SB)

**7:41 moneylender** – This was more like a loan shark than a banker. (TLSB)

*five hundred denarii.* An ordinary worker earned about one denarius per day; these sums were substantial. (TLSB)

A denarius (a Roman coin) was an average labor’s daily wage. That makes the 500 and 50 wages about 1 ½ years and almost 2 months respectively. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**7:42 they could pay** – The point is that they have no ability to pay. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*canceled the debts of both* – The Greek word means free and total remission. See Eph 4:32 and Col. 2:13. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Amazingly, the debt was forgiven. Obviously, it was an unusual event, which makes a powerful point in Jesus’ story. (TLSB)

*which will love him more* – The greater the gift, the greater the gratitude. (TLSB)

**7:43 larger debt** – ἐχαρίσατο—“Give,” “cancel” (money owed), “show one’s self favorable toward.” This word is a synonym of ἀφίημι, which is used for “forgive” in Lk 7:47–49. It also expresses the concept of ἄφεσις, “release, forgiveness,” which Jesus said would be the keynote of his ministry (4:18–19). (CC p. 324)

Even though Simon answered with some reservation (“I suppose”), he came to the only logical conclusion. (TLSB)

Arndt: “Simon answers cautiously.” Marshall: “his response expresses caution, since there could be circumstances when it might be wrong. Most probably, however, Simon realizes that he has been caught in a trap; the answer reluctantly anticipates what follows, namely, the criticism of Simon’s own lack of gratitude to Jesus.” Morris: “Simon’s answer is somewhat grudging.” Note that Jesus does not say: “You’ve answered correctly” but “You’ve judged correctly.” He could not judge otherwise. Implied in this statement is the fact that he has totally misjudged the woman and her actions. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**7:44-49** By the end of this extraordinary scene, Jesus has explicitly declared the forgiveness of sins to the woman and her salvation by faith. This occurs in the context of Jesus’ presence at a festive meal, where the gift of forgiveness and fellowship is offered. The irony, however, is that those who are actually reclining at the table with Jesus to eat—the Pharisees—do *not* receive the forgiveness of their sins and so, in fact, exclude themselves from his fellowship. Instead, forgiveness—and fellowship—is received by one who was not originally invited to the meal (cf. 14:17–24), a sinful woman, with whom the Pharisees will not have fellowship. She comes to that table in repentance and faith and receives from Jesus his gifts of forgiveness and fellowship. *Thus eating together per se does not guarantee forgiveness of sins and fellowship with the Messiah.* Jesus teaches this again in 13:26–27: “Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our wide streets’; but he will say, saying to you, ‘I do not know you—where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of unrighteousness.’” (Only Luke preserves this saying.) To be present physically at Jesus’ table is one thing. To receive him and the gifts he brings is another. One can eat with him but refuse his gifts of fellowship and forgiveness. To receive his table fellowship of teaching and eating and drinking in his presence means to accept *Jesus*. This involves accepting his practice of *inclusive* table fellowship, bringing forgiveness for sinners. (CC pp. 327-328)

The forgiveness of sins is the dominant theological issue in this incident, and the parable of the two debtors stands in the center of this narrative to illustrate this very point. No matter how large or how small the debt, and regardless of one's inability to pay it back, the full debt is graciously remitted (ἐχαρίσατο; 7:42–43). Jesus will declare all the woman's sins to be forgiven (7:48; ἀφέωνται), and the invited guests (most likely Pharisees) will question among themselves whether Jesus can forgive sins (7:49). (CC p. 328)

These Pharisees do not show proper respect nor love for Jesus. They do not accept Jesus and his table fellowship with the likes of Levi and this woman. Therefore, they do not receive the forgiveness of their sins. If the size of one's "love" reflects the size of one's debt that has been forgiven, then these Pharisees do not even fall into this category of 7:47: "The one to whom little is forgiven loves little." They do not love *at all* because they imagine they have no need at all for Jesus to forgive them. It is sinners who accept Jesus and his gracious table fellowship and receive the forgiveness of their sins. These sinners and outcasts fit under this category of 7:47: "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, because she loved much." (CC p. 328)

This issue of love is mentioned first in the parable of the two debtors. Both there and in the application in the ministry of Jesus, it is love that *flows from one who has been forgiven*. The first instance of love (in the parable) informs the interpretation of the second instance. (CC pp. 328–329)

Therefore, it is clear that the woman's love is not the cause of Jesus' forgiveness, but rather the result. The teaching of Jesus in the immediate context, and indeed the witness of the entire Scriptures, is that love for God is the believer's response to God's prior, forgiving love (cf. 1 Jn 4:19). The sense of Lk 7:47, then is this: "*One can know that she has been forgiven much (which is invisible) because (of the visible evidence that) she loves much.*" (CC p. 329)

**7:44** *turning toward the woman* – Jesus turns to the woman with full approval. It is truly amazing that He had not dismissed her on the grounds that this was not the time nor place for such a display of affection. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*do you see this woman* – Everyone agrees that Blepeis introduces a question. But there is disagreement on the purpose of the question. Lenski thinks that Simon had turned his face away and that Jesus was asking him to face the woman. That cannot be. Morris quotes Morgan: "Simon could not see that the woman as she then was, for looking at her as she had been." Exactly. Simon was still thinking of her as an undeserving *amartoloz* (*siiner*) (vs. 39). Jesus looks at her quite otherwise. It is *Blepeis* not *oraw*, the ordinary word for seeing. It is a rhetorical question which Simon will have to answer for himself after Jesus' reply and application of the parable, which are devastating for Simon's attitude. Note the repetition of *moi* (to me) and *mou* (of me), in 44–46, six times. The *moi* forms denote indirect object. The *mou* are all genitive of possession. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*water for my feet*. The minimal gesture of hospitality. (CSB)

Ordinary hospitality included the opportunity for a visitor to wash. Sandals and dusty roads made for dirty feet. (TLSB)

Note Gen. 18:4 TLSB) First step of proper hospitality. Because there were few inns, people placed high importance on hospitality. Neglect or mistreatment of travelers was regarded as a

great social evil. Ambrose: “A man ought therefore to be hospitable, kind, upright, not desirous of what belongs to another.... Such is the favor in which hospitality stands with God, that not even the draught of cold water shall fail of getting a reward. You see that Abraham, in looking for guests, received God Himself to entertain” (NPNF 2 10:59–60).

Note also the frequency of podas (feet) again in verse 44-46. Lenski aptly remarks that giving water for the feet (Gen. 18:4; Judg 19:21) was only common politeness; offering a kiss of peace (Gen. 22:4; Ex 18:7) denoted treatment of a friend; and application of oil (Ps. 23:5; 141:5; Mt. 6:17) denoted the treatment of a festive guest. In other words, Simon was not polite, not a friend nor a true host to Jesus. No love. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**7:45 kissing** – In the ancient East, the kiss of greeting is equivalent to a handshake. In fact, this is still common today in parts of the Near East and Europe. (TLSB)

The Greek for the word “kissing” is complementary to the verb denoting in what respect she was not ceasing. Note that it is present tense. There is no parallel to this in Scripture, so far as the writer of those notes knows. Note the contrast between mere water and tears. Though “towel” is not stated, it is implicit in the text and contrasted with Thiziv (hairs) (V. 44), unbound hair, a mark of real courage under the circumstances. The woman was oblivious to her surroundings. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

*from the time I came in* – Jesus and the woman must have entered about the same time. She didn’t wait. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**7:46 not anoint my head** – Offering olive oil for personal grooming was a special courtesy, reserved for important guests. (TLSB)

Ps. 23:5 note...A banquet guest might be given oil to put on his head as a sign of hospitality. The oil acted like lotion, soothing the skin. Shepherds carried such oil in cattle- or ram-horn containers. (TLSB)

The double contrast between elaion (ordinary olive oil) and kephla as opposed to muron (expensive perfume) and podas is tremendous. The comparison has only aleipho in common, absent in Simon’s case, present in the woman’s case. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**7:47 she loved much.** Her love was evidence of her forgiveness, but not the basis for it. Verse 50 clearly states that she was saved by faith. See Eph 1:7. (CSB)

This woman’s love did not earn her forgiveness. Rather, it flowed from being shown mercy, as Jesus’ story suggested. Augustine: “This was spoke on account of that Pharisee who thought that he had either no sins, or but few” (NPNF 1 6:417). (TLSB)

*forgiven little loves little* – οὐ̄ χάρις ... ὅτι—“For this reason ... because.” If taken out of context, these two expressions could support the view that Jesus forgave the woman’s many sins as the *result* of her great love, rather than as the *cause* of her great love. However, Jesus had just told the story about the two debtors in 7:41–43, and that story, as well as Jesus’ explanation in the second half of 7:47, both show unmistakably that *a person’s love for God is the result of the forgiveness of sins, not the cause of forgiveness.* Any interpretation of the first half of 7:47 must be in harmony with the context (7:41–43, 47b). The context clearly portrays the cause-and-effect relationship between *forgiveness as the cause and love for God as the result.* (CC p. 324)

What reason does Jesus say this? Simon was totally oblivious to the woman's love which was caused by her absolution, which Jesus now states publically as already having taken place. The verb is in the perfect tense. And that too despite their great number. *Legō soi* denotes I tell you) denotes divine authority attributed to Jesus' human nature. Simon saw only a teacher. But he was dealing with the God-man. The love is evidence of her forgiveness, not the cause of it. Both Arndt and Lenski use this illustration: "It is raining because the window's are wet." Who would misunderstand that sentence? Arndt is worth quoting here: "a) The parable of the two debtors shows that love is here considered not as the cause, but as a result, but as of forgiveness; b) the second part of verse 47 is another indication that forgiveness is thought as of coming first, and then love; c) Jesus says, verse 50, 'Your faith has saved you' not 'Your love has saved you'; d) the whole NT views love as the fruit of our receiving forgiveness, not as the cause of it." Verse 47b does not mean that there is such a thing as partial forgiveness. By saying "To whom little is forgiven, he loves little," Jesus is deftly applying the second use of the Law to Simon to make him think. Jesus is practically saying: "Your lack of love, indicated by lack of even common courtesy, is proof of the fact that you are not conscious of your sinfulness and that you yet do not enjoy forgiveness." He does not embarrass His host but does leave him with a thought whose intention and purpose were repentance. (Exegetical Notes – Bult)

If the size of one's "love" reflects the size of one's debt that has been forgiven, then these Pharisees do not even fall into this category of 7:47: "The one to whom little is forgiven loves little." They do not love *at all* because they imagine they have no need at all for Jesus to forgive them. (CC p. 328)

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (IV 152–55) has a lengthy discussion of 7:47, of which this is a summary:

There is a familiar figure of speech, called synecdoche, by which we sometimes combine cause and effect in the same phrase. Christ says in Luke 7:47, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, because she loved much." But he interprets his own words when he adds: "Your faith has saved you" (v. 50). ... Faith is that which grasps God's free mercy. ... The woman came, believing that she should seek the forgiveness of sins from Christ. This is the highest way of worshiping Christ. ...

It is faith that properly accepts the forgiveness of sins, though love, confession, and other good fruits ought to follow. He [Jesus] does not mean that these fruits are the price or propitiation which earns the forgiveness of sins. (CC p. 329)

The woman comes to Jesus because she believes that his presence signals the presence of the forgiveness of sins, and her demonstration of gratitude and love is her response to Jesus' forgiveness. J. Jeremias affirms:

Hence it is conclusively established that in the much-discussed phrase in v. 47a, forgiveness comes first, as is shown unequivocally by v. 47b and by the parable, and this implies that *ὄτι* in v. 47a indicates the evidence of forgiveness: "Therefore I say to you that God must have forgiven her sins, many as they are, since she displays such deep thankfulness (grateful love); he to whom God forgives little, shows little thankfulness (thankful love)." The story therefore implies that *Jesus in his sermon had offered forgiveness*. (CC p. 329)

Although the text does not state that this sinful woman had previously heard a *sermon* (J. Jeremias' contention) in which Jesus offered forgiveness, it does strongly imply that she is responding to the *teaching* of Jesus in which he has regularly proclaimed forgiveness. She may

have heard his teaching in person or by word of mouth from other hearers. In either case, the text concerns the relationship between *teaching about forgiveness*, the gift of forgiveness, and the response of love and gratitude. This is a dramatization, a live object lesson, and a practical application of the truths of Jesus' *teaching about forgiveness* in 7:28–35, according to which the one who accepts the “plan” (βουλη, 7:30) of God accepts John the Baptist, the precursor preaching repentance, and Jesus, the one coming after John to preach forgiveness. In Jesus, forgiveness comes to the sinful woman. She responds. Her response testifies that she believes that Jesus is the prophet from God. Ironically, Simon the Pharisee *had* entertained the notion that Jesus is a prophet *until* the sinful woman appeared and touched him. Jesus' tolerance of her leads Simon to conclude that Jesus is *not* a prophet, as Simon's contrary-to-fact musing shows (7:39). From what he had known previously from reports of events like those recorded in 7:1–35, Simon the Pharisee was ready to acknowledge Jesus as the eschatological prophet of the new era. He does, in fact, call Jesus a teacher (διδάσκαλε; 7 7:40), “a title revered in contemporary Palestine.” Simon's difficulty with God's plan (7:30) is that it includes sinners. (CC pp. 329-330)

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**7:48** *your sins are forgiven* – *aphewntai* – The perfect tense has the nuance that her sins were already forgiven and continue to be forgiven in the present time. (CC p. 325)

Literally, “Your sins stand forgiven.” Gk perfect tense implies a previous pardon that continues to remain in effect. “In repentance these two things ought always to exist, namely, contrition and faith.... By these tears the contrition is recognized. Afterward, she hears the Absolution” (Ap XIII 57). (TLSB)

By the end of this extraordinary scene, Jesus has explicitly declared the forgiveness of sins to the woman and her salvation by faith. This occurs in the context of Jesus' presence at a festive meal, where the gift of forgiveness and fellowship is offered. The irony, however, is that those who are actually reclining at the table with Jesus to eat—the Pharisees—do *not* receive the forgiveness of their sins and so, in fact, exclude themselves from his fellowship. Instead, forgiveness—and fellowship—is received by one who was not originally invited to the meal (cf. 14:17–24), a sinful woman, with whom the Pharisees will not have fellowship. She comes to that table in repentance and faith and receives from Jesus his gifts of forgiveness and fellowship. *Thus eating together per se does not guarantee forgiveness of sins and fellowship with the Messiah.* Jesus teaches this again in 13:26–27: “Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our wide streets’; but he will say, saying to you, ‘I do not know you—where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of unrighteousness.’ ” (Only Luke preserves this saying.) (CC pp. 327-328)

Neither Jesus nor the woman are inhabited by the surroundings. Why does He repeat what had been said in verse 47? For two reasons: a) Public sinners who repent are publicly absolved. She had already been absolved. The verb is in the perfect tense. Tongues should no longer wag at her. b) For Simon's sake. This application of the Office of the Keys to the woman are for Simon's benefit if and when he realizes how own sin and sinfulness, his work-righteousness. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**7:49** *who even forgives sins* – Jesus’ discourse leads those at table with him—and the hearer or reader of the gospel—to a significant conclusion about the divinity of Christ. Jesus’ story (7:41–43) portrayed sin as a debt owed to the lender, who represents God. The story concludes with the forgiven debtors loving the lender/ God. Since Jesus himself forgave the woman after telling the story (7:47–48), Jesus is asserting his claim to be the lender to whom all sinners owe their debt: he is God in human flesh. Moreover, Jesus’ acceptance of her worshipful act of love (see textual note on “kiss” in 7:38, 45) is also an affirmation that he is rightly the recipient of love toward God—the same incarnate God who forgave her sins. (CC p. 325)

They began, by their own questions to realize that this man was more than a mere teacher, a mere Rabbi. They realize that this man has divine powers. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

Because only God can forgive sins, the guests were shocked that Jesus claimed such authority. Cf. 5:17-26) (TLSB)

**7:50** *Your faith has saved you.* Her sins were forgiven and she could experience God’s peace. (CSB)

Or, “Your faith has made you well.” Forgiveness imparts deliverance from sin and death. “Christ did not mean that the woman had merited forgiveness of sins by that work of love. That is why He adds, ‘Your faith has saved you.’ But faith is that which freely obtains God’s mercy because of God’s Word” (Ap V 31–32) (TLSB)

*go in peace* – Peace naturally flows from the reception of God’s forgiveness and acceptance (cf Rm 5:1). (TLSB)

Thus, the parable of the “forgiveness that is evident in the response of love” is portrayed dramatically in the lives of the Pharisee and the sinful woman. In complete contrast to Simon, she, who owed the great debt and was forgiven, showed great love. Behind it all is God’s gracious plan and her faith in Jesus, who is the center of the plan. Thus Jesus says to her: “Your faith has saved you; go in peace” (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην; 7:50). This verse is filled with Lukan vocabulary of salvation: “faith,” “save,” and “peace.” Jesus’ acclamation, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found faith so great” (7:9), finds here a complement. Faith in Jesus, as the Messiah who releases from bondage, is given to the most unlikely in Israel, another example of Jesus’ principle of the Great Reversal. The sinful woman goes in the peace of forgiveness, received at the table of Jesus. (CC p. 330)

Another assurance to the woman personally that not only was she no longer a social outcast, but also safe in the arms of her Lord. She had this faith BEFORE she came into the house. Eis is the static use meaning “in.” :be on your way in peace” not only the objective fact that all was well with God but also the feelings and emotion which results therefrom. Lenski remarks that, at time we do not “feel” this peace but the objective fact is always true. “I trust Him, whether flet or not.” (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

**7:36–50** Jesus teaches that even notorious sinners can be forgiven and restored; indeed, they sometimes become all the more devoted to God for having received greater deliverance. His teaching challenges us to consider: Do we act like the begrudging Pharisee or the grateful penitent? Do we trust that God can truly change people’s lives? By God’s Spirit, we grow daily in our appreciation of the fact that “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Rm 5:20). • “Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me, Died that I might live on high, Lives

that I might never die. As the branch is to the vine, I am His, and He is mine.” Amen. (*LSB* 611:1)  
(*TLSB*)