

SCANDALOUS GRACE

Scandalous Grace

Key idea:

The Friend of Sinners is a scandal to the self-righteous, but the only hope for those who know their shame and seek forgiveness.

Key text:

Luke 7:36-50

Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is — that she is a sinner." 40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven — for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Key points:

1. We live in two realities: the fallen world we've created and God's ultimate reality of grace and love.
2. Jesus welcomes sinners and outcasts, reversing the direction of "contagion" - His holiness flows to us rather than our sin defiling Him.
3. True holiness exposes the gap between who we think we are and who we really are. Grace is free, but only the humble can receive it.
4. The fragrance of grace lingers, transforming lives and environments.

Discussion Questions:

1. The sermon contrasts Simon the Pharisee with the sinful woman. Who do you relate to more in this story, and why?
2. How does the idea of living "before the face of God" (coram Deo) challenge or comfort you?
3. The sermon states, "Grace isn't fair. It's better than fair." How have you experienced this truth in your own life?
4. Discuss the statement: "The Church of Christ is not a prize banquet for the moral elite. It's a dinner table for the unworthy." How should this shape our view of church and community?
5. How does the concept of Jesus reversing the direction of "contagion" impact your understanding of His work on the cross?
6. The sermon asks, "Are you still amazed?" by God's grace. Share a time when you were freshly amazed by God's grace in your life.
7. How can we cultivate a "fragrance of grace" in our daily lives and interactions with others?

Practical Applications:

1. This week, practice seeing others as Jesus sees them. Choose one person you struggle with and intentionally pray for them, asking God to help you see them through His eyes of grace.

2. Reflect on areas in your life where you might be acting more like Simon (self-righteous or judgmental) than the woman (humble and grateful). Confess these to God and ask for His help in cultivating humility.
3. Consider ways you can make your small group or church more welcoming to "outcasts" or those who might feel unworthy. Discuss practical steps you can take individually or as a group.
4. Write a letter of gratitude to God, acknowledging your need for His grace and thanking Him for specific ways He has shown you mercy.
5. Practice "kneeling" before Jesus this week through intentional times of worship and surrender, remembering that "the posture of grace is not standing tall, it's falling at the feet of Jesus Christ."