

04/08/12

## Loving Your Savior

- would you agree with me this morning that it is generally best to err on the side of caution that to engage in behavior that is reckless?...
- for example, it's spring...the time as the old poem says, when a young man's heart turns to...
  - thoughts of loud power equipment and the desire to either cut something down or cut something up...
  - am I right guys?...please tell me you've found some reason to fire up your chain saw in the last week or so?...
  - now these are some pictures taken right off the Skill Chainsaw website..
- what do all three of these guys have in common?...they are all being cautious, aren't they?...
  - hard hats, ear protection, full visors, safety gloves, safety pants...long sleeved shirts...
  - if I did that, I'd have one less scar on my leg, but let's not get into that this am...
  - they're just being cautious...
- although the website also has a picture of this guy...
  - he's got a couple of safety faux pass's going on...
    - I don't think that ear protection is doing him a whole lot of good...
    - and his shirt has short sleeves...
    - but what I really like is – the guy's using 2 chain saws...I had never thought about trying that before – do you realize that would cut your time in half?...or it would cut something in half...
    - but the point here is – the value of erring on the side of caution and not engaging in behavior that's reckless...
- the same is true in driving, right?...
  - I was telling the folks at Church Family Night last Sunday that I had just had a little driving mishap on my way to the West Lafayette City Council pre-meeting for Faith West...
  - so I went up I-65 and then over on 25 to 52...do you know that little stretch of road I'm talking about?...between I-65 and 52
  - would everyone here agree with me that the speed limit on that stretch of road is far too low?...
  - that's not what the state trooper said who pulled me over...
  - he said, after looking at my license, and where are you going in such a hurry, Mr. Viars...
  - the West Lafayette City Council meeting...
  - he said – oh, are you on the City Council?...
  - no, I'm a pastor and our church has a proposal before them...
  - he said – Oh really – what church...Faith Church...
  - Oh, do you know Trooper so and so?...
  - Yes I do...I surely do...I hope you do too...
- but the bottom line is – I shouldn't have been speeding...I should have been more cautious...
- I think we would all agree -- it is generally best to err on the side of caution that to engage in behavior that is reckless?...
- but let me ask you this – in your relationship with the Lord – is there ever a time to throw caution to the wind?...

- to make a statement about your devotion to Christ that might be questioned by other people in your life as having gone too far?...
- and on the other hand – is it ever possible that what might look like appropriate restraint in your relationship with Jesus is actually a thin cover over apathy or even unbelief...
- 2 related questions are – what does all of this have to do with the issue of your love for Christ and the presence of core strength in your life or the lack thereof?...
  
- with that in mind, please open your Bible to Luke chapter 7...page 51 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- Our church's theme this year is **Building Core Strength**...
  - we want to be sure that we're shoring up the fundamentals to be the kind of people and the kind of church that God desires...
  - it's possible to be a mile wide and an inch deep...and especially during this period in our church's life where we're being stretched into so many new ministry directions...we want to be sure that we're majoring on the majors so we're not simply getting larger – we're getting stronger...
  - and we're also the kind of place where anybody can comfortably jump in and grow right along with us wherever they're at in their journey with Christ...
  
- recently we've been working our way verse by verse through the gospel of Luke...
- now, I should probably remind you that we're going to be moving away from that series for the next several weeks as we enjoy a special outreach series together...
- It's called – **Getting to the Core – Six Weeks to Focus on Things that Matter Most**...
  - the idea is – if you're just starting to get into church – this is an excellent time for you to jump in...
  - this is also a great time for you to invite your friends and neighbors and co-workers to come to church with you...that's one of the primary reasons we offer these kinds of outreach series...that's why we have one of the handouts in the bulletin – that's really not for you, that's for your friend you're going to invite...
  - here's the six topics...[if we're talking about getting to the core...].
    - **Figuring Out What You Believe**
    - **Figuring Out Why You're Here**
    - **Figuring Out Who You Are**
    - **Figuring Out Who You Love**
    - **Figuring Out What You Want**
    - **Figuring Out Where You're Going**
  - I hope you'll plan to be with us for the next six weeks and that you'll prayerfully plan to have someone next to you...
- now, in Luke chapter 7...we just read about an incredible interchange that Jesus had with the delegation that had been sent to Him from John the Baptist...
- the reason John didn't come himself was because he was in prison...because a politician's wife, sort-of, didn't like something John had said...namely that her now husband shouldn't stolen her from her previous husband who was also his brother – it's a long story...
- so John is in prison and he sends a group to ask Jesus if he really was the Messiah or should they be looking for someone else...
- and what's amazing is that the Lord doesn't criticize him for that question – in fact, he commends him – he says that there has never been a man "born of a woman" (which is about the only way you can be born as far as I know) – but there has never been a man born of a women who was greater than John...

- and we walked away from that saying marveling that God actually invites us to bring our questions, concerns, and doubts to Him...as long as our heart sincerely wants to know truth from Him...unlike this guy...who looks like he's being cautious – but it's very thin veneer over a heart that has no intention of submitting to or loving Jesus...

- let's listen in...

**- Read Luke 7:36-50**

- this morning we're talking about **Building Core Strength by Loving Your Savior**
- and with the time we have remaining, let's think about **3 Ways to Show Your Devotion for the One Who Died for You.**

**I. Love Your Savior in Ways that Sometimes Seems Reckless.**

- there is absolutely nothing restrained or cautious about what this woman did...
- and please remember that before anything else, the gospel of Luke is a personal letter, written by a physician named Luke to his friend Theophilus...
- and we don't know for sure...but some theorize that he might have been a political figure or perhaps a respected member of their community...
- but Luke wants him to have an accurate record of the life and teachings of Christ...
- well, you can just imagine this refined gentleman hearing this story and have it reach out and grab him by the throat...
  - the question is obvious – which one of these two people are you most like?...
    - apathy and unbelief covered by a veneer of caution and restraint or a heart of faith that sometimes expresses love for Christ in a way that is anything but cautious and restrained?...
    - and of course I hope already asking the same question of yourself...
    - this isn't a bedtime story to put us to sleep – it's a true account to wake us up and lead us to ask important evaluative questions...
    - now, let's think about how this was an example of reckless love...

**A. By where she was willing to go.**

- there's no question here about the character and identity of two of the main characters...Simon was a Pharisee
  - **Luke 7:36 - Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.**
- ...obviously not Simon Peter – or by the way another Simon's house where a similar event occurred with a different woman...Simon was a very common name in Bible times...
  - but everyone in this event, including the woman, knew that Simon was a Pharisee...a religious leader...someone who could very easily articulate all the various ways a person might sin...
- and then there's this woman...
  - **Luke 7:37 - And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner...**
  - that was common knowledge as well – and although the word sinner could be used to describe a lot of activities, many believe she was a prostitute...
- so where is about the last place a known sinner is going to go for a social gathering?...
- at the home of a Pharisee...unless there is a person there whom you unusual reason to love...
- and it's important to note – it's not like this is the first time this woman has heard the message of Christ...or probably interacted with Him...because at the end of the story, when Jesus tells her that her sins have been forgiven and her faith has save her...He's talking about the action she's just performed...

- He's talking about the faith she had previously exercised before this event ever unfolded--  
-why else would she have done what she did...
- this wasn't in order to be forgiven—in order to be saved – this was because she had been forgiven...because she had been saved...
- that is a crucial distinction...the love we're talking about this morning is the appropriate response in your heart after you've repented and believed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ...
- that's why Paul would later say...**Ephesians 2:8-10 - For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**
- what this woman is doing is the “verse 10 part of the equation...”
- but there's no question about the fact that even going to this place was reckless in the sense that she was risking being judged and ridiculed by the Pharisee and his guests...perhaps even Jesus Himself...
- but see – love motivates you to go to places you might otherwise not have gone...
  - think about our missionaries this morning – in many cases far away from loved ones on a wonderful holiday and in some cases in places that are quite dangerous for followers of Christ...
  - why?...because love motivates a person to go to places you otherwise might not go...
- this was also evident...
  - B. By how she was willing to sacrifice.**
    - we don't know all the details but it would appear this was one of those events where the details were not planned out very well in advance...
    - and we've all been there – where we intended to do one thing...but then this happened, and then that...and pretty soon everything is going in an entirely different direction...
    - **Luke 7:37 - And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,**
    - some Bible students believe this event may have taken place at dusk, or after dark...
    - and it wasn't uncommon for a religious leader like Simon to invite a teacher like Jesus to come for a meal to discuss religious matters...
    - it's likely that Simon wasn't really interested in learning anything from Christ – by this time many of the Pharisees were just trying to gather evidence to have Him put to death...
      - they were like the children we saw last week who criticized John the Baptist because he wouldn't eat or drink like they did...
      - and turned right around and criticized Jesus because He did...
  - in other words, they weren't interested in knowing the truth – they just wanted to discredit Jesus and find some fault in Him...
  - we're also told that it would not have been uncommon for the door to remain open and others from the town to come in and stand around and listen to the conversation and observe the meal...
  - that may have been what this woman was doing and no one noticed her at first because she was in the shadows...
  - and she came with...
    - **Luke 7:37 - ...she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,**

- the alabaster itself tells you this was very expensive because that was a costly kind of stone container...
- which probably says something about the value of the perfume as well...
- and what we assume happened here – although we don't know for sure and it ultimately doesn't matter to the main point of the story...
- but we assume that she came to anoint Jesus' head with this perfume...that's what would have typically happened in this culture...
- but the text says something else happened...
- **Luke 7:38 – standing behind him at His feet, weeping...**
- the word weeping is the **Greek** word **brecho – raining**
- it's the same word used in **Matthew 5:45 - ...He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous...**
- so now we have a real problem, because she's in the back away from the table...like guests would have in that culture, they are reclining with their feet away from the table...which would have been especially important because the passage also says that Simon hadn't bothered to wash Jesus' feet or have someone else to do it, which would have been just common courtesy...
- but we think perhaps what occurred is that this woman is trying to figure out how she is going to show her adoration of Christ by anointing His head and she's overcome with emotion because of what Christ has done for her...and eventually do for her...
  - so she's now raining tears---that's it – raining tears of adoration...on what are rapidly becoming his muddy feet...
- so now what do you do?....practice reckless love...
- C. By what she was willing to risk.**
  - you take down your hair – which also was a taboo in that culture to do in that setting...
  - but it's not like she had brought a towel...so she used the only thing she had...her own hair...mixed with the perfume, mixed with her own tears...
  - can you close your eyes and imagine that aroma?...and imagine that sight...
  - **Luke 7:38 - ...she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.**
  - does that look restrained to you?...does that look cautious?...
  - and I understand this point could be misapplied in a lot of ways...but let's not try to balance this so quickly that we take the aroma out of the air...or minimize the significance of the risk...
  - this woman, unlike Simon, loved Jesus – and it really didn't matter to her what other people thought of that...
- can I ask you this morning – is there any sense in which your love for Jesus is appropriately reckless?...when's the last time you practiced reckless love?...
- you say – what does that look like?...it could look like a million things...
  - for example, pulling yourself out of bed in the morning and taking time to open your Bible and commune with your Savior not out of legalistic duty but genuine heartfelt love...and some people might find that crazy but so what...
  - or organizing your life around honoring Him – and some people might think you're a fanatic...any more than this woman?
  - or standing up at work for what's right, or speaking for Him when it's appropriate...and if you risk professional advancement for that – so be it...
  - you love Jesus -- that's at the very core of your strength...and sometimes it looks...reckless...

## **II. Love Your Savior by Acknowledging the Depth of Your Need.**

- see, who's the biggest sinner in this story?...be careful...is it the woman, or is it Simon?...
- who's wearing the black hat in this tale?...
- and you might say – but wait a minute – in the parable that Jesus subsequently tells, he says that the person who has been forgiven for many sins will love the most...
- that's true – verse 47...
- **Luke 7:47 - For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.**
- but what was the point – too bad for you Simon – if you had sinned more, maybe you could have loved me better?...
  - the question isn't – who sins the most – we all sin...
  - the issue here is – who is willing to acknowledge it...
  - one of the most direct routes to loving Christ is...

#### **A. Number yourself among the sinners.**

- **Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**
- see, Simon thought far too highly of himself...
- in fact, how did he respond as this event unfolded with this sinful woman?...
- **Luke 7:39 - Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."**
- there's a perfect example of a person sincerely believing something, and having it entirely wrong...
- and you could be here this morning and think – well, this might be true of other people but it's not true of me – I don't fall short of God's glory – I don't need a Savior – I can earn my way to heaven...
- when the truth of matter is – you still fall short just like we all do whether you'll ever acknowledge it in this life or not...
  - and Jesus tries to help this man – how?...he reads his mind...
  - the man didn't make that statement out loud...he "said it to himself"...
  - and Jesus told him a parable that showed him – I know exactly what you're thinking...
- you might say – well, how do I get there?...

#### **B. Let your love for God's Word lead you to a correct view of yourself.**

- the larger picture here is – Simon is an illustration of the children we studied at the end of last week...
- **cf. Luke 7:31-35**
- they're trying to get their friends to play with them in the marketplace...so they trying playing funeral and the kids won't dance...
- so they trying playing funeral...and they won't weep...
- and Jesus said – that's exactly what you did to John the Baptist and me...
  - you rejected him because he wouldn't eat and drink...
  - and you rejected me because I did...
    - in other words, you're not interested in knowing the truth because you have no intention of submitting to its implications...

- and you might ask – well, how can I know?...

#### **C. Proceed from a proper analysis of yourself to corresponding acts of adoration for your Savior.**

- the more we understand our condition apart from Christ, the deeper our love and appreciation will be for what He did for us on the cross...
- and now the empty tomb gives us the power to grow in our love for Him every day...

- 1 John 4:19 - We love, because He first loved us.

**1. Lacking in Simon's life.**

- he didn't love Christ because he didn't think he needed anything from Him

**2. Overflowing in the "sinful woman's" life**

- she knew Christ was her only hope...and she couldn't believe He would love her not because of who she was, but in spite of who she was...

- Questions...

1. Have you admitted your need and placed your faith in Christ?...

- have you started this love relationship with Him?...

2. Are there examples in your life of what amounts to reckless love?...

- cf. folks serving in the Passion Play this week...

- In his book *Crazy Love*, Frances Chan said, **Obsessed people are more concerned with obeying God than doing what is expected or fulfilling the status quo. A person who is obsessed with Jesus will do things that don't always make sense in terms of success or wealth on this earth. (Crazy Love pg. 136-137**

- Joe Blake and Mike King have led the Faith West effort with Reckless Love for the people who live around 1920 NW – and our neighbors noticed and they came out to support us...

- Kevitt Brown has been leading the prayer effort with reckless love for the Lord, and He is answering those prayers...

- some of these questions about property taxes have given me an opportunity to explain to folks how Faith West is being funded – it's anything but a business – it's being funded by people who are crazy in love with Jesus...and they don't just talk about it, they do it...

**III. Love Your Savior by Surrounding Yourself with Others Who Are in Love with Him Too**

- the people at the dinner asked an interesting question...

- **Luke 7:49 - Those who were reclining *at the table* with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this *man* who even forgives sins?"**

- a better question would have been...how can we be more like her?