

Luke 7:18-50

Repentant humility translates to hope in the way of Jesus.

As a child of the 80s, and a lover of Science Fiction, one of my favorite movies was Tron. Do you know it? Kind of like a “Wreck-It Ralph” but live-action! Computer programs caught up in a game, with the evil mainframe trying to subdue and erase those program files that won’t submit. These programs have an interesting faith... in their users... those that wrote their code... it is the hope that carries them through and fuels their quest until they reach the upload and free the fractils.

The story tries to get at the human longing for more... and the beyond...

Humanity has an inborn longing for more. We all sense it. Something is off and there must be an answer. We find remedies to this longing in all sorts of places... claiming new identity, relationships, rebellion, chemicals.

If we are at this pursuit long enough, we hopefully come to realize that actually, we have what I call a Creator gap. We ache to be in proximity to our Creator. To be in relationship with him.

Once all the false fillers of this gap are rendered useless, then we get to what we are made for.

Malcolm Muggeridge “It is precisely when every earthly hope has been explored and found wanting, when every possibility of help from earthly sources has been sought and is not forthcoming, when every recourse this world offers, moral as well as natural, has been drawn on and expended with no effect, when in the shivering cold every stick has been thrown on the fire, and in the gathering darkness every glimmer of light has finally flickered out – it is then that Christ’s hand reaches out, sure and firm, that Christ’s words bring their inexpressible comfort, that his light shines brightest, abolishing the darkness forever.”

The longing is designed to lead us home, to Jesus.

In our text for today, this same longing is making an appearance.

You see Israel had an experiential history with this longing for a relationship with God. They had been set apart from other nations to reveal him. They had been entrusted with a way of life that glorified him. And they were familiar with the feeling of not living up to this way.

But they continued on because ever before them had been a promise of One that would come and establish a kingdom forever - to finally bring peace, salvation, then end of striving. This has been their hope, what fueled their quest.

“See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the covenant you delight in — see, he is coming,” says the Lord of Armies.” --

Malachi 3:1 (CSB)

Luke is an account of His arrival and the unleashing of His Kingdom, but the people who had exposure and a history of relating were confused as to how it happens, the Messiah has come to correct that and open the way for all who believe.

Like those expecting a certain way of redemption, we too might not be sure of Jesus. But in the interaction with the question, if he is the One, we may gain some insight and the hope we need to keep going.

There is One to believe in, to be discovered, to submit to...

Jesus is the One

John the baptizer is in prison hearing all of the reports of Jesus' ministry and the things that are happening around you. The healings. The resurrections. The growing excitement. Remember John is the mangy wilderness prophet who was bold and brash, calling people to repentance and standing up to the religious elite and political class because of their sin.

He is the one who baptized Jesus saying he was unworthy to do so, recognizing the Messiah had come. But as he is listening to the report of ministry, maybe it

was Jesus' claim of Isaiah that left him in doubt. He said he came to proclaim liberty to the captives and John waiting in his cell.

With a mind towards political change, John wonders if Jesus is the one to baptize with the Spirit. To redeem Israel. So he sends a couple of disciples to ask.

'Hey Cuz, "Are you the One who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

In the midst of the miraculous, this question comes. Jesus is healing, delivering, restoring people.

As we have been watching his ministry unfold, there seems like there is supposed to be a shift in the people's mindset. That this is what the Kingdom looks like. We have heard it in the Sermon on the Plain. Jesus leveled with his followers about the upside-down kingdom - not made of military means but of love for enemies.

Yet it is still hard to swallow for those waiting on what they usually expected.

Bernal's squeaky box spring - they had no peace until they flipped it over.

God's people would find peace when they let Jesus flip their expectations of redemption.

So he answers the question.

"He replied to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news, 23 and blessed is the one who isn't offended by me." -- **Luke 7:22-23** (CSB)

'Stay steady John - you are the messenger - I am the One.'

This will be the tension through the resurrection... before the ascension... even today. Is Jesus the One?

He keeps on proving it and if we would be so bold as to not be offended by him - we should see it too.

By answering, Jesus confirms John's ministry and he shows the way.

Repentance is the Way

Jesus says that John was more than a prophet, he was THE prophet. But the kingdom completes the work and brings something greater.

Hearing this the crowd "acknowledged God's way of righteousness." Those baptized into repentance by John had it confirmed they were doing things right.

Turning from sin, recognizing their need for something different, for God to act to save them. This was their baptism.

That's God's plan. That we would see our need, and bring it to him.

But the Pharisees and "experts in the law" didn't believe John and rejected the plan of God for themselves.

"But Pharisees and lawyers, who prided themselves on their keeping of the Law and were content to rest their hope of salvation on their merits, refrained from the humiliation of baptism. Of course, they would never have claimed to keep the Law perfectly but rather, sufficiently." Hughes

Jesus calls them a generation of children that find a complaint, a way around the kingdom at every turn.

This is vital - the question of "are you the One?" poses back to us, "Who are we?"

The unworthy, the sinners, those in need of redemption. Needing forgiveness.

Where we don't own our need for forgiveness, a turning away from sin and to God, we reject the plan of God for ourselves.

John Owen wrote, "He that hath slight thoughts of sin never had great thoughts of God."

Nobody likes the self-righteous... but we sometimes need Jesus to turn the mirror on us so we can see ourselves and he does just that here over dinner.

Simon the Pharisee has invited Jesus to his house for a meal. But he doesn't seem keen on giving any honor to Jesus. There is no welcome, no washing of his feet, no anointing of his guest. So there is an atmosphere of disrespect to begin with and a woman enters the scene.

In that day the homes of well-to-do people were built around central courtyards in which formal meals were served. The guests reclined on their left elbow on low-lying couches, eating with the right hand. One's feet would extend away from the table, in keeping with the belief that the feet were unclean and offensive by nature. And Jesus' feet were filthy since the host extended no courtesy to him.

Yet this woman, a sinner, likely a prostitute, found out Jesus would be there and she came. Broken, humble, with tears flowing.

Had she heard the message of the Kingdom and owned it for herself? Embarrassing or not she would not be offended by Jesus and she would give him the honor he is due.

She gives all of herself to bless Jesus.

Simon doesn't like it. And he thinks to himself... 'if Jesus was really a prophet he would know what kind of woman this is...'

Simon doesn't realize this is the kind of woman Jesus came to save!

Jesus answers Simon's thought with a mini-parable of debtors who have their debts forgiven. A 500 sinner and a 50 sinner. Which would love the creditor more?

Simon supposes the one with the bigger debt. He is right.

The one forgiven little loves little. This is not a standard but the reality of a perspective...

"Those who are keenly aware of their many sins and receive the stunning and amazing forgiveness of Jesus are filled with joy. But those who think they are good in and of themselves see little or no need for forgiveness. They do not think

grace is amazing because, like Simon, they think their own lives are rather amazing.” TS

She knows her sin - more than even the Pharisee presumed - and that is what she brings to Jesus.

“our response to Jesus and our love for him are directly connected to a proper view of ourselves and others. When we understand our brokenness and cast ourselves upon Jesus, the result is forgiveness of sin, love, and peace. If instead we lack compassion for others and love Jesus little, then, like Simon, we show that we do not understand ourselves or Christ’s grace.” GTB

In this mini-parable, what is fascinating is that both debtors were forgiven, needing forgiveness - the one doesn’t think they need much and misses it.

Sometimes, even the things we think we need to do to be better wreck us and act as a rejection of Jesus.

My dream - church space... poison to kill the vermin - but it brought more death than hoped for. Even trying to clean ourselves up without Jesus brings death.

This is what is going on with Simon. Trusting his reputation. His status. His obedience to a skewed view of the law. And it is a rejection of God’s plan.

In the kingdom, all of life is repentance. The way of righteousness, where forgiveness is found.

To the one humble, to the one repentant, to the one not offended by Jesus...
“Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” -- **Luke 7:48** (CSB)

“Because divine wisdom has been “justified by all her children,” men and women must abandon any delusions of self-sufficiency or innate goodness. They must stop looking for a god small enough to allow them to pretend that their imperfect righteousness is okay. They must stop looking for a salvation that is small enough to be earned.” Hughes

Before Jesus we are to be humbled with clear eyes, being honest can be uncomfortable, but it is for our good.

Humility's result is Hope

“Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.” -- **Luke 7:35** (CSB)

“Those who are truly wisdom's children prove God's plan. Tax collectors and sinners and all who accept the good news of John and Jesus show they are wise by their response to their message, by their repentance and discipleship.”
Schreiner

Humility before Christ is wisdom. Those that acknowledge God's plan, tax collectors, sinners, those in need of rescue, those that surrender to Jesus.

In repentant humility forgiveness and peace are found.

Sin is forgiven and forgotten... As Corrie ten Boom used to say, when God throws our sins into the deepest sea, he puts up a sign: “No Fishing!” If our sins are forgiven, we are at peace, for we know that God knows all that defiles us but has removed it from us forever through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The crowd might be uneasy... “Who is this man who even forgives sins?” He is Yahweh!

To those who come humble, repentant, and in faith, he says... “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” -- **Luke 7:50** (CSB)

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God.” --
Romans 5:1-2 (CSB)

The hope we need for living in our day. To carry us forward. To lift our heads. To bring us over the horizon. To unleash the kingdom in our midst!

Where do you need hope today? Find it in Jesus. Receive his peace.

“What a grace it is to feel your need. What a grace it is to stand still as you mourn your sins with a dirge, confessing them to God and repenting—and then to dance to the music of Heaven’s free grace.” Hughes

Repentant humility translates to hope in the way of Jesus.

Acknowledge God’s plan of righteousness - Come with repentant humility, be forgiven much, and love much. Jesus meets the need. He forgives all your debts. Believe in him, follow him, surrender to him.

Live this all of your days - In Christ, keep coming to the well of his grace. Live humble and hopeful in him, and remind those around you of his amazing grace.

This might just be what sparks revival among us. When we break our jars...

Break Your Jar - Matt Pilgrim

“Everyone loves beautiful, brimming jars.
But the King prefers broken vessels.

Not only because he can then repair them Himself -
He can. And he does. -
But because He loves to look out upon the beautiful devastation
Of lives that have been poured out,
That is, lives that have been made low.
To their knees, yes. But lower even still
Until they’ve been so profoundly humbled
That the world is turned upside down
Making the last first and the first last.

Jesus takes profound joy in surveying
The crime scene where the self was murdered.
The clues and the witnesses all pointing
To that blood-sealed testimony that “to die is gain”.

So it would be a holy pleasure indeed

To see a few more broken jars,
To endure a few cuts from shards of alabaster
As they bathe in the most precious of substances.
Substances with modern names like “time”, “talents”, and “treasure.”
And older names like “heart”, “soul”, “mind” and “strength”.
The sort of stuff that time, and good sense
And unbelief have taught us is too valuable -
Too precious - to add it to the coffers of the King.

A few more broken jars
And the gasps of horror and awe
Just might produce sufficient wind to turn coals to flame,
To put bones on flesh,
And to shake a few more Jonah’s from their ships
So they can start learning how to swim
And, simultaneously, how to stop swimming.

You can imagine that alabaster will shatter
Decidedly upon the Sea of Glass
Revealing those contents we believed were too sacred
Too necessary, too irreplaceable
To be poured out at the feet of the King.
So sacred that they were left to sit for eternity
On some white-picketed mantle, high above the fray.

So let’s break these jars of clay.
Let’s wash feet with those sacred materials
We quaintly call our “gifts” and “blessings”
Lest they become the very seal
That chokes the necks of these old jars
Until they die, all along thinking they were living.”

Jesus is the answer to that longing deep in our souls. He is the One that was to come. Run to Him in humility, turning from sin, giving yourself away and receiving peace.