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Luke 7



Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg unpacks Luke chapter 7, highlighting the unusual faith of the Gentile centurion and the pitiful case of the widow's son. He also dives into the controversial topic of uncleanness in Jewish society and how Jesus challenged societal norms by healing those considered unclean. Gregg explores the context behind John the Baptist's doubts about Jesus and how Jesus' response alludes to Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Overall, Gregg provides insightful commentary on the historical and cultural background of Luke chapter 7 that sheds new light on its meaning.

Transcript

All right, we're in Luke chapter 7 today. Some of the material in this chapter is unique to Luke. Some is not.

And the part that is not has some ways in which Luke differs from the parallels in Matthew and or Mark. We begin reading at verse 1. Now when he concluded all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum, and a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to him, pleading with him to come and heal his servant.

And when they came to Jesus, they begged him earnestly, saying, that the one for whom he should do this was worthy, for he loves our nation, and he has built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them, and when he was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to you.

But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having 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. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed him, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel. And those who were sent, returning to the

house, found the servant well, who had been sick.

Now this story is found in Matthew, but somewhat differently. Because if you read it in Matthew chapter 8, it turns out that there, we read there of the centurion himself coming to Jesus. If you read it in Luke, it looks as if the conversation took place directly between Jesus and this man.

And so, I'll just show you here in Matthew chapter 8, verse 5 says, Now when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, pleading with him. And it has the conversation that we read about in Luke, but it's represented as if the centurion is talking to Jesus face to face. Now Luke not only presents it differently, but he's emphatic about the fact that the man wouldn't come to see Jesus.

The man said, I did not think myself worthy to come to you. So he sent instead some of the elders of Israel. This is regarded, like many differences between the Gospels, as a contradiction by many people.

But we have to understand this is not really a contradiction. This is a case, again, of compressing a narrative. When an action is done by agents on behalf of another, it is not unusual, either in the Bible or elsewhere, to say that the actions were done by that individual.

Of course, they were done through his agents. Much business is transacted through agents, but the person whose agents they are is the one transacting the business. And therefore, when we speak about it, we could say that so-and-so made a negotiation and there was a merger between him and this other CEO of this other company.

And in fact, the arrangements might have been made through his agents, through representatives and so forth. What is done on behalf of another by his agents is done by him. And therefore, Luke is telling us more detail than what Matthew gives.

Matthew, we would just get the impression the conversation took place between the centurion and Jesus. Well, it did, but indirectly. There were elders of the Jews that were favorable toward this centurion.

And this is pretty unusual because a centurion is a Gentile. A centurion is a Roman official. He's an officer at a certain rank in the hierarchy of the Roman army.

And the word centurion suggests 100, and that's because he had 100 soldiers under him. He was a commander of 100. Now, therefore, he was a man of some authority and a man of some dignity in the service.

In fact, Polybius, the Latin writer, described centurions. They were chosen from a certain kind of character and class of men. And the Roman writer wrote this about centurions.

He says, centurions are mentioned a number of times in the Bible, and they're always favorably mentioned. There is, of course, Cornelius, the centurion. There is this centurion.

There's a centurion at the foot of the cross who says, surely this was the son of God. There's a centurion in the book of Acts who is protective of Paul as Paul's being conducted to Rome as a prisoner. The centurion seems to be very favorable toward Paul.

You never actually read of a centurion in the Bible without it being more or less a favorable image. These were men of good character, but they were not Jews. They were Gentiles, and Jews generally had no good things to say about Gentiles.

Yet this man, like Cornelius later on in Acts chapter 10, was very kind to the Jews. Most Romans were not. The Roman occupation army were generally very cruel and heartless and racist toward the Jews.

But once in a while you'd find a man who really cared about the people that he was controlling through his troops. And this particular man, Jesus is told, this man is worthy of being helped by you, Jesus, because he loves our nation. He's even built us a synagogue.

That is, at his own expense, he helped the Jews construct a synagogue. So this man must have been what we would call a God-fearer. Among the Gentiles, there were three kinds.

There were those that were pagans, and they worshipped other gods. There were those that were proselytes to Judaism. That is, they'd been converted to Judaism, and they were counted as Jews.

They got circumcised and kept the Jewish law. But there's a third category of Gentiles that we read of in the Bible, and that is those who are called God-fearers. They were not pagans because they were enamored with the Jewish religion and the Jewish God.

They felt the Jewish God made more sense or was better, more admirable, more worthy of worship than their pagan gods. But they didn't go so far as to become circumcised and become converts to Judaism. Instead, they still held themselves a little aloof from the Jewish religion, but looked on it favorably.

And this must have been what this man was. That certainly is what Cornelius was. Cornelius was not circumcised, but he was a worshipper of the Jewish God, and he prayed and gave alms as a good Jewish man would.

Now, this centurion is a different one, but obviously this must have been the case with a number of centurions. They were not the wicked pagans that Romans were often thought to be. And this man was apparently unusual enough among Gentiles that even

the elders of the synagogue, the elders of Israel, thought well of him.

And for any Gentile to have Jews thinking well of him is a pretty unusual thing. But he apparently asked them to go on his behalf to see Jesus. He had heard about Jesus.

He had a servant who was dying. He was near death and needed the recovery. In desperation, the man thought Jesus was his only hope to heal his servant.

But he did not think himself worthy to come to Jesus. Now, in Matthew's parallel, where it looks like the man is talking to Jesus, Jesus said, I'll go and heal him. And the man said, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Just speak the word. And just like we read here, although in this case we read that this latter part of the conversation was done through other messengers. The first messengers that came to Jesus were the elders of the Jews informing Jesus about the situation and asking Jesus to do something for this man.

And when Jesus responded and started going toward the man's house, messengers from the house came out and said, oh, don't bother Jesus with coming here. Now, this was not because they didn't want to be welcoming to Jesus or were inhospitable. It's because the Jews would not go into a Gentile's house.

That was customary. A Gentile's house would be thought to have things in it that a Jew could not countenance. They could not eat at a Gentile's house because Gentiles didn't serve kosher food.

And even in the Gentile's house, there might be unclean things, things that to the Jew would be defiling. And so it was just customary. A Jew would not go into a Gentile's house.

You might remember when Peter went to Cornelius' house. It was only after he'd received a vision from God telling him to do so. And when he went to Cornelius' house, he says, you know, it's unlawful for me as a Jew to come into your house.

But I did it anyway because God showed me not to be prejudiced. And likewise, Jesus was clearly ready to go to this man's house. Jesus didn't have this prejudice the Jews had.

He was going to go to the man's house. But the man thought, oh, I can't ask you to do that. You're a Jew.

You wouldn't want to come into my house. You're being too gracious. I'm going to just say, don't bother yourself.

Don't endanger your own reputation or whatever by coming to my house. I know that you have the authority to speak the word and it'll be good enough. And the man said, I

know this because I know something about authority.

I'm in authority in a hierarchy myself. I tell my soldiers to go somewhere and they go there. I tell them to come over here and they come.

I tell a servant to do something, he does it. Now, somehow this statement really impressed Jesus, obviously. It says, when Jesus heard these things, verse 9, he marveled at them.

Jesus sometimes marveled at people's lack of faith. We read, there's one place that tells us, I think in Mark, that Jesus, when he went to Nazareth, couldn't do many mighty works there. And it says he marveled at their unbelief.

Here he marveled at this man's faith. The reason he marveled at the unbelief of the people of Nazareth is they were Jews and knew him and should well have been receptive to him, but they weren't. He marveled at this man's faith because he was a Gentile.

And he said, I haven't found this kind of faith in all of Israel, that is among the Jews. Here I am in Israel among my own people, the Jews, God's people, the covenant people, and I don't find faith among any of them like I find with this Gentile who's not even one of God's people. This is what was so marvelous to Jesus.

By the way, the fact that Jesus sometimes marveled at people's faith and sometimes marveled at their lack of faith raises questions about the whole issue of Calvinism because Jesus shouldn't be marveling. I mean, if God has foreordained that someone's going to have faith, they're going to have it. If he's foreordained that they won't have it, they won't.

It's nothing to be surprised about. If you're a Calvinist, you know going into it that some people just aren't going to have faith and can't. Others are going to have faith and can't otherwise.

Jesus didn't apparently see things that way. He thought people should be able to have faith and he was marveling when they didn't. He thought some people probably wouldn't have faith and he marveled when they did.

In this case, because he was a Gentile primarily. He contrasts this with the Jews. In fact, when Jesus says this in verse 9, Matthew inserts a saying of Jesus from another place, but which is relevant to the point.

And if you look at Matthew chapter 8 in verse 10, at the end of verse 10, Jesus says, I've not found such great faith, not even in Israel. His next words, Jesus' next words are, I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness and there will be weeping and gnashing of

teeth.

This statement of Jesus is also recorded in Luke, but in a different context. It's found in Luke 13, verse 29. But Matthew, who arranges things topically, felt that this saying of Jesus from another occasion would work well here too, because it's making the point.

Here's a man who is unlike most of Israel. Most of Israel, Jesus doesn't find faith in them. Here's a Gentile who has faith.

This is important of things to come. There will be many Gentiles, many from the east and the west, that is outside of Israel, who will come into God's kingdom while the children of the kingdom, that is the natural heirs, the Jews, will be thrown out. He's not saying all the Jews will be thrown out and all the Gentiles will come in, but he's saying just as it's surprising to find a Gentile who has more faith than a Jew, there will be many Gentiles who have more faith than many Jews.

Many of the children of the kingdom, meaning the Jews, the natural heirs. Remember, the kingdom was first offered to Israel in Exodus 19, verses 5 and 6. It was Israel's natural inheritance to have the kingdom, but they rejected it. And so he says the children, or the normal heirs of the kingdom who would be expected to inherit, they'll be thrown out.

They won't be in there because of their lack of faith. But many Gentiles from the east and the west and the north and the south will come in. And they will be in the kingdom.

And he talks about sitting down at the table with Abram, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom. We might picture this as a heavenly scene, you know, where we're united with the saints of the past and sitting at the great feast. And maybe that's correct, but I think he's using it figuratively.

I think he's saying he is currently inviting people to this feast that he is participating in. Remember, he's just said that he's the bridegroom in a previous story. They said, why don't your disciples fast with the bridegroom? You don't fast at the wedding feast.

His movement was a feast. His movement was a wedding feast. And Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, because of their faith, were already a part of this movement.

And Gentiles would join them at the table, so to speak, as followers and worshipers of Christ. But the Jews who didn't have faith would not. And so, although Jesus probably didn't say that remark on this occasion, because Luke records it in a different context, and Matthew is the one who tends to gather things in a topical way, yet it is the same idea.

This one Gentile who had more faith than many Jews would be like a token of a much greater movement in the future where more Gentiles than Jews would be coming in. And

verse 10, Luke 7, 10 says, And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick. Now, the next story is only found in Luke.

It is one of three cases that we read of Jesus raising the dead. We know the famous story of him raising Lazarus from the dead. There is also a story recorded in multiple Gospels of the raising of Jairus from the dead.

Only John, in his Gospel, mentions Lazarus. And only Luke mentions this story of the son of a widow in a town called Nain. So, multiple Gospels record Jairus' daughter incident, but Luke alone mentions this case of Jesus raising the dead, and John alone mentions Lazarus.

But those three together make the only cases we actually have record of. However, we do know that when Jesus sent out the Twelve and the Seventy, he told them, heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead. So, apparently there were many more people raised from the dead during the ministry of Jesus than we have specifically recorded.

A few incidents simply stand as examples of a larger movement. There must have been others raised from the dead, not only by Jesus, but even by the Twelve that he sent out even during his ministry. So, raising the dead wasn't a unique instance.

Actually, there were raisings of the dead in the Old Testament, too. Elijah raised the dead, and so did Elisha. Elisha did it after he himself was dead.

The dead body was thrown into his tomb and touched Elisha's bones, and the body rose, but Elisha didn't. But his bones raised a man from the dead. So, raising from the dead is not something unprecedented as a work of God, and it wasn't even restricted to the three cases we have recorded in the Gospels.

In Jesus' case, I'm sure he raised others, and we know he commissioned his disciples to do so, and they must have done so as well. But this is one case where, you know, a particularly pitiful case, because this was the only son of a widow. Now, a woman who was a widow, left with children, was a pitiful thing.

She was going to be poor, more likely than not, unless her husband had left her some kind of a fortune. But most widows were the most vulnerable and poor in the society. But she had only one son to count on to kind of pull her out of poverty.

If he grew up and got a job and supported himself, he could take care of her in her old age, and that was what would be expected. However, her son now dies, the only son. So, she is truly, entirely destitute.

And this takes place in a town of Nain, which is about a day's walk from Capernaum, and it says this happened on the next day. So, Jesus must have walked from Capernaum all day and got to Nain probably around evening. It says, now it happened the day after,

that is, the day after he had been in Capernaum.

He's now in this other town a day's walk away. He went into a city called Nain, and many of his disciples went with him and a large crowd. So, we've got quite a parade here walking through the streets of Nain, one direction with Jesus at the head.

And when he came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. So, we have two large crowds.

It says there's a large crowd with Jesus and a large crowd with this funeral procession. They're coming down the street another direction. They're going to intersect, and that's how this story takes place.

But you can picture this situation if you're up in a helicopter looking down at it, and you'd see these two large processions coming down different streets, coming toward a certain intersection where they're going to meet. And one is a procession of Jesus who's full of life, and the other's in celebration, and everyone's marveling and celebrating the life and the healing and the great things that Jesus is doing. And the other is a mourning company, mourning this mother's loss, this widow's loss of her only son.

So, the moods of the two groups are very different when they intersect. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, do not weep. Now, that might have seemed like a really insensitive thing to say.

What do you mean don't weep? I'm a widow. This is my only son. He's dead.

Aren't you supposed to mourn your dead? But, of course, Jesus never gives unreasonable instructions. If he says don't weep, there must be something encouraging that he has in mind. There must be something that means weeping is not going to be appropriate when you see how this turns out, so stop weeping.

Then he came and touched the open coffin. Now, this would ordinarily make a Jew unclean, to touch a coffin. Yes, people had to touch coffins, and becoming unclean was not a sin.

We have to realize that uncleanness under the law was not the same thing as sin. Sin would be a violation of a command of God. The Bible does not command people not to bury their dead, but it does say if they do, they contract ceremonial uncleanness.

Likewise, a person who is a leper. There's no command of Scripture, don't become a leper, but if you are a leper, you're unclean. It's not a sin to be a leper, but it's an unclean state.

Lots of things could render a person unclean. Contact with any unclean person or thing

would make them unclean. It's just a symbolic, ritualistic condition.

I believe uncleanness in Scripture is symbolic for sin, but it isn't sin. A woman on her period was unclean. The woman with the issue of blood who was not on her period but had been bleeding for years, she was unclean.

Anyone with an issue of blood was unclean. A man who had a wet dream was unclean. A person who was at battle and someone was killed next to them was unclean because they were in contact with a dead body.

Lots of very innocent conditions would make a person unclean, either until nightfall or for a week, depending on the situation. Touching a dead body or a coffin or even probably attending a funeral, even if you didn't touch anything, would make you unclean. The high priests were not allowed to attend funerals because that would make them unclean.

The Nazarite, likewise, was not allowed to go to a funeral because that's one of the three things he wasn't allowed to do. But most people, of course, were expected to go to funerals. Most people were expected to do this and they would simply figure, okay, I'll be unclean for the week.

What unclean means doesn't mean you're guilty and if you die you're going to hell or something like that. Unclean just means that you've contracted a ceremonial condition that lasts for a prescribed length of time. It's symbolic for sin in that it alienates you in some ways from society and from the temple.

You can't go to the temple when you're unclean and you can't really even associate with people in close contact when you're unclean. Because if someone touches you, they're unclean. So the idea is that uncleanness separates you from the worship of God at the temple for a week and from society in general.

Not because you're bad, but just because you had maybe the misfortune or even the duty of attending a funeral or something else. These unclean states were extremely numerous and after you were unclean, you'd end your period of uncleanness with a bath. You'd wash your clothes and your body and that'd be the end of it.

Certain states would make you unclean until nightfall. Other states would make you unclean for a week. And during that time, you couldn't go to the temple and you couldn't have contact with your friends and family and so forth physically.

And therefore, it's like sin. Sin alienates us from God and from people. And that's the idea here.

Leprosy, particularly as an unclean state, seems to serve as a really good type and shadow of sin. And it's through these ceremonies that God is teaching lessons about spiritual things. But uncleanness is not itself a spiritual thing.

Jesus touching this coffin was not necessary. He could have just commanded, as he did in the case with Lazarus. He didn't touch anything when he raised Lazarus.

He just said, Lazarus, come forth. Likewise, with Jairus' daughter, as I recall, he didn't touch her. He just said, little girl, arise.

He could have done that here, but he deliberately touched the coffin. This is really an interesting thing because that would be controversial, or at least it would seem to put him in the state of uncleanness with the others who were attending the funeral. He could have remained more aloof and done the same miracle.

But he was associating with those in their grief and in their uncleanness, as it were. Jesus, we know, actually did take our sins upon himself on the tree and bear them. And his association with sinners is perhaps even symbolized by his willingness to associate with the unclean condition.

However, as he took our sins, he defeated sin and brought life and righteousness. So also, by his contact with this dead body, he changed the situation thereto. The dead man came alive.

One has to wonder whether the people still had to be unclean for the next week or not when the dead man that made them unclean wasn't dead anymore. I suppose that probably was a situation that the law didn't have any explanations for. If you come in contact with a dead body, but he's not dead anymore, are you still unclean? I presume not.

I think an argument could be made that the people are no longer unclean since there's no dead body that they've been in contact with. Anyway, Jesus did that. He touched the coffin.

And those who carried it stood still. And they're wondering why he's doing that. First of all, approaching a dead body would be something you wouldn't want to do if you're trying to avoid uncleanness.

Jesus walks right up, tells the woman not to weep. Surprising thing to say to a widow who's lost her only child is bury him. Everyone's wondering what's going on here.

These people of name may or may not have heard of Jesus. This was not extremely far from Capernaum, and rumors about him may have reached them previously. But there's a good chance that there are people in this crowd who had no idea who Jesus was and why this man was heading a parade and walking up and touching a coffin, which would be something usually they wouldn't want to do.

So they stood still, not knowing what to do. Are we supposed to keep moving or are we supposed to stop and see what this guy's going to do or what? They stood in their steps.

And he said, young man, I say to you, arise.

Now, this is the exact way that he raised the dead on other occasions, addressing the person and telling him to arise. Lazarus, come forth. Talithicum, little girl, I say to you, arise.

Young man, I say to you, arise. Raising the dead, notice Jesus didn't pray for the dead to rise. Actually, Jesus never prayed for the sick to be healed either.

And he never prayed for demons to leave people. Jesus didn't pray about those things. He just did it.

He didn't say, Father, please raise the dead. He just raised them himself. Get up.

He always commanded the sick to be well and commanded the demons to come out. Jesus was not doing these things through prayer. He was doing them through the authority the Father had given him to address these things.

And death recognized his authority, just like demons did. Demons, sickness, the wind and the waves, they obey him. They recognize who he is and the authority he has.

And so did even death itself. Now, by the way, when we act in Jesus' name, we are doing in his place what he would do. And therefore, the apostles, they didn't pray for the sick either or for the dead to rise.

They did the same thing Jesus did. When Peter encountered the man at the gate of the temple who was lame, he didn't say, Father, please heal this man. He said, in the name of Jesus Christ, get up and walk.

And when he was taken up to Tabitha's room where she had died, Dorcas, in Acts chapter 9, he just turned to the body and said, now he did pray first. We don't know what he prayed. He says, Peter prayed and then he turned to the body and said, Tabitha, arise.

He did just what Jesus did. That is the exercise of Christ's authority in Christ's name is not done apparently through prayer, although we also pray in Jesus' name. When we pray, we pray in his name.

But when we do anything else, we do it in his name. In fact, Colossians says, whatsoever you do in word and deed, do all in the name of Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we act as we act in his place.

We are his body. We are the extension of him. The last verse of Ephesians 1 says that we are the church, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

So the body, the blood, the bones, I should say, the flesh and the bones of Jesus. This is

what we are. And in this world, we are his agents and we act as he would act in his name if he authorizes us.

That's what prayer in Jesus' name means. We pray what he would pray. We pray standing in for him, praying what we believe his prayer would be and with his authority, with his authorization.

That's what it means to pray in Jesus' name or to do anything in Jesus' name, to do it the way he would. So praying for the dead to rise is something the apostles didn't do. Praying for the sick is something they didn't do.

Now, there's a question that's raised and that is should we not then ever pray for the sick? The Bible does authorize prayer for the sick. It says in James 5, if there is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. In the prayer of faith, she'll save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up.

This is the elders of the church. It would appear that the apostles, which is different than the elders. The elders are simply the local church authorities, but the apostles were the men that were given Christ's special apostolic authority.

They acted as if they were Jesus himself. They didn't pray for the sick. They just commanded the sick.

Elders and perhaps others don't necessarily have apostolic authority. They're not exactly given the same authority that Jesus gave the apostles. Remember it said in Mark 3 that Jesus chose the 12 that he might give them the authority to heal the sick and cast out demons.

So there is a special authority that was given to the apostles and they did act exactly like Jesus in cases like this. Some of us may not have apostolic authority and it may fall to us simply like the elders of the church to pray for someone to be well. It's hard to know in each case what to do.

One thing is we always want to learn the rules. We always want to learn the methods. How is this done? When I face a sick person, what should I do? Should I pray? Should I command them to be well? What am I supposed to do? Well, what you're supposed to do then as at all times is be led by the Holy Spirit.

We always want to have the rules written down like the Pharisees had. The Pharisees had all their rules written down or at least oral traditions. They knew they had rules for everything and Jesus didn't come to bring more rules, a different set of rules.

He came to bring a relationship with God where we're walking in the Spirit and doing what the Spirit leads you to do. So all this is to say that there may be times when God

gives you the authority to command a sick person to be well or a dead person to rise for that matter. But in cases where that isn't so, I think we're left to pray.

But Jesus didn't have to pray for them. He could give commands because he had inherent authority, who he was. The apostles had inherent authority because of Christ giving it to them.

And so demons obeyed him, the wind and the waves obeyed him, death even obeyed him. And he commands a dead man who couldn't hear him, presumably, to rise. And yet it says, he who was dead sat up and began to speak and he presented him to his mother.

That must have been a touching moment. He not only raised him and walked away, he went and he took him to his mother and presented him alive to her again. Then fear came upon all and they glorified God saying, a great prophet has risen up among us and God has visited his people.

And this report about him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region. Now this was not a town in Judea, this was in actually Galilee, but there must have been visitors there from Judea or of course people from Galilee regularly went to Judea. So his reputation spread that direction too.

Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus saying, are you the coming one or do we look for another? Then the men, excuse me, when the men had come to him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us to you saying, are you the coming one or do we look for another? And that very hour, when they arrived, they had occasion to see some stuff going on. That very hour he cured many people of their infirmities, afflictions and evil spirits.

And to many who were blind, he gave sight. Then Jesus answered and said to them, go and tell John the things that you've seen and heard. That the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.

And blessed is he who is not offended because of me. And when the messengers of John had departed, he began to speak to the multitude concerning John. And we'll talk about what he said about John in a moment.

Let's talk about this first part first. By the way, the word messengers in the verse 24, when the messengers of John left is the word angels, angeloi in the Greek. And you may be aware that the word angeloi or angel means messengers generically.

It's usually used of, you know, heavenly messengers, spirits sent by God with messages and things like that. You know, what we usually think of as angels. That's how the word is usually used in the New Testament.

But in the Greek, secular Greek, it just means messengers. And in the New Testament, in a place like this, it clearly just means human messengers. I say that here because it may be important elsewhere in looking at certain passages.

Knowing that it's not always supernatural beings from heaven that are referred to, although the word angels sometimes is used to translate it. I'm thinking primarily of the Olivet Discourse where Jesus said he will then send his angels out to gather the elect from the four winds. This is the word messengers also, and it may be referring to evangelism rather than angels from God collecting people up.

That's for another passage. But I note this because it's fairly reasonably uncommon in the New Testament for the word *angeloi* to mean human messengers, but it certainly does here. Now, John the Baptist heard word about what Jesus was doing, and it's interesting that it didn't encourage John the Baptist.

It made him wonder, are you the right guy or not? Why is that? Well, Jesus was doing what some prophets in the past had done. In fact, the people in name were saying a great prophet has risen. Why? Because prophets like Elijah and Elisha did these kinds of miracles.

But the Messiah is supposed to do something else, John thought. Not just do miracles like prophets do, not just to impress people. The Messiah is supposed to be delivering his people from their enemies, and the Romans are their enemies.

And John himself was imprisoned by the Romans at this very time. John wasn't supposed to be there. The Messiah is supposed to drive the Roman power out, not just tolerate them.

And John was feeling more than most the cost of tolerating them. As long as the Romans were in power, he was rotting in a third world jail. Really, eventually he died there.

And it didn't seem to John like this is really what the Messiah's business is, going out healing people. That's nice, but when are you going to get around to doing the Messiah stuff? You know, the delivering your people, the David kind of stuff. David came in and he drove out the Philistines and David drove out the enemies and Messiah is going to be another David.

He's going to deliver his people from their enemies and these enemies, Romans, they're kind of a pain in the neck right now, especially to someone like John, who's in their jails. And John, who had known Jesus or certainly had believed that Jesus was the Messiah and announced him to be, was now beginning to wonder, what's up with this? You know, I thought you were the guy. Are you? Or am I supposed to be looking for someone else? Now, this question on John's part has troubled some people.

They say, well, how in the world could John ask a question like that? He was a prophet.

He knew Jesus was the Messiah. He had pointed out, he'd seen the Spirit come down as a dove.

How could John even have doubts? To ask this question requires that we don't observe human nature very realistically. People have doubts all the time who have no excuse for doubts. The Israelites, once they were taken through the Red Sea, were grumbling and doubting that God was on their side three days later.

Three days only. After seeing such a miracle and rejoicing and singing and praising God for his deliverance, three days later, they don't have enough water and starting to feel the pinch of thirst. They say, you know, did God just want to kill us out here? You know, is God on our side or not? Well, how could you wonder about that when only three days earlier you've had such a deliverance? But it doesn't take long for circumstances to change your mood, you know? How many people have said, God, if you get me out of this, I'll serve you forever.

Well, they get out of it and they forget God right away. They don't serve him. There have been many times when I thought, after I've seen a miraculous provision of God or an answer to prayer, I thought, wow, I could never doubt God again.

This is amazing. But I do sometimes doubt him again later. There's times when the needs are great and the finances are not visible.

And I think, you know, what are we going to do now? You know, well, there's been a thousand times in the past where I wondered the same thing and God came through. And I thought, well, I'll never doubt God again. Human nature is such that you can doubt more readily than you can believe what you can't see.

John certainly had great faith during the revival where everyone's coming to be baptized with him. Everyone, he was the talk of the nation. He was a celebrity and he was riding the crest of a revival wave.

And Jesus was the next banner carrier. Or, you know, he's going to pass the baton to Jesus and it's going to go on. And Jesus is going to carry this movement out to its finish and drive those Romans out.

Instead, John's in prison and Jesus is doing nothing about it. And so he's thinking, was I wrong? Now, there's a possibility that what, as I said, that John was genuinely having these doubts. Some have suggested that it wasn't that John was really having these doubts.

I think these explanations aren't as likely to be true, but I'll give them because some commentators think them. Some think that John knew that Jesus was the Messiah, but his words were calculated to sort of shame Jesus into getting on with the program. Are you the one or not? Are you going to come through for us or not? You know, here I am in

jail.

Don't forget about me here. You know, it's all well and good for you to be riding the crest of popularity. I'm here rotting here.

Are you the one we're looking for? Should we look for someone else? More or less sort of a sarcastic, no, let's get with the program, you know, show who you really are. Not that John doubted it, but that John doubted that Jesus was on schedule. Doubted that Jesus was motivated to really move forward as quickly as he should.

Some feel that John's question was sort of to needle Jesus a little bit, to goad him on and to get him to get with the program. Now, another view is that John had no doubts at all. He knew who Jesus was, but John's disciples were having questions and that John's disciples would come to him and said, John, you said this guy was the Messiah.

It doesn't look like he's doing any Messiah stuff. Is this the right guy or not? And John, knowing very well that Jesus was, said, why don't you ask him? Why don't you ask him if he's the one who's to come or not? Tell him I asked, you know, but knowing that Jesus would give them an answer that would convince them. So this is a very charitable interpretation for John, that John had no question in his mind about it.

It was his disciples' faith that he was trying to encourage by sending them to ask Jesus and get some kind of an answer that would persuade them. My own thought is the most natural understanding is probably the correct one. John really had his doubts at this moment.

Prophets got depressed. John was like Elijah. He came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Elijah was depressed a lot. Elijah would say, it's not going to rain again until I say so. And the next day Jezebel puts a price on us and he runs out and says, God, kill me.

I'm, you know, I'm no good. I, you know, no sense in me living any longer. And he was a despondent, moody kind of a guy, Elijah.

John could have been too, probably lonely. He lived out in the wilderness with locusts, you know. How, you know, how many friends could a guy like that have? How many close relationships? And the man was probably melancholy and thinking, well, you know, Jesus, I really thought he was the guy, but now I'm beginning to have my questions.

I think I'll just ask him. And so he sends these messengers and they say, are you the one coming or not? Should we look for someone else? There might've been a little bit of a jab in that last part. Should we look for someone else or are you going to do the job? Now, Jesus, it says, at the very hour these men came was doing these kinds of miracles and they saw them.

And he said, why don't you go tell John what you've seen? Well, what have you seen? Well, you've seen and heard the blind being healed, the lame walking, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Now, why would this be an answer to John's question? Well, what Jesus is doing is alluding to two passages in the Old Testament about the Messiah, both of them in Isaiah. One is Isaiah 35 and the other is Isaiah 61.

In Isaiah 35, this is a messianic chapter describing the messianic kingdom. And it says, in Isaiah 35, 5 and following, Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

In other words, these things are said to accompany the messianic age. Jesus said, go tell John what you see. The blind are seeing, the lame are walking, the deaf are hearing.

This is the stuff that Isaiah said the Messiah would do. And then Isaiah 61, which Jesus himself had read in Luke chapter 4 in the synagogue of Nazareth and had said this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. It says in Isaiah 61, 1, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

The Messiah is preaching good news to the poor. Notice at the end of Luke 7, 22, he says, Why should the poor have the gospel preached to them? Now, he doesn't say yes or no to John. He says, well, why don't you just tell John what's going on out here? Put it in these terms.

The gospel is being preached to the poor. The blind are seeing, the deaf are hearing, the lame are walking, the lepers are being cleansed. Isn't that what the Bible says the Messiah is going to do? Now, it's not what the Jews thought the Messiah was going to do.

They thought he was going to be a military leader. But, Jesus is pointing out, you know, really, they're ignoring what the Bible actually says he's going to do and they've got their own plan for the Messiah. The Jews had come up with their own traditional ideas of how the Messiah would behave and so forth.

And John, as a Jew raised in that society, though a prophet, prophets don't know everything, they only know what's been revealed to them. Otherwise, they're ordinary people. And he apparently had the same ideas other Jews did about what the Messiah would do and was a little disappointed that Jesus wasn't doing that.

And Jesus points out, hey, what I'm doing is right. I'm doing the right thing. It's scriptural.

If you pay attention to these scriptures and look at what I'm doing, you'll answer your own question. And he says, as a final tag to this message he sends off to John, and blessed is he who is not offended because of me. Now, offended here means stumbled.

Whoever's not stumbled because of me. In other words, I am doing things that might stumble you. That is, your faith may be stumbled because I don't measure up to your expectations.

What I'm doing is not what you thought I would do, and that might make you have your doubts, but I am doing the right thing. Trust me. Blessed is the man who doesn't stumble because of what I'm doing.

This is a really important statement of Jesus because it's very relevant to many situations because many people experience disappointment with God. If they've been taught that he's supposed to heal them, he doesn't heal them. He's supposed to prosper them, he doesn't prosper them.

He's supposed to answer their prayers, he doesn't answer their prayers, they thought. He's supposed to save their children because they raised them right, and he doesn't save their children. It's like, what's up, God? I thought you're supposed to do this.

And people often lose their faith. Losing faith, disappointment with God is almost always because of unmet expectations. In fact, that's in fact what disappointment means, isn't it? You're disappointed because you had expectations that were not met.

Now, is it that God is unfaithful and he doesn't meet proper expectations, or is it that our expectations are off kilter? We have come to allow ourselves to expect something from God that it may be he never really intended for us to expect. We have interpreted things a certain way, and it's not how he intended them to be understood. But because we have misunderstood, we have wrong expectations, he doesn't meet them, and we're disappointed.

And we could be stumbled, and many people have lost their faith because God wasn't, you know, he didn't do what they thought he should do. Even in general, people say, you know, if there's really a good God, why is there so much evil in the world? Just generically. How could God allow this evil? How could God allow these children to suffer? How could God allow tsunamis to happen? They're disappointed with God.

They think somehow if God's what he's supposed to be, he wouldn't do that. Their expectations are of God being a certain way, and he doesn't turn out to be that way. He actually does let tsunamis happen.

He really does tolerate evil in the world much longer than we think he should. And we think, well, then I'm giving up on you, God, because you're not what I thought you were supposed to be. Well, you've just failed your test.

You flunk. Your faith is tested. Trusting God is always right, because God is never wrong.

But our expectations can be mistaken. If we think a good God would never allow evil in

the world, we just don't know as much as we need to know about what a good God would or would not do or why. We may not understand why he does what he does, but that doesn't mean he doesn't understand why.

And we have to trust that he knows what he's doing. And that's what Jesus is saying to John. I'm not doing what you think a Messiah should do.

Well, you're going to stumble over that? You're going to give up your faith? This is a test of your faith, John. You'll be a blessed man if you don't stumble over this, but you might. People have done so.

Blessed is man who doesn't stumble because of me, Jesus says. That's a great line, I think, relevant to very many things. Now, when the messengers of John had departed, he began to speak to the multitude concerning John.

What did you go out into the wilderness to see? He's talking about the fact that they had gone out to see John baptized previously. A reed shaking in the wind? John is not a reed shaking in the wind. He's a stable guy, but even he can have his doubts.

He's not a weakling, though. He's not a moral weakling, a spineless fellow. He's a man of principle.

Did you think that's what you're going to find, a spineless character? A man who just is tossed to and fro by every wind of human opinion? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? A man in a fancy suit? He says, indeed, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury, they're in king's courts. They're not out in the wilderness eating bugs. They're in king's courts.

You go out in the wilderness, you don't expect to see a man in a three-piece suit. You expect to see a man wearing camel's hair. That's what you found.

In other words, did you think you'd see a religious leader like you're accustomed to here in Israel? Guys who just follow human opinion if it's convenient. Guys who are living in luxury in this world. No, you found, John, a different kind of man than that.

A man of principle. A man with some backbone. A man who gets himself thrown in jail for not backing down on his convictions.

A man who forsakes the pleasures and comforts of the world for his calling in God. Living in rough garments and in rough circumstances. This is an unusual man.

He's an unusual man. And Jesus said, but what did you go out to see? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet, this is he of whom it is written, he quotes Malachi 3.1, behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way before you. For I say to you, among those born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist,

but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Now this is a strange statement, obviously. Of those born of women, there isn't a greater prophet than John the Baptist. By the way, the word prophet is not found in the Alexandrian text, so it's not clear whether he said that here.

In Matthew's version, it doesn't say prophet. In Matthew's version, which is in Matthew 11, it just says there's not a greater than John the Baptist. But if prophet is correct and implied, then what it's saying is that John is the greatest of the prophets.

Jesus said, did you go out to see a prophet? Yeah, he is a prophet, but more than that, he's more than an ordinary prophet. He's the greatest of the prophets. The prophets could announce that someday God will send the kingdom.

Someday God will restore Israel. Someday God will come as the Messiah and shepherd Israel. Someday, all the prophets could say.

John could say, this is the day. There he is, there's the Lamb of God. His message is the most important of all the prophetic messages.

He could actually point to Jesus. He's the greatest of the prophets. Now, if the word prophet doesn't belong there, if he's just the greatest guy, that could still be true.

Jesus taught the world of John. He could be using a hyperbole. There's no one greater.

Like I say about some of my friends who are guitar players, he's the best guitar player in the world. Well, you know, he probably isn't, but you know what I mean. And say, well, there's no one greater than John the Baptist.

Could be a hyperbole of sorts. He's a great guy. You won't find many that can match him in terms of his strength of character and so forth and his dedication to God.

But he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John. And by that, I think he means, holds a greater privilege, has a greater privilege than John. Because John didn't have the privilege of coming into the kingdom.

He announced the kingdom of God is at hand. But the kingdom of God came after John died. And so John didn't have the privilege of being in the kingdom, only announcing that it was at hand and present.

And for that reason, those who actually are in the kingdom who live after the death and resurrection of Jesus and come into the age of the spirit and the kingdom of God, they have greater privilege than John and perhaps are even greater prophets than John because their message is even greater than John's. Because we can speak of the kingdom that has come. John could say the kingdom is at hand.

No earlier prophet could say that. John could say the kingdom of God is at hand. We can say the kingdom of God is here.

Come on in. We have a greater message than John even. But we also have greater privilege.

And that must mean what, that must be what Jesus means. Now, these verses that come next, verses 29 and 30, are unique to Luke. This general speech about John is found also in Matthew.

But these verses are not included in Matthew, verse 29 and 30. And when all the people heard him, even the tax collectors who had crucified God having been baptized with the baptism of John. Now, heard him, the word him is italics.

It's not in the Greek. And notice the translators have capitalized it. They've supplied the word him and capitalized it meaning Jesus.

I think it really means John. I think this is either Jesus speaking or it is Luke speaking about John. I think it's probably Jesus continuing to speak about John.

When all the people heard John, even the tax collectors justified God having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God for themselves not having been baptized by him. Now, this is treated by our translators as an interjection by the author.

It's not in the quotation marks as if Jesus spoke. But I think this is still part of what Jesus spoke. And he said those who responded to John and were baptized by John justified God.

What's that mean? Well, God had a complaint against sinners. Those sinners who never repent suggest that God is wrong. He's got a complaint, but I'm okay.

As soon as I decide God's right, I repent and I say God's right about this. Sin is wrong. It justifies God's judgment when you come say, okay, I repent.

The tax collectors that came and got baptized and repented were justifying God's judgment confirming that God was correct about this. God was not unfair or unjustified in his condemnation of sinners. Even the sinners themselves acknowledged this by being baptized.

And the Pharisees and lawyers rejected, it says, the counsel of God. Now, the word counsel there is the word will, the will of God for themselves. Some translations say it that way.

In Ephesians, it talks about how God works all things according to the counsel of his will. A very Calvinistic sounding verse. But the same word here is used, the lawyers, the

Pharisees rejected the will of God for themselves and did not get baptized.

Clearly, this is saying God's will for them was to be baptized by John, but they rejected that by not being baptized. In other words, God's will isn't always done. It is possible for man to reject God's will for himself.

If it's God's will for you to repent and you don't, you've thwarted God's will for you. And that's what it says these men did. This does not say it was God's secret counsel, his secret decree that these people would be unbelievers.

No, their being unbelievers went against God's will for them. And so, obviously, there's another will that affects these matters besides God's own will. Well, we're running out of time here, but not out of material.

Verse 31. And the Lord said to what then shall I liken the men of this generation? And what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying, we played the flute for you and you did not dance. We mourned for you and you did not weep.

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine and you say he is a demon. The Son of Man has come eating and drinking. And you say, look, a glutton and a wine-bibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners, but wisdom is justified by all her children.

That last line seems to mean people who espouse a certain philosophy or wisdom or argument, they always justify it. They always justify the way they think, although it's not always really justifiable. He said, you people cannot be reached by any approach.

God has tried two opposite approaches. You take the austere approach, the John the Baptist approach. He doesn't eat meat or drink wine.

He lives out in the desert. He wears a hair coat. He's, you know, he's really a dropout of society as you might expect a holy man to be, but you guys don't go with him, the Pharisees.

They say he's got a demon. He's got a religious spirit. You know, that's not the approach that we're going to respond to.

So Jesus comes with the opposite approach. He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners. He doesn't practice this kind of self-denial and asceticism that John does.

Instead, he's a man of society, a man of, you know, enjoyments, actually, not sinful enjoyments, but he enjoyed life. He enjoyed the company of people. He drank wine.

He ate meat. And they just say, well, he's a wine-bibber and a glutton. He's a friend of the wrong kind of people.

And he says, there's no pleasing you people. You go John the Baptist way, you think that's wrong. You go my way, you think that's wrong, and we're at opposite poles.

You know, what's going to please you? You're like children playing, saying, well, what should we play together, you know, to the fellow kids? Let's play a happy song and we'll dance. No, you don't want to dance? Okay, we'll play a sad song and we can mourn. Oh, you don't want to do that either? You won't dance with our happy music.

You won't mourn with our dirges we play. And so we can't play anything. We just can't play together because we can't agree on something.

Nothing I suggest is okay with you. God is saying to them, nothing I suggest works for you, John or Jesus. They're very different approaches, but you didn't respond to either.

You're impossible to please. That's basically what he's saying. Now, I'm actually going to take some more time, just a little bit, and take this last part of chapter 7, which is unique to Luke.

It says, Then one of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him. And he went to the Pharisee's house and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner.

I think we should presume probably a prostitute, although we don't know. There's not that many kinds of flagrant sins that women would be involved in in that society that would mark them as a sinner. But it doesn't say she was a prostitute and she might not have been, but she was a notorious sinner.

A woman in the city who was a sinner when she knew that Jesus was at the table in the Pharisee's house brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil and stood at his feet behind him weeping. And she began to wash his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. And she kissed his feet and anointed them with fragrant oil.

Now, when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he spoke to himself saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this was who is touching him, for she is a sinner. And Jesus answered and said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he said, Teacher, say it.

Jesus said, There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed him 500 denarii and the other 50. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both.

Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more? And Simon answered and said, I suppose the one whom he forgave more. And Jesus said to him, You have judged rightly. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, Do you see this woman? I entered your house and you gave me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.

You gave me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss my feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but this woman has anointed my feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.

But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. And he said to her, Your sins are forgiven. And those who sat at the table with him began to say to themselves, Who is this who even forgives sins? Same complaint they made on an earlier occasion when the paralyzed man was raised before him.

Then he said to the woman, Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. Now, we don't read that this woman had had contact with Jesus previously, but she may have.

We don't read of him having forgiven her previously, but she apparently felt forgiven. Now, there's something in the moral of the story as Jesus states it that might be confusing. It says in verse 47, Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.

It makes it sound like he's saying her loving much has qualified her to have her sins forgiven. Her sins have been forgiven because she loved much. Yet, that's the turning around of the story that he told about the men who were forgiven.

The one who was forgiven much loved much. In fact, he even summarizes that way in verse 48. He said to her, or not there, in verse 47, at the end of that, To whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.

So, he's saying that loving a lot is a result of having been forgiven a lot. And loving little is a result of having been forgiven little. And yet, when he says her sins are forgiven because she loved much, it sounds like it's the other way around.

Her forgiveness is the result of her loving. But the parable he tells about the two men who were forgiven, and the statement he makes at the end of verse 47, suggests that it's the other way around. So, I think we have to understand that statement.

Therefore, I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she has loved much. Means, for as you can see, she loves much. Therefore, you can deduce that she's had many sins forgiven.

It's an awkward way of phrasing it, but it's clearly what he's teaching. He's saying her sins, very many sins have been forgiven, and she loves much as a result. And you can, I think he's suggesting, you can deduce that she's had many sins forgiven because you can see that she loves much, and that's a result of having been forgiven much.

It's a strange turning around of the phrases, but it certainly must be what he means to fit it. Now, Jesus was not treated with even customary respect by his host. He wasn't

greeted with a kiss at the door.

He was not, he didn't have his feet washed. It was always the case that when you came to someone's house, the servant met you at the door to wash your feet. For some reason, this had been neglected.

It's not a small matter. His host essentially didn't want to show too much, even customary kindness to Jesus, perhaps because association with Jesus might endanger the respect he would have from his fellow Pharisees. This was a Pharisee.

He was curious, no doubt, to learn more about Jesus, but he didn't want to seem overly friendly to Jesus because that could endanger his status with his friends, the Pharisees. So he kind of neglected Jesus, kind of quietly ignored Jesus when he came in, didn't give him the customary, polite greetings. And Jesus points that out.

You didn't give me any kiss. You didn't wash my feet. This woman has done far more than you have.

She loves me more than you do. And maybe that's because she knows she's been forgiven more than you know you've been forgiven. It's hard to know whether this woman really was a greater sinner than the Pharisee himself.

His sins were perhaps of a different sort. Her sins more flagrant and his more respectable. Pride, greed, you know, jealousy, hatred.

These sins he probably was guilty of and they are great sins. They're not small sins, but these are sins that are much more under the surface. Certainly, the more you are aware of your forgiveness and how much you've been forgiven, the more you will love as a result.

It says in 1 John, we love him because he first loved us. Our love for him is out of gratitude. By the way, this is the motivation for becoming a Christian.

Not to look out for yourself, but out of gratitude for him, for what he's done. He, in dying for our sins, it says God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their sins against them. That's what it says in 2 Corinthians 5 at the end of the chapter there.

And so Christ died for our forgiveness and it's out of gratitude to that that we love him. It's not because we've got something to get out of it, but we have a great deal to gain by it. But it's love for him because he first loved us and that's what this woman's response was.

How she knew that he had loved her, how he knew that he had forgiven her, we do not know. There may have been a previous encounter. It'd be interesting, although it's not related in the same chronological order, if this woman happened to be the adulterous

woman that had been brought to Jesus by the Pharisees in John 8. And, of course, he had spared her from being stoned to death and he alone could condemn her and he said, I don't condemn you either.

Go and sin no more. If this was that woman, that would be really interesting. However, that woman was in Jerusalem if the story in John 8 is in its proper context and would have been a different case.

Also, there's another case of another woman washing Jesus' feet with her hair, with her tears in her hair and also pouring ointment over him and that is Mary of Bethany. And that happened just before Jesus was crucified and when she was criticized by the disciples for wasting the ointment, Jesus said, well, she's anointed me for my burial. Clearly a different situation.

That was in Bethany near Jerusalem just before he died. This is in, you know, somewhere in Galilee much earlier. Some people think it's the same story that's changed because in both cases the host's name was Simon.

Jesus addressed Simon the Pharisee by name Simon and the other case happened, according to Scripture, in the house of Simon the leper. So both women anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair in the home of somebody named Simon. However, Simon was the most common name in Israel in those days.

We have documentation of that from extra-biblical records. The most common name of a man in Israel in those days was Simon. There were lots of Simons just like there were lots of Marys among the women.

They were popular names. So there's no reason to take the approach that some have taken that this is the same story but it has morphed in the retelling. It was a Pharisee but in the retelling it was a leper.

That it was a sinful woman but in the retelling it was Mary of Bethany and she's not a sinful woman. Now these are two different stories but they obviously have some things in common. The main thing is that Luke only tells this story and the point here is that Jesus didn't object to this woman touching him which would have been very scandalous because of her sinfulness.

He didn't mind touching a dead body either. He'd touch things that other people wouldn't touch. And he saw this woman as a needy person not just as some kind of damaged goods, some kind of evil sinful person.

He saw her as somebody who not only needed but apparently had received forgiveness maybe by some interaction that he'd had with her before and that she was now expressing her love for him in a way that a man who didn't feel he had been forgiven much, he didn't have any love. Pharisees' biggest problem is they didn't feel they were

sinful but they were. And so we come to the end of that story and the end of our session.

So we'll come to chapter 8 when we come back.