**Third-World Sinners Forgiven Much**

Based on [Luke 7:36-8:3](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk7.36-8.3)

Preached on June 12, 2016

Pentecost 4, Proper

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Nicole was looking at her cell phone the other day and she was expressing frustration and disappointment. The reason...her cell phone didn't show today’s date on the home screen. In order to recall the date, she had to open another app or access the pull-down menu every time. Oh bother; woe is me. Then she chuckled, regained perspective and said, "**I guess that's what they call a "first world problem."**

It's funny and it's not. 1 in 10 people across the globe don't have access to clean water. 1 and 3 don't have access to a toilet. And I spend time complaining that my utility bill is too high. “First world problem”

Now, being in a state of perpetual want and lacking something essential to life; being in a place of danger and extreme discomfort, a place where you do not have the means to pull yourself out, no utilities, no access to doctors or medicine, no basis for a hope, these are third world problems. And they make worrying about painting your house, planning your vacation or having to put up with an annoying coworker seem shallow and in a way, perverse.

Not being able to use the gender bathroom of your choice; having to stay home and raise kids instead of being able to pursue your career, saving enough of a nest egg for a cozy retirement...**these are “first world problems” and they were created, I daresay, created because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

Think about it: Caring for the poor, providing for public education and health care; equal treatment of all human being because they are all made in the image of the one true God and redeemed by him, the study of nature in science as stewards of God’s orderly handiwork…all of these values are the foundation of first-world “western” society and culture. Why? They are works of love, which are the fruit of the gospel. And for the past 2000 years, western society has known that they have peace with God, that his wrath was assuaged by the mediation of his own Son on the cross for us…this faith produced love for God and the freedom to love our neighbor as Christ loves us and gave his life for us...the freedom to want to build hospitals and schools and care for the humanity God loves so much as to forgive it

Society has done a marvelous job of preaching the love of God, so much so that we are a generation or two from having ever had to live under the **doctrine of the wrath of God**. Of course the Gospel is not to blame for our selfish and whiney first-world problems, but preaching the Gospel without preaching the law is responsible. Because preaching the Gospel without the law does not show us our sin and God's wrath and judgment against it.

Think of it this way. In one sense you contribute nothing to your salvation. The forgiveness given to you in Christ was won for you solely by his blood and merit. You contributed nothing to the victory. However, in another sense **you contribute something very important to your salvation, essential even**. You contribute your sin...and you do this entirely without the help or aid or assistance from God. You do this of your own free will. Your sin...without it you couldn't be saved...and it's all you. Congratulations.

Consider our Gospel lesson. Simon a Pharisee invited Jesus into his house, and Jesus went and ate with him there. And to the house comes a sinful woman, unclean according to the Law of Moses, and therefore not welcome at the Pharisees table**. She comes anyway and proceeds to wash Jesus feet with her tears. Simon is aghast, because this would make Jesus unclean, and Jesus should know this.** But here's what the Pharisee didn't understand, Jesus came to become unclean, by taking our sin upon himself. Paul says, "**He who knew no sin became sin so we might become the righteousness of God**." And this woman knew this and that is true worship, to know that Jesus comes to take away your sin, can bear it in his body on the tree, and crucify it. She knew this, that he is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and so she who has a great debt of sin, has it taken away by Jesus, right there. She contributes her sin and Jesus responds with forgiveness. And on account of that forgiveness, first offered then received, she loves Jesus.

This woman lived in the third-world ghetto of God's wrath every day of her life. Now this is not God's fault, it's her own. And it's also the fault of the priests and the Pharisees, who though they thought they were equal with Jesus, did not have the credentials to forgive sins. They loved to be greeted in the marketplaces as holy men, taking the best seats in the synagogues, giving the appearance of righteousness, but really have none to offer themselves let alone others. **But unlike Simon, Jesus had something to offer the weeping woman, not just the appearance of righteousness, but the real thing.** To someone who doesn't know the magnitude of their own sin--call him a "first world-sinner"--Jesus only offers what the "first world-sinner" believes he already has. But to a third-world sinner, the forgiveness of sins is better than fresh water and having Jesus in your midst is more convenient than cell phones and in-house plumbing.

Simon like all the Pharisees, had the first-world problem of knowing of God's love for him without knowing his own sinfulness. And I want to clear something up here about the Pharisees. **It's true, Jesus ends up condemning them as a group, but they are not condemned because they like to keep the rules and the traditions.** I can't count how many times I talk to Christians who are lax about God's Law and Church traditions, and they say something like, "**well we don't want to be Pharisees or legalists, we live according to the gospel not the law**."

Now that sounds good, who doesn't want to live according to the gospel right? But here's where these "gospel only" folks get it wrong: **Jesus did not condemn the Pharisees because they were meticulous in trying to keep the law**. He says to the Pharisees, and I quote from Matthew 23:23-24, "**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, *and have neglected the weightier matters of the law*; justice and mercy and faithfulness."** Notice, Jesus says the Pharisees had neglected the weightier matters of the law. He condemns the Pharisees not because they keep the law, but because they neglect it. He says these less-weighty matters--tithing mint, dill and cumin--these things ***you ought to have done*** without neglecting the others. "You blind guides, (he says to them) straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!"

Last week at a zoo in Dallas, a 3 year old boy fell into a gorilla pit and in order to save his life, the zookeepers shot the gorilla. And this made headline news, raising issues of whether the boy was to blame for wandering, or whether the parents were to blame for neglect, or whether the zoo was to blame, as PETA commented, for "**displaying animals as sideshows for humans to gawk at.**" Every day 125,000 unborn children are killed in the sanctuary of their own mother's womb, every single day, and the shot heard round the world is the one that killed a monkey. **First world problem...no doubt. Blind guides and Pharisees we are, "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel."**

The Pharisees are not the ones who keep the law, they are the ones who believe they are righteous for straining out a gnat, and not realizing they are swallowing a camel. And first-world Canada and USA are more concerned about the inadequacies of the health care system than they are about the fact that we are as a nation, apostate and entirely unaware of the wrath of God that is to come, when the Son of Man returns. "**Oh when the Lord comes, he won't cast me into the outer darkness...I love. I cried when they shot the gorilla. I feel sorry for kids who suffer from Gender dysphoria, I accept the 50 year old she male who wants to share a bathroom with my prepubescent daughter."** To such a one Jesus will say, that is not love, that is shallowness and conceit. **You are not loving the person, you are condemning them by approving of their sin so that they won't feel the uncomfortable need to contribute it to Christ**. First world western civilization is a whitewashed tomb, beautiful on the outside and full of dead bones. Repent.

To such a one Jesus has this to say, Love for your neighbor comes not from identifying with your neighbor, or appreciating his problems. **Love, Jesus says, is found only in those who have been forgiven much.** The gender confused 50 year old doesn't need God's sympathy or yours; he needs forgiveness. And he can't have forgiveness without recognizing his sin and laying it with tears at the feet of the Lamb.

Friends apart from the Law there is no forgiveness...because apart from my Law there is no sin. **Apart from sin there is no forgiveness, and apart from forgiveness there is no love.** The Pharisees did not have too much of God's law, they didn't have enough...because they didn't know they were sinners, and only the law can reveal that. **The Pharisees rely on parts the law to prove them righteous and ignore the parts that don't. We rely on the law to prove we are sinners in need of Christ, and His forgiveness produces in us much love, a love that honours Christ and keeps his commandments.** So Paul says, "we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ."

The woman at Jesus feet was justified not because she loved him, but because she believed in him to forgive her sins. She was justified by her faith, and that justification was shown in her love for Christ. As first-world Christians with first-world problems, our love has grown cold because we, like the Pharisees, are not aware of the wrath of God against sin.

But ladies and gentlemen, you who are aware of the wrath of god against all unrighteousness, including your own; **you** **who do not despise God's law but accept all of it in fear and trembling, even and especially the parts that condemn you; are invited to this altar to contribute your sins in to Christ,** and to receive in full measure his righteousness, given in his body to you, poured out in this cup for you.

Yes faith is aware of God's wrath against sin every moment of every day, and that's as it should be. **Even so you are also aware that Christ is the reason you are not destroyed, but have an inheritance of eternal life that will not rust or decay, but is deposited in heaven and waiting for you at your retirement from this third-world poverty of spirit**, a nest egg that is truly secure it the real first-world where love does not grow cold, but abounds even now in the heavenly places where angels dwell and the Glory of God is unveiled.

*Jesus sinners doth receive;*

 *Also I have been forgiven;*

*And when I this earth must leave,*

 *I shall find an open heaven.*

*Dying, still to Him I cleave:*

*Jesus sinners doth receive.*

 - Jesus Sinners Doth Receive; LSB # 609, v.7