

## **“Reckless Love”**

**Luke 7:36-50**

[www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=luke+7:36-50](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=luke+7:36-50)

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### **“Be eccentric now. Don’t wait for old age to wear purple!”**

Reckless seems to be a word not often used in connection with the word love. However, reckless is the only word that comes to my mind when I read this Jesus encounter. The woman is reckless with her love. She is an outcast. She is an untouchable. Her job as a prostitute makes her unclean. Anything or anyone she touches is unclean. The Pharisee Simon can have her physically removed and beaten for violating the purity laws. In fact, the ruling elders can have her killed if they wish. She is reckless with her life to come and anoint Jesus.

This woman’s reckless love does not show up just here in Holy Scripture.

- The Prophet Hosea depicts God’s reckless love as he supports his prostitute wife and her lovers.
- God’s incredible reckless love is demonstrated through Jesus’ willingness to die on the cross on behalf of a world of sinners who do not care.

We see in this woman’s reckless love the reality of God’s love! She is willing to pour out her life for Jesus just as Jesus is willing to pour out his life for us. This morning I propose that we examine up close and personal this reckless, Christ-like love.

### **God’s GFI**

To help us see God’s reckless love more clearly I invite you to remember what a GFI circuit breaker looks like. That is the electric plug you have in your kitchen or bathroom. It has a built in fuse. Should you get any moisture at all within the electric circuit, then it will immediately trip and cut off the power.

Now be aware that Christ-like love is similar to the GFI circuit. Any sentimental, romantic, love moisture will trip the circuit and stop the power. Christ like love is not about feelings or emotions! True, Christ-like reckless love flows within us only when Gratitude, Freedom from expectations, and an Infinite vision characterize it.

Let’s look at each portion of God’s GFI.

### **Gratitude to God**

For those of us born with a silver spoon in our mouths, gratitude is difficult. Most of us do not know what doing without means. We assume life is temperature controlled, well watered, easily fed, and nicely clothed. Even the past two years of economic uncertainty and difficult circumstances have not yet broken into our consciousness enough to allow us to truly be grateful for every day. Gratitude is still difficult for most of us. Cynicism comes easier.

There was a visiting Bishop at Yale who spoke to the freshman class on the dangers of worldliness. The letters of the university were his outline. He held forth for 10 minutes on Y for Youthful pleasures, but his advice seems unimpressed. He carried on for seven minutes on A for Avarice, by which time he had lost the entire crowd. Nevertheless, he went to L for Lust and ended with E for Envy. By now everyone was gone except for a young student in the last pew who had knelt in an attitude of prayer. When the student arose, the bishop said, “Young man, perhaps you would be good enough to tell me what it was that moved you so deeply.” The student responded: “Yes, of course. I was just offering a small thanks to the Lord that I go to Yale and not the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.”

Or, consider the man who was helping his 10 year old daughter with her homework. Things were going well, and he seemed to be able to give helpful comments. Eventually the daughter looked up at her father and said, “Dad, you are so smart, you should have been a woman.”

Jesus' parable is about gratitude. The Pharisee is very much like us. He takes for granted his position, his possessions, and his perks. There is little for which he feels genuine gratitude. The woman, on the other hand, knows how demeaning, destitute, and despairing life in her village can be. She knows the pain of rejection by family, friends, and strangers. And, she knows the power of acceptance and forgiveness that Jesus offers to her. Her response is a response of reckless gratitude for the gift of reckless love. She is so thankful for Jesus coming into her life and transforming her soul that she must do something to demonstrate her love. She lives on the underside of life. She is unacceptable to respectable people. Yet, Jesus accepts her. Jesus offers her forgiveness. Jesus envisions a new life for her. Because of what Jesus offers to her, she responds with gratitude.

As Jesus says, those who are in touch with how much they need God's love and forgiveness are the ones who express great gratitude. Let me see if I can help you get in touch with our sister's kind of gratitude. Imagine that you are seriously ill. The only way you can recover health is through a heart/ lung transplant. You will die unless you can receive the transplant. You languish in the hospital for months. Finally, in the middle of the night an accident claims a person who has earlier decided to donate their organs. Their heart and lungs are flown into your hospital. You are prepared for the operation. You wake up in the recovery room with the heart and lungs of another person whose name you do not even know. You have life. You have a future. You can live because someone died for you. Not a day will go by but what you will give thanks for that person who gave you life through their death.

Gratitude is our necessary response to Jesus' gift of life now and eternal life. More important than a new set of lungs and a heart is the gift of a new life through Jesus Christ. Through Jesus' reckless love we can know God's incredible forgiveness. Gratitude is our response.

### **Freedom from the crowd's expectations is our gift.**

The untouchable woman is not interested in what other people are going to think about her. She is not concerned about her reputation. She is not worried about whether people will reject her. She is not going to spend any time thinking about what people might think about her. The entire cadre of religious and village leaders is gathered in the room, and she does not care what they think of her! She is free to respond to Jesus with a reckless love. No one is going to intimidate her. She is free to live her love for Jesus.

We are not near as free as she is. We worry if other people hear us singing too loud. We get concerned about being considered a religious fanatic. We want to be respected. We certainly don't want to be singled out saying "Amen" or something. Enthusiasm in church is for someone else, not us. We are not free. We get concerned about other peoples' responses.

If you are to be free to love Jesus as Jesus loves, then you need to let go of our expectations of being accepted by others. You need to forget what other people are going to think or do. You can expect to be misunderstood. You can anticipate rejection. You can choose to do your best even when you are mistreated. You are free from the tyranny of other's expectations when you accept Jesus' gift of reckless love!

If you are to be free to love like Jesus loves, then you will give up your need to compare! Do you sometimes think you are not as good as someone else? Do you look at what you have and compare it to what others have? Do you look at what you have now and compare it to what you had before the economic crash? Are you lost in comparison thinking? You can be free from all that pain when you accept Jesus' gift of reckless love!

If you are to be free to love like Jesus loves, then you will let go of your need to control! Do you want to make sure everything is just the way you want it to be? Are you so concerned that others do what you want them to do that you just naturally become the organizer and judge of the world? Are you lost in your need to control? You can be free from all that unnecessary anxiety when you accept Jesus' gift of reckless love!

Allow me to remind you of who you are because of Jesus' reckless love.

You are God's child!

You are loved by God as if you were the only person in the world to love!

You are a beloved child of the King!

Your inheritance as a child of the King is assured!

You are a member of an eternal family! Now and forever you will live with brothers and sisters who celebrate the ultimate gift of Jesus' reckless love: resurrection to new life!

Turn to your neighbor right now and say, "You are God's Child!"

The amount of gratitude for God's love that exists within your heart is directly related to the amount of freedom that you have to express your love for Christ. Our sister in Simon the Pharisees home is free to share her love in a reckless manor because of her great gratitude. Because Jesus forgave her, she is saved for all eternity! And, she has the gift of seeing more than the others see! She sees:

### **Infinite Vision possibilities with Christ.**

Gratitude and freedom naturally grow out of a vision that sees the infinite, not the parochial. Our untouchable sister sees beyond the moment of Simon's house. Jesus knows that she understands the need to anoint his body for burial. She sees what is coming up at Jerusalem. Her vision is greater than the moment. Because she is in touch with God, she sees into the infinite.

You know what infinite means don't you? Infinite is the opposite of finite. Finite is what defines our lives. We are limited. When we define our identities by putting down someone else, we are demonstrating our limited, finite vision. However, when we define our identity through the love of God, then we are in touch with an infinite vision. When Jesus' reckless love is alive within us, we live with a different set of eyes.

So often, children can teach us about this infinite vision. A mother told a story of a shopping trip with her six-year-old son. They were at one of those giant toy stores—toys piled to the ceiling. They went around the corner of an aisle and saw a young, longhaired, bearded man in a wheel chair. He had apparently been in a terrible accident, because he was missing both legs and his face was badly scarred. The six-year-old yelled in a too loud voice, "Look at that man, Momma!" The woman did the "mom" thing and tried to shush her son, telling him it wasn't polite to point, but he gave a hard tug and broke loose and went running toward the man in the wheel chair. He went right up and said, "What a cool earring, man! Where did you get such a neat earring?" The young man broke into a great big grin that lit up his whole face. He was so surprised by this complement that he just glowed with happiness, and the two of them stood there for a moment talking about his earring and other 'cool' stuff. That experience made a lifelong impression on the mother. She had only seen a horribly scarred man in a wheelchair, but her six-year-old saw a man with a cool earring. (by David Russell, *Ahh!* P.51)

Reckless love sees more than the obvious. Reckless, Christ-like love sees the infinite within the finite. Our forgiven, grateful Sister in Simon's house saw much more than the rest of the people who gathered there.

When you are willing to live within Christ's wonderful gift of reckless love in your life, then and only then are your eyes opened and your ears unstopped so that you can actually see the eternal within your finite world! Christ's reckless love allows you to live each and every day as special! So:

### **"Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple!"**

I invite you to consider your own love for Christ. Are you of the reckless variety? If not, why not? Sharing God's unconditional, no strings attached love is the best way I know to be in touch with God's presence on this planet.

A pastor of a Cincinnati church recommends that his congregation regularly participate in Christ's reckless love. One suggestion was that they set up a Christmas wrapping station in a local shopping mall. They refused to accept any money for their work. They wanted to give away a service with no thought of return. People wanted to pay, but they refused to accept the money. They asked the people to give their money to help the needy.

Reckless Love is Christ-like living. When we think God's love is sentimental, accept anything, grandfatherly or grandmotherly kind of love, then we short circuit God's power. But, when we live with gratitude, then we know freedom, and see with an infinite vision. When our GFI circuits are open, God's power can flow through us. When we are willing to pour out our lives, then God can transform our world.

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