

Luke 7C

- In Luke 12:51 Jesus says this:

[Luke 12:51](#) “Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;

[Luke 12:52](#) for from now on five *members* in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.

[Luke 12:53](#) “They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

- It’s a provocative statement, wouldn’t you agree?
 - It causes us to pause at first, questioning whether He really meant what He said
 - Especially at Christmas, when we remember Christ’s birth we sing, Peace on earth and goodwill to men
 - And yet Christ said his arrival would not bring peace but rather division
- Although we’ll study the full meaning of this statement in a few weeks when we approach Chap 12, we will begin to understand it even today as we finish Chap 7
 - Luke story of Jesus follows several storylines or themes simultaneously
 - Last two weeks we watched as he demonstrated to his apostles the truth of what He had taught them in Chap 6 during the sermon on the mount
 - But then he is interrupted by the visit from John the Baptist’s disciples, who ask Jesus to confirm that he was the Messiah who has come to fulfill prophecy
 - These events follow Luke’s storyline of how Jesus prepared the disciples for their eventual ministry
 - But now Luke is ready to bring an earlier theme back to the foreground – his emphasis on the battle between Jesus and the religious leaders of the day who rejected Jesus ministry

- Watching these groups plot and scheme against Jesus will become an increasingly important theme for Luke, but for now we're still in the early stages

[Luke 7:24](#) ¶ When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

[Luke 7:25](#) "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are *found* in royal palaces!"

[Luke 7:26](#) "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet.

[Luke 7:27](#) "This is the one about whom it is written,
'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'

[Luke 7:28](#) "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

[Luke 7:29](#) When all the people and the tax collectors heard *this*, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.

[Luke 7:30](#) But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

- Remember, Jesus had entered Nain and raised a dead boy, causing fear among the people
 - Then word of this miracle made it's way to John, who is still near the Jordon river, presumably baptizing
 - And that prompted John to send his messengers to Jesus
 - It must have been sometime after Jesus had performed the resurrection that John's disciples had made it to Nain – at least a few days if not longer
- So as they arrive, they no doubt find Jesus in the midst of a crowd, as He was virtually all the time now
 - They ask their question, which Jesus answers by continuing to perform miracles within the crowd that's gathered
 - And now that they've left, He turns His attention back to the crowd
 - And He uses the occasion of John's disciples interruption to begin teaching the crowd again

- Jesus turns the crowd and asks, sarcastically, what did they you go into the wilderness to see? In other words, what was their interest with John the Baptist? Who do they think he is?
 - The crowd had just heard Jesus answer John's question concerning His identity, but He did so in a veiled way
 - Those who knew God's word and believed in it would have instantly recognized the meaning of Jesus' answer – His answer being the nature of His miracles
 - But the rest of the crowd would have not understood the exchange
 - Now Jesus plans to put the crowd on the spot concerning their understand of the meaning of all these events
 - He asks if they thought they would see a reed shaken in the wind?
 - The word for reed is kalamos – like the tall, hollow grass reeds that grow by a river
 - In Greek mythology, there was a tale of two young boys who were close friends, names Karpos and Kalamos – who spent all their time playing together
 - One day, Karpos falls in the river and drowns
 - And in his grief, Kalamos turns into a water reed, and the myth says that the mournful song made by the wind rustling through the water reeds is Kalamos mourning his lost friend
 - Jesus is making a play on the word Kalamos when he calls John by that name
 - Just as a reed makes continuous noise as the wind blows in the wilderness, Jesus is asking the people if that's what they thought of John
 - Is he merely a noisemaker you came to observe and listen to – maybe like we slow down to see a car wreck on the freeway
 - Or perhaps they came to see a man dressed in fine clothing, Jesus asks sarcastically

- A man of importance in his own right
- A celebrity, or a perhaps a religious leader
- Or a king, a new leader to support their particular political point of view
- Jesus rightly tells them that if that's who they're looking for, go check out the palace
- You see, Jesus knows the hearts of men – better than we know ourselves
 - When the men and women of Jesus day first heard of John the Baptist, they were curious and wanted to know more
 - But many of those who approached John at the side of the river were coming of reasons of their own
 - Some came for entertainment, the spectacle of a crazy man on the side of the river dunking perfectly clean people into a small dirty river
 - They cared little for his message, and none of its truth penetrated their cold, dead hearts
 - Then there were those who came down to see if John was the one they had been waiting for
 - The problem was, they were looking for the wrong thing
 - Some wanted a new political leader who would rise up and contend with Rome
 - Perhaps some wanted a new religious leadership who would agree with some particular point of view (Sag. Vs. Phar)
 - Perhaps others were simply looking for someone beautiful and charismatic to follow
- These desires are as old as the hills and as new as yesterday
 - Men and women today are exactly like the crowd who came down to see John
 - They have needs and desires, goals and agendas

- And when someone speaks up and brings a new message, everything that person says is filtered through the lens of their own desires
- The news media loves to highlight the rapid growth of mega churches around the world
 - It's the latest phenomenon in the world – churches so big, drawing so many people, that they have to park in another zipcode
 - Now big isn't automatically a problem, of course
 - The crowds following Jesus were large, they reached sizes that must have rivaled even the biggest church today
 - Remember the story of Christ feeding the 5 thousand with fish and bread
 - The scripture says that the count was 5,000 men – plus the women and children
- So large crowds are nothing new – but neither are all the reasons large crowds desire to gather around Jesus or his teaching
 - Just as Jesus accuses the crowd of following John for all the wrong reasons, it's no different today
 - People gather in churches every Sunday for all the wrong reasons
 - Jesus will be their source of wealth
 - Jesus will be their source for emotional comfort – something to use to escape the misery of the world
 - Jesus will be a social experience, an entertainment event – and the price is right
 - And as long a church doesn't ask much of the crowd, they stick around for the show
- But that's false religion – no different from any other
 - I guess if the choice is watching all those people sit at home on Sunday and watch football or going to a hindu temple or mosque, then sitting in a church for the wrong reason is certainly better

- But it's a shame so many unbelievers can sit for so many years in so many churches and never feel any pressure to think differently much less act differently
 - And Jesus isn't about to let this crowd get away easy
- Now that's he's chastised them for viewing John in all the wrong ways, He finally tells what they should think
 - He says that if they came to see a prophet, they were right
 - But John is more than just a prophet
 - Jesus quotes Malachi's prophecy that before the Messiah could come, another would precede him – a man who would come in the manner of Elijah
 - And Jesus is telling the crowd, this man John is the one Malachi spoke of..
 - John came as a forerunner to point people to the coming Messiah
 - John's importance was not his own – it was because of his association with the Messiah that John could be thought of as great
 - That's why Jesus says that he is more than just a prophet
 - John has the greatest honor among the old testament prophets, because he is the one with the privilege of introducing the savior of the world
 - Which should lead them to an obvious question – if John is the forerunner of the Messiah, then who is the Messiah?
- Remember, many of those who had originally come to hear John by the river, and had even been baptized, had now move on to following Jesus
 - After all, John the Baptist was good, but Jesus...
 - Jesus healed people, Jesus raised dead people, Jesus taught on dry land – no need to get wet
 - So now that Jesus was the big hit in this small region, John's ministry had dried up – so to speak
 - But it's so ironic in a way to see these people now following Jesus

- John the Baptist was successful after all in gaining their attention – though many of them coming to John for the wrong reason – and then pointing them to Christ
- But the irony is that though they were directed to their Messiah by John, many of them aren't willing or able to recognize that Jesus is the Messiah
- Just as they came to John for the wrong reasons, they've now come to Christ for the wrong reasons.
- And Jesus knows that this crowd is fickle
 - That is includes both believers and those who are following Jesus for the wrong reasons
 - And look at the passage ends
 - Luke notes two different reactions to Jesus words
 - There are those who accepted the baptism of John
 - A group that includes all the people (and the tax collectors) – the ordinary sinful humble person who looks to Jesus for forgiveness
 - They declared God to be just – in the same as 1John

[1John 1:9](#) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- Then there were the various religious leaders of the day who could accept Jesus' teaching because they never accepted John's teaching
 - Luke says they rejected God's purpose – once again proving that...
 - Without repentance from dead works - the work of the law - there is no interest in a new truth – the truth of the gospel of grace
- There must have been an obvious division in the crowd as Jesus challenged them for why they were following John and now Him
 - Some understood the meaning of Jesus message and agreed with it

- And others, notably the religious leaders, objected and would not accept his message
 - Yet they continue to hang around...probably because of his miracles
 - And perhaps because they wonder if Jesus could serve their purposes
- And now Jesus begins to call them out, to return to the battle that is always awaiting him with the Pharisees

[Luke 7:31](#) ¶ “To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?

[Luke 7:32](#) “They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’

[Luke 7:33](#) “For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’

[Luke 7:34](#) “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’

[Luke 7:35](#) “Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”

- Now Jesus address the Pharisees directly
 - But talks about them in the third person – like they aren’t there
 - Jesus says rhetorically, how can I best described what the men – the religious leaders - of this generation are like,...how can I describe their nature and their behavior
 - And then he makes a comparison to a common scene in the daily lives of Jewish citizens of every town
 - In the marketplace, children often gathered and played
 - And the games of that day weren’t all that much different than today - except that their games didn’t require batteries
 - Children often play imagination games where there is a required protocol for every participant
 - The games had a sort of script for the participants

- If one child did a certain thing, like play a certain song on an instrument or sing a certain song
- Then as the game went, the rest of the children had to respond a certain way
- We have a game like that today – we call it Simon Says
- Jesus says the religious leaders of the day were like children playing Simon Says
 - They're only happy with one another so long as each is playing his assigned role
 - And everyone who wants in on the game must respond according to the rules
 - They must show the necessary respect for the leaders and do as they say
 - They must follow the traditions
 - They must teach according to the rules that have been established
 - And since Jesus wasn't willing to play according to these rules, he was being rejected by the leaders – just as they rejected John
- And to show how silly and insincere their rules and demands truly were, Jesus points out their hypocrisy in the way they criticized John and Himself
 - To John, a man who would rather eat locusts and honey than normal food, who refrained from wine or socializing with the people of his day
 - And him they call deranged or possessed
 - Then came Jesus who was willing to live a joyful life, especially with those who needed Him most – the sinners – even tax collectors – anyone who might be receptive to His message
 - To Jesus the religious leaders respond by saying he is discredited by the kind of company he keeps
 - They want to have their cake and eat it too – either socializing is good or its bad

- But in reality, their problem was that neither man would dance according to the song of the Pharisees and play according to their rules
- I need to be clear with you, however, for why Jesus is criticizing these men
 - It's not merely their hypocrisy or their dishonesty that's a problem
 - It's their desire to preserve a system that meets their personal needs rather than truly seek after God's heart and His purposes
 - They assumed the role of God's representatives on earth – yet they were anything but
 - They served themselves, not God, and their reaction to John the Baptist and to Jesus is proof
 - When John came preaching preparedness for the Christ, the Pharisees didn't yield to the message – they rejected it
 - And when Jesus appeared to confirm John's ministry, they didn't recognize the meaning of his teaching and of his miracles, rather they rejected Him as well
- These men would have nothing to do with anyone who wasn't willing to work inside their system because their system made them powerful and satisfied their egos – their flesh
 - Just as in Jesus day, we have men and women like that today in the church
 - The church has always had people like this – people who serve themselves and not God and who reject the truth if it stands in the way of their own desires
 - Knowing that people like this exist is no secret to you, I'm sure
 - The bigger concern is that we might begin to think like them
 - Don't cling to tradition over truth, don't assume that the first thing your taught is always right,
 - Don't follow a teaching or minister because you like their style or their words

- Follow Christ, follow the truth wherever He takes you
- Now Jesus ends his criticism of the Pharisees with a noteworthy phrase
 - He says that truth is vindicated by her children
 - In other words, you will know the quality of the tree by its fruit
 - And Christ being the embodiment of truth, the world will know the truth of His message by the children it produces
 - And Luke uses this statement from Christ to transition to an interesting story at the end of this chapter that He alone records
 - It's a story that illustrates the idea Jesus has just stated in verse 35

[Luke 7:36](#) ¶ Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined *at the table*.

[Luke 7:37](#) And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining *at the table* in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,

[Luke 7:38](#) and standing behind *Him* at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

[Luke 7:39](#) Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

[Luke 7:40](#) And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher."

[Luke 7:41](#) "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

[Luke 7:42](#) "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?"

[Luke 7:43](#) Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

[Luke 7:44](#) Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

[Luke 7:45](#) "You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.

[Luke 7:46](#) "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.

[Luke 7:47](#) "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."

[Luke 7:48](#) Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."

[Luke 7:49](#) Those who were reclining *at the table* with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this *man* who even forgives sins?”

[Luke 7:50](#) And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

- This scene is remarkable for several reasons
 - First, simply the interaction between Jesus and this Pharisee would make for great cinema – the room is thick with tension and intrigue
 - These men are not friends, and this Pharisee has not invited Jesus into the room because he is a supporter much less a believer
 - But from the start it’s worth noting that Jesus didn’t shun the Pharisees
 - He has accepted Simon’s invitation to eat at his home
 - But there are clues to Simon’s true feelings
- Set the scene
 - Meals were often taken on tables set very near the ground
 - Diners were on divans reclined with feet away from the table
 - Head and arms were near the table
 - Secondly, it was not uncommon for the poor to come into a setting like this, especially if the meal was attended by a visitor, and beg for scraps
 - Simon’s willingness to allow this woman to enter and be in the room would no doubt have been his effort to show generosity and piety to the needy in front of Jesus
- As they eat, the woman begins to attend to Christ by kissing his feet and using her hair to anoint his feet with expensive oil
 - As she does this, Jesus is facing Simon and is not likely looking directly at the woman
 - But Simon who is facing Jesus from across the table, can see all that the woman is doing – and he knows who she is
 - She’s poor and needy because she is a sinner, Luke calls her

- The nature of her sin is not known, but in the tradition of Jewish society, women who lived a life of sin were usually prostitutes
- So they would be shunned from society
- Now Simon is getting quite a kick out of this scene
 - He knows this is a lowly sinner, one who is so despised that if she were to touch a holy man, a religious leader of the day, she would make him ritually unclean
 - This gives Simon great pleasure – Jesus is some prophet – he doesn’t even know what this woman is really like
 - For if he did, he would never allow her to touch him the way she is
- Now Jesus knows what’s in Simon’s heart
 - So he speaks directly to Simon, and says I want to say something to you
 - Simon says, speak teacher
 - This is actually a disrespectful statement, because it was a lower station than prophet, which is what the crowd were calling Jesus
 - Simon was essentially lowering Christ’s standing by how he addressed him
- Jesus then offers his story about the money lender
 - Now the story is easy enough to follow
 - Those who are forgiven great debts are far more appreciative than those who have little to forgive
 - We can understand the point certainly, but imagine the effect the story had on Simon
- You can hear his nervousness when Jesus asks him to answer his question about who would love more
 - Simon says I suppose it would be the one who owed more
 - He is hesitant to answer because he senses something is up

- Just a moment before he had been thinking about how poor a prophet Jesus must be
 - He didn't even know that the woman touching him was a sinner and not worthy to approach a rabbi
 - But now he was asking a question that seemed like a trap, but Simon couldn't figure out where the trap was going
 - When Jesus gives the answer, it must have knocked Simon over
- As Jesus answers and describes how the woman had been so much more loving to him than Simon ever was, it must have hit Simon between the eyes.
 - One moment he's think about how poor a prophet Jesus was since He couldn't discern who this woman was
 - And now Jesus is making commentary on private thoughts that were in Simon's head – he must have been rethinking his assessment of Jesus' abilities about now
 - But we don't want to leave today without recognizing who we are in this scene
- We know we're not Jesus, and I doubt any of us love like as of we were
 - But which of the other two people in this scene represent us
 - Jesus came into this home in part to demonstrate the truth of his statement earlier in verse 35
 - His children vindicate the truth – the woman proved that she believed Jesus could forgive her sins and would
 - But who are we
 - Are we Simon?
 - Do we live like we have little to be forgiven
 - Does God owe us heaven now
 - Having become a Christian, we can go back to our life and our rules and our own plans for serving our egos

- Do we forget to show love to others except when it makes us look good or feel good
- Do we hold ourselves in the world as a pillar of righteousness
- Jesus said those things go together
 - Those who do not recognize their own sinfulness have no idea of how much they need forgiveness
 - The woman was a greater sinner than Simon, perhaps, but her awareness of her sin was what propelled her toward Christ
 - Simon had a hard unbelieving heart and yet his self-righteousness prevented him from knowing the truth
- There is only one right way to respond to your salvation
 - In the manner of this woman
 - In very real terms, she is no more a sinner than you or I
 - And we have no less to be forgiven than she
 - Yet how many of us spend time each day considering perhaps with tears how much we have been forgiven
 - How many of us would do for Christ even as she did, showing our love for all that he has done for us
 - Well, Christ says we still have that obligation to him, though He is not present with us for the time being
 - Rather, we show that love to others in His name – and we keep his commands
- The Pharisees could not accept Christ because He didn't fit their desires and they couldn't accept that they needed anything that Jesus offered – and as a result they showed no love – not to Jesus and not to their fellow man
 - Which is why we say that the World shall know us by our love