

## Luke 7 Chapter Study

### INTRODUCTION

#### VII. The Galilean Ministry 4:14-9:50

Jesus' public ministry lasted a little more than 3 years.

The first 2 years were spent mostly in the northern region of Galilee where Jesus had been raised.

During that time, He made occasional trips south to Jerusalem, but the majority of His time was spent making the rounds of the cities, towns, and villages of Galilee.

For those who are new to our study on Wednesday nights, let me do a brief recap of the historical situation so we can get a better picture of just how Jesus was perceived at that time.

The southern region of Judea was dominated by the city of Jerusalem, the capital of Israel.

Because the temple was there, religious and social life was governed by the priests.

In the north, in Galilee, the situation was much different.

Galilee was a lush, fertile region that supported a huge population.

The Galileans had grown tired of being considered backward country-bumpkins by the cosmopolitan and sophisticated people of the south, so they had developed a rigorous education program.

At the peak of this education program were *the rabbis*; men who not only excelled at memorizing the scriptures, but had shown the rare talent of being able to expound on them with an authority that was clearly a mark of God's anointing.

Rabbis always collected a small group of special students, culled from the Torah schools, who'd shown great skill in memorizing and handling the scriptures.

These students were called *disciples*.

It was the disciples' desire to follow their rabbi where ever he went, watching & listening closely to everything he did & said so that they could emulate him.

Their whole goal was to be just like their rabbi.

So while the *priests* dominated the religious and social life of Judea, in Galilee, it was the half dozen or so *rabbis* who stood at the apex of religious & social life.

What made Jesus utterly unique is that the typical way a rabbi entered into *being* a rabbi was by *graduating* from being the disciple of a rabbi.

When a disciple turned 30, if he demonstrated a unique sense of the authority of God, then his rabbi along with a few of the other rabbis, would lay hands on him and officially confer upon him the authority of the office of rabbi.

When Jesus arrived on the scene, He operated in the same mode as one of the other rabbis who were making the rounds of Galilee at that time.

The difference was this – while the *other* rabbis had been commissioned & ordained to their office by rabbis, Jesus' hadn't.

Think about it – Where & when did Jesus receive His commission as a rabbi?

At His baptism, when the Father voiced His approval and the Holy Spirit descended on Him.

In fact, Luke intends us to understand this as Jesus' commissioning to be a rabbi. Notice how he describes it – Luke 3:21-23

**21**When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. **22**And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." **23**Now Jesus Himself began *His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli,*

A rabbi entered the rabbinate at 30 – Luke intends his readers to make that connection, and to understand that Jesus' ordination did not come from man, but from God.

As we read the gospels, the thing we keep encountering is the people's quandary over where Jesus got His authority.

It was obvious He had it, but since He hadn't risen through the ranks they were used to, they kept asking about the source of His authority, at points even attributing it to the devil.

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As we come to ch. 7, the initial excitement over Jesus' ministry has started to coalesce into two different reactions to Him.

1) The common people are *digging* Him.

They welcome His fresh interpretation of the Word of God and His marvelous power that heals the sick.

2) The religious leaders are cautious & concerned because some are openly claiming Jesus is the Messiah.

Their concern stems from the fact that there had been *others* who'd come claiming to be the Messiah and it always ended badly for Israel, with the Romans reacting by bringing another crack-down, taking away even more of their rights & privileges.

Luke shows the growing rift between the way the common people accept Jesus & the leaders oppose Him.

### **M. Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant 7:1-10**

**<sup>1</sup>Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum.**

Luke is referring to ch. 6 and what we know as "The Sermon on the Mount."

**<sup>2</sup>And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. <sup>3</sup> So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant.**

A centurion was a Roman military commander, having charge of a hundred men.

They were the *true elite* of the Roman military & enjoyed great prestige in the Empire.

In Israel they were despised because they represented the leadership of the oppressors.

***This*** centurion was unique. Though he worked for Herod, he lived among the Jews & had earned their respect.

We know that because he was able to convince the Jewish city elders to go on his behalf to Jesus with a request that He come and heal his servant.

Seeing that he was a Gentile, the centurion thought that a notable rabbi like Jesus would have nothing to do with him if he went himself.

But if Jesus was approached by the Jewish elders, maybe that would convince Him to come.

This man was not only humble, he was loving.

His love is demonstrated in that he didn't consider his servant as just an object to be used. He loved this sick servant & couldn't bear the thought of losing him.

He'd heard numerous reports about Jesus' power to heal, so he asked a favor of the Jewish elders.

**4And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, 5“for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.”**

It appears the centurion had become a believer in the God of Israel.

That he had the financial resources to build a synagogue meant he was rich!

So, rich that he could easily have *replaced* his servant.

This wasn't about hanging on to a servant, it was about saving a loved one.

**6Then 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. 7Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8For 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*.”**

Word got back to the centurion that Jesus had answered his request and was on the way.

But the centurion knew that the Jews had a custom that they could not enter a Gentile's home for fear of becoming ritually unclean.

So the centurion sent some more friends to tell Jesus He didn't need to actually *go* to his house – just speak the word, and the servant would be well.

Then the centurion explained he had a solid grasp on the whole issue of authority.

As a *soldier* he was *under* authority.

As a *commander* he was *in* authority.

The authority he was under had placed him in a position of authority so that when he gave a command to the men beneath him, it wasn't really the exercise of *his* authority but of that which had been *granted* to him by those above him.

He reasoned back all the way back to the original **AUTHOR**, to the God of Israel he had come to believe in, and knew that all authority ultimately *came from Him*.

In Jesus he recognized One Who was also under that authority, and used it to accomplish God's will.

And just as he as a centurion had the ability to speak a word of command & a thing was done, so all Jesus needed to do was speak the word and his servant would be healed.

**<sup>9</sup>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!" <sup>10</sup>And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.**

Jesus high-lights the faith of this Gentile & says it's greater than any He's encountered among the Jews.

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Please don't miss the connection between faith & authority this story teaches.

Jesus commends the centurion's *faith* – but it wasn't *faith* the centurion had spoken of; it was *authority*.

The reason the centurion had great faith was because he knew Who Jesus was.

He knew it because of what he'd heard Jesus did in the many miracles He *performed*. He'd probably also heard reports about what Jesus *taught*.

As a man *under* authority, the centurion *knew* authority when he saw it – and Jesus was clearly a man who *had authority* because He was *under it*.

Contrary to a lot of goofy teaching today, faith is not some mental gymnastics we play where we conjure up in our minds something we want then pour positive mental energy into it.

In fact, faith has less to do with the mind & more to do with the *will*.

In a normal, healthy, parent-child relationship, does the young

child have great faith in the parent?  
Absolutely! They trust in them for everything, and don't really even think about it.  
Why do they have such implicit trust in Mom/Dad? Because they are in complete *submission* to her/him.  
As the child grows, the parent invests more & more responsibility with that child.  
With the responsibility comes whatever *authority* is needed to do the job.  
When the child obeys, he shows he's *under* authority, but as he obeys he also exercises the authority he's been given.  
The single thought in the child's mind as he performs the task is his desire to please his parent.  
Friends, that's what Faith is!  
It's simply us as God's children performing the Father's will.  
It's understanding Who He is, His authority & power, and who we are as those who've been given authority to accomplish His will.

Great faith is the result of being under God's authority.

The centurion understood that & Jesus pointed it out for all to see.

#### ***N. Jesus Raises a Man From the Dead 7:11-17***

***11*** Now it happened, the day after, *that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd.*

Nain was a minor city located 6 miles south of Nazareth.

There's quite a crowd following Jesus at this point.

***12*** 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.

This woman must have been fairly well known in Nain judging by the large crowd that's attending the funeral of her son.

Widows had a tough time in Israel because women lived off the support of their husband or grown children.

A widow who had no children was almost always in terrible poverty.

This poor woman is facing a life a intense hard-ship.

Not only she is now bearing the grief of the loss of her only son, she's facing a life of crushing desperation. So here's a crowd *leaving* Nain carrying the dead only son of a widowed mother.

They meet a crowd coming into Nain following a living only Son of the Heavenly Father.

The dead son will live – because the living Son came to die.

**13When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.”**

Jesus' compassion was fueled because of the grief she bore in the loss of her son, and because of the life He knew lay ahead of her without her son to provide for her.

**14Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried *him* stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” 15So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.**

Jesus had a habit of breaking up funeral processions by raising the dead.

He entered Jairus' house & told the professional mourners to stop their howling, then entered Jairus' daughter's room & healed her. [Luke 8:41-56]

He went to the tomb of Lazarus where the mourners were gathered to weep and told them to remove the door of the tomb. Then He called Lazarus forth. [John 11:1-45]

Jesus didn't like death & regarded it as an enemy to be defeated.

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**16Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen up among us”; and, “God has visited His people.”**

Jesus' raising the widow's son would have reminded the people of Elijah's raising the widow's son in 1 Kings 17, so they proclaim Him a great prophet.

**17And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.**

Nain is in Galilee, but Luke tells us that the report of this healing was made major news in Judea, as well as the rest of Galilee.

According to Jewish history, rabbis *did* perform the occasional

miracle.

This is what helped identify them as rabbis who enjoyed unique authority to speak for God.

What marked Jesus as fundamentally *different* from other rabbis was the *volume & kinds* of miracles He performed.

Other rabbis might perform a healing now & then, but people didn't *line up & all* go away healed as they did with Jesus.

And no rabbi had ever been known to break up a funeral by raising the dead.

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Luke's comment that Jesus' name is being spread far & wide, especially in Judea, is meant to let us know that He's coming to the attention of the Jewish leaders.

### **O. John's Doubt & Jesus' Answer 7:18-35**

**18**Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. **19**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?"

When the news of Jesus' ministry in Galilee reached John, he sent 2 of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was indeed the Messiah, or if they should look for someone else.

Why would John ask this? After all, as Jesus' cousin, he'd grown up knowing the story of both his and Jesus' birth.

At Jesus' baptism, John was there when the Father's word of approval came and the Holy Spirit descended on Him.

John himself had pointed to Jesus & said, "Behold the Lamb of God."

So why is John questioning Jesus' identity now?

Well, Matthew 11 tells us John was in prison at this point.

He'd been arrested by Herod & the prospects of his release were dim.

John knew the prophecy of Isaiah which said that when Messiah came He would . . .

- Heal the sick,
- Defend the poor,
- Raise the dead.

So when he heard reports about how Jesus had been doing all of this in Galilee, he wondered why Jesus hadn't also done one of



the other things the prophecy said,  
*set the prisoners free.*

After all, John was His forerunner, the one who'd faithfully prepared His way.

That he was still in prison caused him to wonder if maybe Jesus *wasn't* the Messiah after all.

**20**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?' " **21**And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. **2**Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have 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.* **23**And blessed is *he who is not offended because of Me.*"

The answer Jesus sent back to John was a report of *more* of the same kind of stuff John had already heard about.

Then Jesus said they were to give John this message, "**Blessed is *he who is not offended because of Me.***"

In other words, "John, look at what I AM doing, not at what I am NOT doing."

When Isaiah said the Messiah would come to set the captives free, he meant the captives of sin would be liberated from the bondage to sin and death.

But John, like so many of his day, expected the Messiah to bring a military & political kingdom that would liberate the political prisoner's in Pilates & Herod's prisons.

John thought his role as forerunner for the Messiah was to *purify* the people *morally* so that God would reward them *politically*.

He didn't realize that his mission was to *prepare* the people *spiritually* so that a *spiritual* kingdom could come.

Jesus sent his disciples back with a message that was meant to answer John's doubts by correcting his thinking & straightening out his expectations.

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What happened to John happens to most believes at some point.

A trial comes into our lives & we cry out to God for deliverance,

but He seems silent.

We become desperate & begin to wonder if God is there.  
In such seasons of divine silence, we need to realize that God is very much there & very much at work.

It's just that our ideas of *how* He ought to be working -- our expectations on *what* He ought to be doing, are wide of the mark.

John did get out of prison – just not the way he expected.

His exit from his prison cell led directly to the glory of heaven.

And of this we can be sure – when his eyes opened in the glory of God's presence, he realized in that moment that God's plan for busting Him out of jail was far better than the one he'd hoped for.

When God seems silent or inattentive to your need, remember, He's still there & still at work.

As Jesus said, don't be offended because God isn't doing things the way YOU think they need to be done.

Though it may be hard to understand, His way is best.

**24** When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: **“What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?”**

Did they go out to see some Wildman of the desert making a lot of noise?

**25** **But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts.**

John didn't “use” his popularity as a lever to gain position & wealth & make his life more comfortable.

**26** **But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.**

John's whole ministry was cut from the same cloth as the prophets of old, calling the people to repentance.

But because of his unique role as forerunner for the Messiah, he had an even loftier calling than that of prophet.

**27** **This is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way**

**before You.’<sup>28</sup> 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.”**

Jesus sets down a firm dividing line between the old age John represented & the new age Jesus came to inaugurate.

John was the last of the old age, & because of his unique role of preparing the Way for the New, John had the greatest mission of all in the old era of God’s redemptive plan.

But Jesus opened the door to the Kingdom of God & brought about a new epoch.

Now, the humblest believer in Christ enjoys an intimacy with God believers in the previous age couldn’t even imagine.

**<sup>29</sup>And when all the people heard *Him*, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. <sup>30</sup>But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.**

When the common people heard Jesus’ praise of John they rejoiced because they’d responded to John’s call to repent.

Because the religious experts considered themselves righteous already, they resented John’s call to repentance & thought his rite of Jewish baptism nothing less than a disgrace & scandal. They hated John with a passion.

Jesus’ praise of John is not going to be a hit with them.

But Jesus’ isn’t concerned with being popular with these guys -

**<sup>31</sup>And the Lord said, “To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? <sup>32</sup>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 to you, And you did not weep.’**

Have you ever talked to a young child of say, around 5, 6, 7 years old – and they are just contrary!?!?

No matter what you do, they oppose you and play sullen and angry.

That’s how Jesus describes these guys – they are just *contrary*.

They cannot be happy no matter what, because they have chosen

## NOT TO BE.

**33**For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' **34**The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

At the same time the Pharisees suggested John lived in the wilderness in a strict & ascetic lifestyle because he was demon-possessed, they said Jesus enjoyed a liberal lifestyle because He was sensual. Jesus' point is that John & Jesus had picked just about opposite lifestyles and the Pharisees criticized both!

This was proof they were just contrary guys.

They didn't really have a position themselves, they just determined that it **WASN'T** going to be anything truly led or ordained by God!

**35**But wisdom is justified by all her children."

While the Pharisees opposed God, the common people were enjoying the benefits of their simple faith by responding to both John's & Jesus' messages.

### ***P. A Woman Anoints Jesus' Feet 7:36-50***

Since we covered these verses on Sunday, we'll only look at them briefly tonight . . .

**36**Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat.

In light of what Luke has told us about the growing opposition of the Pharisees to Jesus, we can assume that this invitation was a set up; they were looking for something with which to condemn Jesus.

**37**And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner,

A euphemism for prostitution -

**when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, <sup>38</sup>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 the fragrant oil.**

When a special guest like a rabbi was invited to eat at someone's home, it was common for others to invite themselves to come and

sit to listen to him teach.

So there would have been nothing unusual about this woman coming to the Pharisee's house.

What was unusual was her intense display of emotion.

By comparing the other gospels we know that just prior to this, Jesus had told the crowd about the tender Father-heart of God.

[Matthew 11]

Then He invited those with heavy burdens to lay them down in preference of the pleasant yoke of following Him.

This woman appears to have been deeply impacted by Jesus' invitation; this is her response.

She is overwhelmed with the offer of forgiveness for her wretched past and the incredible promise of a new life marked by dignity and love.

So she spends the most precious things she has on Jesus' feet as acts of devotion and adoration.

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When I read of this woman's acts of adoration for Jesus, I'm reminded of a story about a woman in England some years ago. She remained single her entire life but wore a golden locket around her neck which she never allowed anyone to look into. The gossip went that she had some secret flame, some love who belonged to another so she kept herself single while she pined for her secret love.

When she died, everyone was curious to see whose picture was in the locket.

All they found was a piece of paper with the words of 1 Peter 1:8; "Whom having not seen, I love."

Jesus was the only lover she knew and the only lover she ever longed for.

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**<sup>39</sup>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 is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."**

The Pharisee thinks he has what he's been looking for – evidence of Who Jesus is.

In his self-righteous mind, a prophet would know this woman's reputation & never have allowed himself to be fawned over like this.

**40** And Jesus answered and said to him,

The Pharisee thought a prophet would have *spiritual knowledge of the woman*.

Jesus knew alright – even more, he knew *what the Pharisee was thinking* -

**“Simon, I have something to say to you.” So he said, “Teacher, say it.”**

Not, “Rabbi” but “teacher.”

Now, there are some commentators who say that that’s the title Simon *meant*.

But I’m convinced if He’d said, “Rabbi” instead of the more common word for teacher, Luke would have put that in the text.

The point here is that the Pharisee has downgraded Jesus from rabbi to mere teacher.

His next words prove it for they are just plain rude; “Say it – What?!”

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Jesus then tells a story -

**41** “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42** And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” **43** Simon answered and said, “I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.” **44** Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; 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. **45** You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. **46** You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. **47** 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.”

These 3 things were considered standard acts of hospitality due to guests, and most especially to a respected person like a rabbi.

That they were omitted by Simon is evidence that this invitation

was less than sincere; it was a set up to find something with which to condemn Him.

But Jesus turned the tables on Simon and showed that while he'd been busily comparing himself to the woman and coming off as righteous, he ought to have been comparing Himself to the very One he'd invited to his house to sit in judgment on – Jesus. Simon was not sitting in judgment on Jesus; it was the other way around.

But Jesus wasn't there to judge that day, as His treatment of the woman showed.

He was there to bring salvation to those who repented of their sin. The problem is, the only ones who would repent were those who were convicted.

And conviction would only come if they were open to Christ.

In v. 47, Jesus is not saying the woman was forgiven *because* of her love.

The translation makes it appear that way, but that is not the intent of the original, which says her love flowed *from* her sense of being forgiven.

**48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."**

What she'd known intuitively before, Jesus now makes explicit – She's forgiven.

Jesus makes this statement both for her sake, and to challenge Simon and his companions with their attitude toward Him.

**49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"**

The only One who can forgive sins is God. They knew this.

And it's a lesson Jesus had already made clear to them in the healing of the paralytic in ch. 5.

By telling the woman her sins were forgiven, Jesus is making it crystal clear – HE IS God!

The cults that deny the deity of Christ like to point out that Jesus never said, "I am God."

Actually He did – in a way that was far more clear than just using those words.

You see, if Jesus had just said, "I am God" people both then & now could use clever semantics to make it seem that Jesus was

not really claiming deity.

Oh, they could say that He *meant* as man he was created in the *image of God*.

Or that as a man He is *godlike* over creation.

Or that He *represents* God, in the same way that a parent is “god” to their child.

Jesus made unmistakable claims to deity that left no doubt as to what He meant.

One of them is right here when he announced forgiveness to this woman.

Only the Spiritual God of heaven, the Giver of the Law, can forgive because only He is the Righteous Judge.

In John 10:30, Jesus says that He and the Father are one, meaning they share the same essence as God.

The claim to deity couldn't have been clearer, and that's why the Jews took up stones to kill him for blasphemy.

There's another time they went to stone Him - In John 8:58, Jesus claimed to be the eternal God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush.

This claim to deity was so clear, so direct, the religious leaders took up stones to kill Him for blasphemy.

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For Simon & his crew, Jesus' claim to deity was something to *accept*, or to *go to war* with Him over.

To put the final nail in the coffin of their hostility . . .

**50** Then He said to the woman, **“Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”**

Jesus spoke the word of salvation to the woman, a person Simon and his companions would consider beyond redemption.

While she went home in the peace of a new life, they would be in turmoil, stewing in the juices of their anger at Jesus.

Her faith resulted in peace. Their unbelief led to unrest. And so it ever is.

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[1] Guzik, David Commentary on Luke