

Jesus, Friend of Sinners: Image is Nothing Thirst Is Everything

3/3/19 – Pastor Randy

You just watched a commercial from about 20 years ago. It was one of many commercials developed by the Coca-Cola company to market their soft drink “Sprite”. The ad slogan, *Image is Nothing, Thirst is Everything*, proved to be very clever and effective.

As far as advertising goes, it was a huge success. Sales increased roughly 9% shortly after it was introduced. When surveyed, 93% of consumers ages 18-24 said the commercials were effective. Among all consumers, 83% rated it as effective. They used high profile athletes to communicate the message that, while Sprite might not enhance your image, it would quench your thirst. The delicious irony is that the Coca-Cola company spent a ton of money to CREATE AN IMAGE that they were unconcerned about image. Does anybody really believe that Sprite quenches thirst better than 7-up?

Bob Garfield in *Advertising Age* wrote this about the ad campaign: “But if image is nothing and thirst is everything, why is not one of the ads here about thirst? Why are none of the ads about taste? Why are none of the ads about anything intrinsic to Sprite? Why does the famous-athlete send up use Grant Hill, a famous athlete? Answer: As far as this advertising is concerned, image is not nothing. Image is everything. So, yes, this is unusually candid advertising-in the sense that it's precisely the sort of lie it warns about.

God's word for us today is, “Image is nothing, thirst is everything”.

Luke 7:36-50

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!”

Then Jesus answered his thoughts. “Simon,” he said to the Pharisee, “I have something to say to you.” “Go ahead, Teacher,” Simon replied.

Jesus, Friend of Sinners: Image is Nothing Thirst Is Everything

3/3/19 – Pastor Randy

Then Jesus told him this story: “A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?” Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt.”

“That’s right,” Jesus said. Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn’t offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.

“I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.” Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”

The men at the table said among themselves, “Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?”

And Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Last week we read Luke 7:31-35, the passage that immediately precedes today’s text. We learned that the Pharisees, the religious leaders, rejected Jesus because he didn’t abide by their social-religious customs. Jesus was accused of showing friendship to sinners by eating with them and socializing with them. Immediately after, Luke records this account of Jesus accepting an invitation to visit the home of a Pharisee by the name of Simon.

In this story Jesus shows himself to be a friend to both Simon, a Pharisee, as well as the unnamed immoral woman; probably a prostitute or a sexually promiscuous woman. Jesus is a friend for ALL SINNERS!

How was Jesus a friend to Simon.

1. Jesus accepted an invitation to dinner at the home of a Simon. Both the invitation and the acceptance were gestures of friendship.
2. When Jesus corrected Simon he didn’t come at him hard. He didn’t level a hostile rebuke against him for his behavior. Jesus’ words were direct but

Jesus, Friend of Sinners: Image is Nothing Thirst Is Everything

3/3/19 – Pastor Randy

respectful and they sound more like an attempt to persuade Simon and awaken him to his misperceptions about both Jesus and the immoral woman than motivated by a desire to verbally punish Simon.

So Jesus' was not hostile towards Simon, but if he was indeed going to extend true friendship, he was going to have to address Simon's sin honestly.

Although Simon does not appear to be as hostile to Jesus as some of the other Pharisees, he does seem to suffer from the typical Pharisaic tendency of placing great emphasis on image creation and management. The Pharisees, show up frequently in the gospels as those who are more concerned with their image before men than they were with actually being right with God and displaying the righteousness of God through their lives.

Jesus warned his followers against practicing their righteousness in front of others to be seen by them, like the Pharisees did. Later Jesus again warned his disciples not to follow the example of the Pharisees who "did everything for show". He then turned his attention to these religious leaders and said, "You are like people who clean the outside of the bowl or cup but not the inside". In other words, you take great pains to look good but not to be good.

All of these statements point to a specific problem that was typical of Pharisees, and a problem that is very common for us in modern society. We can become conditioned to feel compelled to create, project and manage a public image of ourselves that is disconnected from the private reality of who we truly are. The image we create is the image we prefer over our reality.

The work of creating and maintaining a preferred image requires us to engage in acts of habitual self-deception.

Because Simon had been so focused on image creation and management, he was deceived about himself, Jesus, and the woman who entered his home.

Simon's misperceptions:

1. About Jesus - Jesus was unholy and undignified for allowing this woman to engage with him the way she did. He was allowing himself to be placed in a

Jesus, Friend of Sinners: Image is Nothing Thirst Is Everything

3/3/19 – Pastor Randy

spiritually compromising position by letting this woman “play with his feet” this way. Jesus couldn’t really be a prophet based on what he was allowing.

2. About The Woman – Simon interpreted her actions according to the label affixed to her by her reputation. Jesus said, “Simon, do you see this woman?” What kind of question is that? Of course Simon saw this woman, and what he saw was very troubling!! Simon was unable to see what God had done in her heart and what God was doing in her life because he could only see her for what she had been. His view of this woman’s behavior was colored by her reputation so that he assumes she is acting in a promiscuous and seductive fashion by letting her hair down and “playing” with Jesus feet. He had a misperception about her behavior because he viewed it through the lens of her past public reputation.

3. About Himself – He did not identify himself as a sinner. He placed himself in the position as “the judge” over Jesus and this woman. He understood himself only according to his reputation. He worked hard at his public performance and based his spiritual status on that. Simon’s evaluation of this woman was full of contempt: In his eyes she is “this kind of woman”. She is “a sinner.” Simon’s invitation to Jesus to come to his home indicates that Simon viewed himself, unlike this woman, of being worthy of hosting Jesus at his home. Remember the text that led to this story? Jesus quoted the Pharisees and scribes criticism of him for showing friendship to sinners by eating with them. Simon’s home, of course, was an appropriate place for Jesus to eat at.

Jesus’ corrected Simon’s misperceptions with truth.

1. Jesus was in fact a “prophet” of God. Simon thought, “If he were really a prophet...”. Jesus, in true prophetic form responded to Simon’s thoughts: “Simon, you want to know why I am allowing this woman to treat me this way?” Jesus revealed Himself the one who has the authority to forgive sins.

2. When Jesus asked Simon, “Do you see this woman?”, he was inviting Simon to see her as she was, not as she used to be. Jesus’ parable made the point that she was not acting seductively with ill motives towards Jesus, she was expressing gratefulness to Jesus for forgiving her and giving her hope. She

Jesus, Friend of Sinners: Image is Nothing Thirst Is Everything

3/3/19 – Pastor Randy

was represented by the individual in the parable who was released from the massive debt, triggering within her an immense degree of honor and appreciation love for Jesus.

3. Simon was not only deceived about Jesus and the woman, he was also deceived about himself. Jesus didn't only ask Simon, "Do you see this woman?", in order to correct Simon's misperception of the woman, he also asked it to open Simon's eyes to his own hypocrisy. Simon was judging her for not following the proper social etiquette and religious customs when he violated them himself. Simon didn't show Jesus the customary honor of washing his feet, greeting him w/ a kiss, or providing oil for the dry skin on his head. Considering the fact of Jesus deity, Simon proves himself to be the "real sinner". He dishonored God the Father by dishonoring God the Son but the woman he considered "the sinner" proves to be the true worshipper of God!!

Here is a vital contrast between Simon and this woman. Simon was preoccupied with his public image, his reputation. She showed no concern for her public image or reputation. Her only concern was to be in Jesus presence to express honor to Jesus for forgiving her and restoring her.

Simon had an image, the woman had a thirst. Image is nothing, thirst is everything!!

Building our reputation or public image does not transform our character. A hunger and thirst for God and His righteousness will transform your character, who you really are!!

Reputation is not the same as character. Our reputation is what others believe us to be. Our character is what God knows us to be. Reputation describes who we are in public. Our character describes who we are in private.

The problem with trying to maintain an image, building and tending to our reputation, is that images fade. Reputations that are disconnected from the reality of one's character are eventually exposed. In time, the gap between our character and our reputation will be closed.

Jesus, Friend of Sinners: Image is Nothing Thirst Is Everything

3/3/19 – Pastor Randy

When Grant Hill was preparing for his Senior season at Duke I had the opportunity to meet him and Christine took a pic of us. I got a lot of mileage out of that pic. I used to show it to people to create an image of myself as a great basketball player, who played w/ Grant Hill back in the day. However, I was not able to maintain the image once I stepped on the court.

Sprite's slogan serves to remind us of a vital truth for Christians – "Image is nothing thirst is everything." An image of being righteous is nothing, but a genuine thirst for righteousness and the presence of God is everything."

Jesus demonstrated that he was a true friend to Simon by spending time at his house but also by tactfully and gracefully confronting Simon's sin.

Jesus also proved to be a friend to the sexually immoral woman.

How did Jesus prove to be her friend?

1. By offering her forgiveness and freedom from sin.

Jesus did not rewrite God's definition of sin? He didn't say, "Don't let those people demean you. I have come to defend your rights and dignity as a "sex-worker". He didn't say, "Don't let people shame you for being promiscuous. I see you simply have a non-monogamous orientation. If that is the way God made you, then you...just...be...you!

No! Jesus said her sins – **which were many** – had been forgiven.

2. By calling for her to be restored to the community; to be accepted back into God's family. It is clear from the parable that this woman had already received forgiveness from Jesus. Her actions and Jesus words clearly imply a prior encounter between her and Jesus. The point of Jesus' parable is that she is so acutely aware of the gravity of her sin, and therefore, so overwhelmed by the gratuitous forgiveness extended to her by Jesus, that she engaged in such an excessive and extravagant display of appreciation love.

Jesus' statement to her that her sins were forgiven in vs 49 was made to her but for all present to hear. It was followed by the Pharisees questioning, "Who does this Jesus think he is that he can forgive sins?" Jesus addressed the woman again, in the hearing of all present, and said, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace." The words, "you are saved go in peace", clearly

Jesus, Friend of Sinners: Image is Nothing Thirst Is Everything

3/3/19 – Pastor Randy

communicate, not only that she has been forgiven personally but that she now belongs to the community of faith; she belongs to God and his people.

Application: You are either like Simon or like this woman - in this sense: Either you are a sinner who knows he/she needs Jesus forgiveness and freedom or you are a sinner like Simon; deceived by efforts at image building which have caused you to believe that the image is the real thing!

If you have been like Simon, Jesus is your friend. He has proven that by bringing you this word this morning to persuade you to humbly acknowledge your need for Him to be your Savior and Lord. Jesus gave his life to provide for your forgiveness. He took your sin on himself so you could be forgiven and free. You can walk away from that! Or you can walk into his arms!!

Simon is like the man who would rather keep driving and risk being late, or never arriving at all, rather than appear lost by stopping to ask directions. It's ok to admit your lost! You know it, everyone around you knows it, but unless you are willing to ask God for help you will remain lost!

Are you like this woman? I don't mean that your sin is exactly like hers, but that you are like her in that you have been carrying around the shame and guilt of your sin like a ton of bricks on your back. Your past sins have crushed you spiritually, psychologically, mentally. Jesus is your friend. The way he demonstrates his friendship to those who know and feel the weight of their sin, is by lifting that weight off your shoulders and carrying it up Calvary's hill.

The answer for the Simon's of the world and the "immoral woman" of the world is to come to Jesus for forgiveness and follow Him for freedom!

Jesus, Friend of Sinners: Image is Nothing Thirst Is Everything

3/3/19 – *Pastor Randy*
