

Coming home to grace

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again. Maybe I'll tell you something about myself. I love watching those little videos or reading articles that talk about life hacks.

Things where you can have this five-minute video that shows you how to just improve your quality of your life just quickly by just having this little life hack. Like I'm trying to lose some weight, so I heard that avocados are things I should be eating.

And I realized by watching all those life hack videos that I have been just trying to peel my avocados the wrong way. You know, there I was with a peeler just trying to get that skin off one by one.

And then I watched this video, this life hack video, and I realized that all I need to do is cut the avocado in half and just take a spoon and there you go. But to some of you guys, that might be just something you do every day.

For me, it was, you know, life-changing. And I know now because I know how to open my avocado, I will lose that weight. Anyways, as I was looking through our websites on life hack, I saw this amazing article written by somebody who calls himself a child of God.

[1 : 13] And it says, 21 life hacks that a Christian or non-Christian should know that you could learn from Jesus. The article started this way.

It says, aside from being the savior for Christ and even a prophet for Muslims, Jesus was a revolutionary figure who challenged traditions, religions, and belief.

He was one of the first thought leaders who inspired the world. Whether you are a Christian or not, here are 21 life lessons you can learn from Jesus.

And I was very interested to read the article, and I started reading the article. It gave you life lessons like this. Now, it's four pages long. I'm not going to bore you with these four pages, but I'm just going to read you some of them, and they all have kind of like biblical context to it.

For example, be clear with what you want. It says here, it's according to the passage, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock at the door and the door will be opened to you.

[2 : 15] And the answer, the life hack is, be clear with what you want. And when you find it, what the thing you want, take a leap. Because the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again.

And out of joy goes and sells that he has and buys that field. So life hack two is, when you find it, take a leap. Now, it continues. It has advice like, always go beyond what is required.

Keep your promises and be careful with what you say. How you look at others is a reflection on how you look at yourself. Follow the golden rule. You cannot please everyone. Move on.

Take the road, less travel. Continued life hacks and most of them completely biblically out of context. But that's not my argument here today. It's just I looked at this and all this person was talking about, when he thought about the 21 most important thing, a Christian or a non-Christian should know what Jesus has said.

The only thing the person was talking about is things that could merely improve your life today. None of it focused on eternal life. None of us talked about sin and forgiveness and repentance.

[3 : 30] It didn't touch on the gospel at all. And I believe the reason the person wrote this article in such a way is because he had a particular approach to Jesus.

He approached Jesus in a particular way. He thought Jesus was a revolutionary thought leader. And because on how he viewed Jesus to be, he approached writing this article in a particular way. And because he had this view of Jesus and because he approached Jesus in this particular way, the walk away from the article at best would be that you are more motivated in life.

At best. You are more motivated. Now today's text, as we just read, touches on that. In fact, today's text is very revealing on how we approach Jesus, which shows actually how we view Jesus. And depending on how we approach Jesus and depending on how we view Jesus, we will walk away from Jesus or go from Jesus differently. And that's what we're going to look at this morning. [4 : 47] And before I start, let me start us with a prayer. Heavenly Father, we come before you and this morning we ask for your grace.

I ask for your grace to be able to speak your word clearly and boldly and faithfully. Father, I ask for grace for all of us here. So that we may hear your word.

That it may transform our minds. That it may convict our hearts. And that it may change our lives. And I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

So let's look at the first thing, how we approach Jesus. In this story, we have two people. We have Simon and we have the sinful woman. And the interesting thing is both people approach Jesus. Both people want to get to know Jesus. Simon also is interested in Jesus. In fact, it says here he invited him into his house.

[5 : 46] Back then, to invite somebody to your house would mean to invite them to a relationship. Now, Simon was intellectually interested in Jesus.

He wanted to hear what Jesus had to say. And it's profound because he's actually, as a Pharisee, bold. Back then, the Pharisees, they were really against Jesus.

For him to invite Jesus into his house meant that he really wanted to hear what this teacher had to say. He was interested in Jesus. Now, not personally, more impersonally.

He wanted to have more intellectual understanding. But yet, he invited Jesus. And he was bold about it because we know of another Pharisee who invited Jesus. Wanted to get to know Jesus. And that's Nicodemus. Now, when Nicodemus wanted to get to know Jesus, what did he do? He met Jesus quietly at night. No, Simon invited him into his house in broad daylight.

[6 : 48] And back then, you must understand the culture, this invitation was a public invitation. This invitation would be as such that people would come to the house, the invited guests would come to the house, and they would recline at the table with their head at the table and their feet and sandals off down the table.

They would lie on their sides. And the guest of honor and other people who may sit at the table, they would share intellectual thoughts. Now, the public is invited as well. Anybody could walk into the house at a point of time and just participate.

Not participate as in share their thoughts, but listen in. It was a public event. It was kind of like a symposium or a seminar where you would come in and you would hear the thoughts of the intellectuals talking.

And you could actually understand a bit more what they are talking about. So here's Simon. He's interested in Jesus.

He wants to know what Jesus has to say, how he could probably improve his life. He would like to know the life hacks that Jesus has for him. He would like to know how Jesus could impress him and improve his life.

[8 : 03] Simon wants a discussion. Now, that's very, very different from the other person in this story. Now, we see the sinful woman, as she's referred to in this text, approaching Jesus completely different.

When she learned that Jesus was at the house, she went there and she wanted to get close to him. Now, you see her coming and she's weeping. She's emotional.

You see her letting her hair down, which was unheard of in that culture. I mean, for women to show their hair, to show their glory in public is something you would not do.

It would show your vulnerability. Now, some commentators would say it's highly provocative what she was doing there. Some commentators would say that actually letting her hair down is kind of like a woman going topless.

Now, I don't think that that's really back then that strong in that culture because otherwise Simon would have focused on that act. Simon merely focused that she was touching Jesus later on.

[9 : 07] But regardless of what it was, it was something which was not common, something you did not do in public. It was something personal that she was doing. And you see her pour oil.

On the feet of Jesus, a perfume. She was carrying an alabaster jar with her. Now, from reading the text, you may understand what kind of woman it is. The text clearly says that she was a sinful

woman.

A woman in that town who lived a sinful life. That's how she's referred to. Now, most people, most scholars, it probably means that she was a prostitute.

It could also be that she was merely a woman who, everybody knew that she was living a promiscuous lifestyle. But clearly, when she walked into the room, Simon was able to recognize her and immediately knew that she was a sinful woman, most likely a town's woman, a streetwalker, a prostitute who came there.

And it was customary back then for women at times to wear, to have an alabaster jar, which is a perfume. It's an essential oil. It's not an alcohol-based perfume.

[10 : 22] It's an essential oil. It's an expensive item. And women usually would, it's a small little jar, they would wear it around their necks and it would be an attraction, a sign of, because of the smell, it's an aroma, it's a sign of beauty, it's a sign of power that they have over men in that way.

A sign of wealth. It's an accessory. And it has a small little skinny neck, so for you to pour it out would be very hard. So for you to actually get the essential oil out, you would have to break it. Now, I would like not to just focus on the financial cost that was incurred by her breaking it, but as a woman whose livelihood is probably prostitution or attracting men, with her pouring out the alabaster jar, she was pouring out all the power that she had.

She was pouring out everything that she's got, her desirability and her beauty, she was pouring it out on the feet of Jesus. It's not just a financial cost.

You see, she gets personal. Her whole self gets involved. She's emotional. She was emotionally invested, financially invested, and that publicly.

[11 : 41] She came with her whole self, all of her life, completely devoted. Can you see the difference in how differently they approach Jesus?

Both are interested. Both want to get to know Jesus, but their approach is completely different.

Simon wants a discussion. Simon wants to be intellectually stimulated.

She wants a relationship. She wants to get personal. She lets her hair down. She cries. She touches Jesus.

She pours her life worth onto him. She comes completely. Now I wonder this morning, how did you come here this morning?

Did you come here for an intellectual engagement? Did you come here to hear another life hack, to see how Jesus could improve your life?

[12 : 46] Interested but impersonal. Or did you come emotionally invested, with all of your person, all of your life, ready to personally encounter Jesus?

Are you looking to be stimulated in your mind, or touched in your heart? I wonder how we came here this morning. Now we came here this morning in a particular way, and that would be highly dependent on how we view Jesus.

See, how we view Jesus would indicate, and how we approach Jesus. And in this passage here, we see two different ways on how these two different characters view Jesus.

In verses 39, we get to hear some of Simon's private thoughts. It says here, when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, saw this woman, the sinful woman, weeping, opening up her hair, having bodily fluids drop on Jesus, using her hair to wipe the feet, kissing and touching him, he said to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him, and what kind of woman she is, that she is a sinner.

You see, Simon, he thought if Jesus would be a real prophet, Jesus would know that this woman is a sinful woman, and that she is defiling him, because back then in the culture, was if a sinful woman, a sinful person would touch you, you are made unclean.

[14 : 39] They had an outside-in kind of theology. Your outsides will affect your inside. He understood that if Jesus would really know that she was going to do that, if he is a prophet, he should be able to read minds, he should be able to understand what is going on, and he would have stopped her, he would have avoided that situation.

So Simon is thinking, Jesus, he cannot be a prophet. He did not stop her. And if he is a teacher, he is not even a good teacher, because look at how he is reacting.

Doesn't he know that she is sinful? Jesus defiled himself by letting her touch him. See, he saw Jesus merely as, at best, at best, a teacher with some information.

Not a prophet, and definitely not God incarnate. Now Jesus turns around and answers Simon.

So, in a way, this text is funny, because Jesus can read minds. It says here, Simon was saying to himself, so he wasn't saying it out loud, but Jesus knew what Simon was thinking, and Jesus turns around and says, Simon, let me tell you something.

[16:02] And generally, when you read scripture, or generally, when Jesus comes to you and says, let me tell you something, it's not a good thing. Whenever you read the scriptures and Jesus goes around and tells somebody, let me tell you something, it's usually not a good thing.

And, Simon receives a lecture. Jesus starts with a parable. Here's the parable.

Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him 500 denarii and one 50. Neither of them had money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both.

Now, which of them will love him more? And Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven. And Jesus says, you have judged correctly. Now, let me explain this parable a bit more deeper.

It's a really great parable. problem. You have two people who owe money. And the reality is, regardless of how much money they owe, they're both in debt.

[17:09] And regardless of how much money you owe, if you're not able to pay your creditor the amount that you owe, you're deserving of a penalty. Now, it doesn't matter whether you owe 50 or you owe 500.

If you are bankrupt, you can't pay it. Here are two people, both bankrupt, both owing money. and the creditor forgives them both. Now, you may believe that you are better if you just owe 50, but if you can't pay it, you are actually in the same boat as the person who owes 500.

one preacher said it this way, one person is pretty dead and the other person is ugly dead. He said it as an example, imagine you're lying in your sleep and a spider comes and stings you, I don't know, do spiders sting or bite?

Well, let's say sting and you die, you're pretty dead. If a lion comes and mauls you and rips you apart and tears you apart, you are ugly dead. My question is, who is more dead?

[18:24] Who is more dead? Both are equally dead. Let me say it differently. Imagine you have a thin glass wall and behind it is poisonous gas and you take a little stone, you throw it against the thin glass wall and the thin glass wall breaks and the poison comes out.

Well, you're dead. Now, if you take a machine gun and shoot that wall to a thousand pieces, well, the poisonous gas comes out and you're dead. It doesn't matter how many holes the wall has. it matters that the wall is broken and that's our sin. It doesn't matter how great our debt is. We can't pay it back. We are dead. So, regardless of whether you're 50 or 500, regardless of where you are ugly dead or pretty dead, regardless of you throwing a small stone or using a machine gun to break that glass wall of holiness, you are dead.

the creditor forgives both debtors which means that somebody needs to pay the price.

You see here the creditor pays the price. If you owe somebody money and he forgives you the amount of money that you have paid, he is bearing the cost.

[19:46] It has cost him that money. He's paying the price. whenever there's forgiveness, there's always pain. Now, you can choose to make the other person pay and they have the pain or it's the creditor or you can choose to bear the cost yourself and you absorb the pain but the price has to be paid.

Here, the debtor pays both prices. Somebody needs to pay the price always. So, as the creditor pays the price, the question is who do you think you are?

See, the one who is ugly dead, the one with the machine gun, the one who owes 500 denarii, this parable says loves more. Loves more.

The person who realizes that they owe greatly understands that their debt has been covered greatly and that person loves more. the 50 denarii person loves little probably because she thinks, I'm not that bad.

I just owe little. I'm actually a good kind of person. I can probably fix myself.

[21:05] All I need is some life hacks. Well, the person who owes 500 realizes that they are spiritually bankrupt. They can't help themselves. they need somebody else outside themselves to save them and to pay that debt.

Now, Jesus applies that parable right away to the context, right away to Simon and the sinful woman. After Simon already judged correctly and said, well, I guess the one who owes the bigger debt loves more, Jesus turns to the woman and he says this, do you see this woman?

I came into your house, you did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing me.

You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Jesus right away shows Jesus that she is the one who loved more. Simon is the one who loved little.

Simon did not show any love to Jesus. Simon did not honor Jesus. Simon failed to respectfully welcome Jesus into his home because the things that he just mentions are things which are customary.

[22 : 33] Back then, if you invited a guest of honor, it would be customary to wipe their feet and wash their feet. It would be customary to welcome them with a kiss. It would be customary to anoint their head with oil.

Simon failed to do any of this for Jesus which reveals how Simon really looks at Jesus. It reveals the heart of Simon that he did not honor Jesus.

He was merely interested what Jesus had to offer him. without loving Jesus, without wanting to get to know Jesus, without getting personal with Jesus. You see how Simon says, oh, she touched him. He didn't want to get personal. No, the woman instead did everything Simon was supposed to do as a good host. She wiped his feet.

She kissed him. She anointed him with oil. She loved greatly. Simon couldn't see it because he had this outside in theology.

[23 : 36] He had a particular view on how he judged a woman. He saw her as a sinful woman doing sinful things by letting her hair down, defiling Jesus through her bodily fluids and touching him, but he did not realize that she was pouring love upon Jesus.

The reason she was able to do that is because how she viewed Christ. She viewed Christ as somebody who was able to forgive her debt.

She was able to view him this way because she realized that she was spiritually bankrupt. She realized that she was the one who owes 500 denari.

So that's why she approached Christ completely different because she didn't need a life hack. She didn't need a lecture. She didn't need an intellectual debate.

She didn't need a new thought. She needed new life. And Jesus brings it down to the principle in verse 47.

[24 : 44] He says, Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven as her great love has shown. See, her great love showed that she knew she had great debt.

It showed that she recognized her condition. So when she looked at Jesus, she saw the creditor who forgave her great debt. She saw the person who could redeem her completely.

Simon did not recognize his debt to be large. He thinks he can fix himself, his debt himself. All he needs is good advice. So how you view Jesus depends on how you view yourself.

As someone who is morally capable or somebody who is spiritually bankrupt. Depends on whether you think you're pretty dead or ugly dead. Now the interesting part of this principle it has a second part.

It says whoever loves whoever has been forgiven little loves little. So it says to the degree to which you understand how much you have been forgiven to that degree you will love others.

[25 : 57] So to the degree that we understand how spiritually bankrupt we are to that degree we understand how forgiven we are in Christ to the degree that we understand how forgiven we are to that degree we are able to love.

The implication therefore is how we treat others welcome others especially if you read the gospel of Luke the outcast the marginalized the sinners the poor how we treat them is indicative of how much we comprehend the gospel of grace that we are sinners saved through grace by faith so let me ask you this morning how is your love how are you loving others who are different than you how are you loving the sinner how are you loving the prostitute that might come and walk through his doors how are you loving the drug addict who might walk through his doors you see Jesus says however we love the least of these people is how we loved him when people walk into church and I know we have many visitors here today so as people walk into your church wherever your church is are they coming home to grace or are they coming home to judgment as people walk into your home especially now during this Chinese New Year season how are you receiving them how are you loving them we all have that uncle or that auntie or that cousin or that brother or that sister that

person who has sinned against us the person who we rather not visit us the person who we might have every right to be angry with the person who owes us a great debt to what extent are we able to love this person to that extent you understand how greatly you are loved by Christ how are we welcoming people who are different from us how are we loving the sinners eight years ago I was a drug addict eight years ago I walked into a church eight years ago I was greatly loved by the people of that church it changed my life it changed my life completely to the extent that we understand that we are forgiven we are able to forgive others and love others now is it difficult of course it's difficult is it costly of course it's costly because when we pour grace to other people it's going to cost us if we welcome enough friendly to that uncle or brother or cousin or somebody who we have just bad relationship with them if we have grace to pour grace to them of course it's costly towards us somebody has got to pay the debt one theologian says this grace is always costly to the giver but it's shocking to the observer and it's traumatic to the receiver it's shocking to the observer anybody who sees you pour out grace to somebody else they are shocked because it's not common it's not of this world for us to give unmerited favor for those people who don't deserve it it's shocking people will be talking about it people will realize and it's traumatic to the person who receives it whoever receives grace will be changed now if somebody receives grace two things could happen either their heart gets bigger or their heart gets smaller as they receive the grace their heart gets bigger bigger if they don't receive that grace their heart gets smaller regardless they change it's traumatic to the receiver how are we going to love others that grace that we receive from our great debt was the death of

Christ we are people who owe our whole life we have all fallen short of the glory of God even if you walked in this morning thinking that you're morally okay you're not we are all spiritually bankrupt we are all not able to pay the price but here's the good news that Jesus Christ he went on the cross and he paid the penalty he paid the price and if we would put our faith in him this morning we are forgiven and to the extent that we understand this concept to that extent we are able to go out and love others so how do we go from Jesus well in this passage we we read that the observers they were shocked right they saw grace and they were shocked they were asking who is this Jesus who is this person who forgives sins they are asking the question because they see two different kinds of people having two different kinds of approaches to Jesus having two kinds of viewpoints of Jesus so the people they ask who is this who can forgive sins brothers and sisters it's so important that you answer that question for yourself who will will change will change the eternity of your life the answer to that question is one of the most important questions you can ask for yourself ever who is Jesus is he merely a teacher who is giving you a life hack or is he God who came to earth and died the death to pay the penalty of your sin and rose again in glory securing you in eternity in heaven with him should you put your faith in him so you might walk away questioning this morning or you might walk away insulted how do you think

[33 : 11] Simon felt when Jesus told him you have done nothing like this woman you're supposed to kiss me you're supposed to hug me you're supposed to pour oil on me you're supposed to embrace me wash my feet and you didn't do any of those things what do you think Simon was thinking who do you think you are you want me to hug you and kiss you and welcome you and love you who do you think you are Simon was probably very insulted in what Jesus was saying and this morning you might walk away insulted because I have labored greatly this morning to show you that you are as sinful as a prostitute I have labored greatly to show you that you are not pretty dead but ugly dead and you might walk away insulted because you thought all you needed is a quick fix all you needed is a life hack you're morally okay you just need some good advice or thirdly you could walk away in peace

Jesus said to her your sins are forgiven the other guests began to say among themselves who is this who even forgives sins Jesus said to the woman your faith has saved you go in peace this morning when you realize that you are spiritually bankrupt if you realize that you just not need an intellectual debate you don't need just a life hack when you realize that you need new life that you need a savior that you need Jesus Christ on the cross for you when you realize that you can't save yourself hear this he has paid the price and if you put your faith in Jesus you can go in peace and you can go just as this woman went you see we talked about how bold Simon was that he dared to invite

Jesus to an open symposium even though all the other Pharisees were against Jesus just imagine how bold this woman was somebody who's ostracized from her community that she dared to walk

into a public space and openly show her devotion to Christ when Jesus says go to peace he says go into peace he says that you are able to have complete freedom see that woman realized it she came to Jesus openly worshipped him and was completely devoted him and poured her love out to him she did not care what people around her said because she knows if he is for her who can be against her we can have that kind of boldness if we put our faith in Jesus know this he is for you God is for you and if God is for you nobody can be against you we will have the power to be able to go into our public spaces and openly show our devotion to Christ that's what it means to go in peace to have our rest our confidence our identity everything rested not on who we are not on our outsides but what Jesus has done for us once we grasp our identity lies in that we will have peace we will have power we will have strength and know this this morning and if you have put your faith in Jesus before and I struggle with this I have Simon days I have days where I think I'm on a moral high ground and it shows because

I become highly critical of people I usually become highly critical of people who I have the greatest expectancy of and I forget I forget that I am a sinner saved by grace if this was your week look at the woman look how she understands herself to be look at how she understands Jesus to be Jesus says to Simon look at the woman and we look at the woman we see how she views Christ let us do this morning let us look at Christ let us realize that we have been greatly forgiven so that we may go in peace let us pray heavenly father we come before you and we recognize that we owe greatly we have fallen short of your glory we are spiritually bankrupt and we cannot save ourselves your words as blessed are the poor in spirit for they will inherit the kingdom of

[38 : 39] God we know that when we realize how spiritually broken we are and we look on the cross we realize how forgiven we are it is truly through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross that all our debt has sin but there is new life in Christ who paid the price and we give you all the glory and all the thanks and we know that through this power that we have received we are able to go out and love others we ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to help us we praise in Jesus name Amen To Any smile blood in to God God has known used and sort of

Guten put going