

Jesus Looking at His Own Cross

A Walk with Luke

Յիսուս Կը Նայի Իր Խաչին
Ղուկասի Դիտանկիւնէն

Luke 18:9-14

Luke 7:36-50

We continue our journey to the cross as we walk with the evangelist Dr. Luke.¹ We started our journey with Paul, then Isaiah, and today we continue with Luke. We are going to dig in two passages where Luke has recorded an event in which underneath the obvious story we find the message of the cross.

The first story: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Publican)

Jesus told a parable about two men who went up for prayer. In the Middle Eastern context, going to prayer can mean two things: it could mean to go to public worship and prayer or doing your own private prayer. If we look at the context, we can see they “went up” which means they went to the Temple for public worship. **Twice daily, they would offer in the Temple a prayer for the atonement of the sins of the people.** One was in the morning and one in the afternoon. During this service the priest would sacrifice a lamb. There would be prayers and songs. **The sacrificed lamb was for the atonement of the people of Israel.** In the middle of the service, the priest would go inside and continue praying, while the people who were outside would pray their individual prayers.

In our story, it seems these two individuals were in this service. The Pharisee was too proud of himself and of his achievements. “The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’” Me, me, and me.

Now the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

The better translation is done in the Armenian *krapar* (the classical Armenian). Աստուած քաւիա զիս զմեղաւորս, which means, “God, **make atonement** for me, a sinner.” The Greek word, which is used only twice in the Bible, can mean two things: **be merciful to me** or **make reconciliation**.

Jesus says the tax collector went down justified. He says, “for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Of course, humility is one of the lessons we can learn from this parable. Yet, it is more than humility. **If praying humbly and asking for God’s mercy would justify us, then why the cross? Why do we need a Messiah?**

Please look at the context where all this is happening. Both men went to pray for the atonement of their sins. The one who was so proud and did not acknowledge his own sins went down unjustified. He was not broken in the presence of God. Pride kills us.

I learned in my life that my pride is in the Lord and in His cross. Galatians 6: 14, 1 Cor. 1: 13

The second one, who did acknowledge his sins, could not even look up. He was not even sure that the sacrifice of a lamb would be enough for his atonement. Jesus said, “Yes, this man went down justified, not because he was a better man, but because he was asking for atonement from God. **‘Have mercy, give me another chance, I repent.’”**

The man realizes that he cannot do anything for his sins; he can only ask for forgiveness. The innocent Lamb of God can forgive and make atonement. Therefore, the message of Jesus is clear: Jesus is the Lamb of God. By telling this parable, Jesus is not just teaching us how to pray, but also telling us that he will **be the only way for us to find atonement, salvation and justification. For Jesus sin is not primarily a broken law, but a broken relationship.**

Years later, Paul in his letters indicates that **the new Lamb of God is Jesus**. God made the atonement possible because of Jesus’ cross and resurrection.

Second Story

We move to another account again told by Luke, this time **Jesus is invited to have dinner with Simon the Pharisee.**

When we invite someone for dinner, we, as hosts, do whatever it takes to honor the invited guest. In our society, we open the door, we greet them either shaking hands or hugging, we take their coat, and ask them to have a seat and feel comfortable.

In those days, the things one did to honor guests were quite different. First they would **kiss** the guests. If the one who invited was a Rabbi and the invitee was a Rabbi, they would kiss each other’s cheeks. If the invitee was a

student, the invitee would kiss the hand of the Rabbi. If the invitee was a slave, he would kiss the feet of the Rabbi.

Then they would **offer olive oil** for refreshing. It is good for hair and skin.

Remember they were not able to take showers every day!

Last thing before the meal the host will provide water for washing the feet. If he had a slave, the slave would do that.

Now Simon, who knew all this, did not do any of them.

How come this woman was in the house?

The main invitees would recline and eat; the beggars and others would stay behind, near the wall and would start telling praises towards the host family, so that at the end they would get some leftover food. It seems this woman, who heard that Jesus would be dining in this house, also came.

I believe this woman heard Jesus' teaching. She experienced God's love towards the sinner. Now she is following Jesus and has tremendous respect, love and adoration towards him.

She took a big risk.

She realized that Simon was not honoring his guest in the proper way.

-She took the risk, by revealing her hair (that was only done in front of the husband), then touching a man (who is not her husband), then washing the feet of Jesus with her tears; more than that, she poured the expensive perfume on the feet of Jesus. She took a major risk by doing all this.

-She loved Jesus very much. She was broken in tears. I believe some of the tears were due to her shame and guilt, and some were shed because she was sad that this rabbi did not receive the respect he deserved.

-By pouring the expensive perfume, which was used in her profession, she is declaring that she does not need this anymore. **She gives up her old life.** She surrenders completely to this Savior.

Simon did not like this. Simon accused Jesus for allowing that WOMAN to touch him. If Jesus were a prophet, he would know what kind of a woman that person was. What kind of Rabbi is Jesus?

Now Jesus tells a parable of debtors. (Explain)

Let us continue:

“Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “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 not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. (44-47)

You see Jesus was very strongly telling Simon his problem.

Jesus did not play a political game. He could have said to the woman, “Thank you, not now, later...” No, Jesus allowed the woman to do whatever she wanted to do. WHY?

Praising this woman in public and rebuking Simon (the Pharisee) in his house was a strong statement.

Jesus took on himself all the blames and accusations of the woman.

If the woman represented the “sinner” in the story, Jesus took on his shoulders the **sins of this woman**.

If society pointed fingers at this woman as an unworthy and bad woman, Jesus took all those sins on his shoulder.

Now, instead of staring at this woman, the people were looking at Jesus with anger. **No wonder they crucified him.**

The story of the cross is not told here directly, yet it is in the actions of Jesus.

Jesus is looking to his own cross; **he is absorbing the sins, guilt, and the shame of the people.** No wonder they crucified him.

The same scenario happened with Zacchaeus. He was a tax collector hated by everyone. Yet he wanted to see Jesus. He accepted the invitation of Jesus. He wanted to be found by Jesus. He surrendered to Jesus. The audience hated Zacchaeus. But Jesus took all the blame, and all eyes turned toward Jesus. No wonder they crucified him.

We are studying our Lord Jesus, who is looking at His own cross. Yes, he knows exactly that these events are going to be very costly.

Application: a subjective way to look at this events.

The common denominator between the tax collector, the woman, and Zacchaeus is that they all realized they needed Jesus. They need atonement. They needed repentance.

Someone told me that my sermons are depressing him. He did not commit any crimes; he did not steal; he did not feel he was a sinner.

You know, this is the main problem in our churches. The intention of these sermons is not to put guilt feelings or feelings of shame in you. I hope the Word of God will alert you to wake up from a long sleep in self-justification.

Then 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."

How do we go out from this sanctuary?

Allow Jesus to come and restore you.

Amen

1. Several concepts are taken from Dr. Kenneth Bailey's "Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes"