

Normal Campus Sermon Study - 11.15.2026

Leader's Corner

It's Not About the Jar

Luke 7:36-50

Main Idea: Generosity begins with seeing Jesus for who He truly is. When we recognize the depth of His mercy and the greatness of His worth, generosity becomes a response of worship rather than an act of obligation.

Main Passage: Luke 7:36–50 — Jesus is anointed by a sinful woman.

Main Practice: Open Hands, Open Heart: Identify something you have been holding tightly—your time, talents, treasures, reputation, or control—and practice surrendering it to Jesus as an expression of gratitude and worship.

A Note for Leaders: Generosity can easily become a conversation about money. Resist that temptation.This study is primarily about our view of Jesus and the condition of our hearts. Create space for honest reflection about shame, self-reliance, judgment, gratitude, and surrender. Remember that the woman wasn't trying to purchase Jesus' acceptance. Her love flowed from an encounter with His grace.

Formation Focus: We don't become generous simply by trying harder to give. We become generous as our hearts are increasingly captivated by Jesus.

Prayer and Praise

Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

We come before You today recognizing that You are holy, loving, and worthy of everything we have to offer.

Too often, our vision of You becomes small. We get distracted by our circumstances, consumed by our failures, or convinced that we can somehow make ourselves worthy of Your love.

Help us see You more clearly.

Like the woman who came to Jesus, give us the courage to approach You honestly, without hiding or pretending. Remind us that Your grace is greater than our failures and Your mercy is not something we can earn.

As we open Your Word together, soften our hearts. Show us where we have become judgmental, self-reliant, or unwilling to surrender.

May our generosity grow not from guilt or obligation but from a deeper love for You.

Teach us to live with open hands and grateful hearts.

Here we are, Lord. All of us, all for You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Suggested Worship Songs:

1. "Worthy of It All" — David Brymer / Ryan Hall

2. "We Fall Down" — Chris Tomlin

3. "Gratitude" — Brandon Lake

Group Discussion

Begin by reading Luke 7:36–50 aloud.

SEEING JESUS CLEARLY

1. As you reflect on this encounter between Simon, the woman, and Jesus, what stands out to you most? What surprises, challenges, or encourages you?

2. Simon and the woman were physically close to the same Jesus but responded to Him very differently. What do you think shaped the way each person saw Jesus?

* How might our own experiences, assumptions, or expectations influence the way we see Him today?

3. Jesus tells Simon a story about two people whose debts were forgiven (vv. 41–43). What is Jesus teaching about the relationship between forgiveness, gratitude, and love?

* Why might someone who has followed Jesus for years gradually lose their sense of wonder at His grace?

COMING TO JESUS AS WE ARE

4. The woman entered a room where she likely knew she would be judged or rejected. Yet she came to Jesus anyway.

* What do you admire about her willingness to approach Jesus?

* What sometimes keeps us from approaching Jesus with that same honesty and boldness?

5. Shame, pride, and self-reliance can all keep us at a distance from Jesus, although they look very different.

Which of these tends to create the greatest barrier in your relationship with Jesus? Why?

6. Jesus tells Simon, "Look at this woman" (v. 44). Simon saw her reputation, but Jesus saw her faith.

* How might seeing people through the eyes of Jesus change the way we respond to those who feel like outsiders?

RESPONDING WITH GENEROSITY

7. The woman offered something valuable, but the significance of her generosity wasn't ultimately about the perfume.

What does her example teach us about the difference between generosity motivated by obligation and generosity motivated by love?

8. Read Colossians 2:13–15. Paul reminds believers that Jesus has forgiven our sins and canceled the debt against us.

* What changes when we begin to see our entire lives through the lens of what Jesus has done for us?

9. The sermon reminds us that generosity includes our time, talents, treasures, and ultimately our entire lives.

* Which of these comes most naturally for you to offer God?

* Which is the most difficult to surrender?

* What might that reveal about what you value or where you place your trust?

THE ONE WHO IS WORTHY

10. Read Revelation 4:9–11. The picture of heaven is one of complete surrender and worship before God. If we truly saw Jesus as worthy of everything, what might look different about the way we live this week?

Practice

Moving from Conversation to Formation

Weekly Challenge: Empty Your Jar

This week, practice one intentional act of generosity as an expression of worship.

Choose one area where you sense God inviting you to live with more open hands.

TIME: Give meaningful, unhurried attention to someone who needs encouragement, companionship, or care.

TALENTS: Use an ability or gift to meet a need without expecting recognition or something in return.

TREASURES: Give something of value to meet a need, support someone, or advance God's work.

TRUST: Surrender an area of control, insecurity, or self-reliance through an intentional act of obedience.

Personal Reflection: Before acting, ask yourself:

* Am I doing this because I feel obligated, or because I am grateful?

* How might this act reflect the generosity Jesus has shown me?

* What would it look like to give freely without needing recognition?

The goal isn't simply to empty something from your hands. It's to make more room for Jesus in your heart.

Further Study

1. Isaiah 6:1–8 — Seeing God's Holiness Changes Everything

Isaiah's encounter with God follows a powerful movement: Revelation → Recognition → Cleansing → Response

Isaiah sees God's holiness, recognizes his own brokenness, receives cleansing, and responds with availability.

Notice that Isaiah's response, "Here am I. Send me!" comes after God's gracious act of cleansing.

Reflection: How might a clearer vision of God's holiness and grace increase your willingness to serve Him?

2. Luke 7:41–50 — Forgiveness Produces Love

Jesus' parable challenges the assumption that the outward appearance of righteousness reveals the true condition of someone's heart.

Simon appears respectable but demonstrates little love. The woman carries a reputation for sin but expresses extraordinary devotion.

Her actions are evidence of faith and love, not a payment for forgiveness. Jesus ultimately tells her, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (v. 50).

Reflection: Where might you be tempted to measure someone's spiritual maturity by outward appearances rather than the evidence of love, humility, and faith?

3. Colossians 2:13–15 — The Debt We Could Never Repay

Paul describes our condition apart from Christ as spiritual death, followed by God's extraordinary act of forgiveness and new life.

The debt against us has been canceled through Jesus' work on the cross.

This is the foundation of Christian generosity: We give because we have first received.

Reflection: How does remembering your spiritual condition apart from Christ change the way you approach generosity?