

Luke 7:31-38

Sermon: **Wisdom that contains Life within it**

2024.

written by: Danijel Dragaš



WISDOM THAT CONTAINS LIFE WITHIN IT

1. (Luke 7:31–33) To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another, and they say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’ For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.

1.2 This passage is actually more closely connected to the previous event than to the one that follows. Let’s recall that the Pharisees had rejected John’s message and baptism, and afterward they rejected Jesus’ teaching as well, as the author tells us in Luke 7:30. Jesus places a seal on that truth here. In this passage, He wants to describe what a heart looks like when it has rejected the truth of God’s salvation. When He says “generation,” I believe He is referring to the values, beliefs, customs, and worldview that had become entrenched in the religious system of Israel and its culture.

1.3 We read that Jesus compares His people to children sitting in the marketplace. Everyone who heard Him at that time knew what children typically did in the town squares and marketplaces. They knew children gathered there to play. They also knew that children often argued about which game they should play, and when they couldn’t convince others to join their preferred game, they would tug on their parents’ robes, trying to use their parents’ authority to get what they wanted: “Mom, Dad, John and Peter won’t play the game I want — tell them they have to play my game! Mom, Dad, Simon won’t give me his stick — I want that stick, tell him to give it to me!” and so on.

1.4 What is Jesus trying to say with this comparison? I believe it’s this: “You are just like those children in the marketplace — completely self-absorbed. When you want something and cannot have it, you become whiny and spoiled like little children. Even though John lived a life completely opposite to Mine, you did not listen to him, because ultimately, it doesn’t matter what the messenger looks like or how he behaves — it’s the message that bothers you. Both John and I refuse to play by the rules of

your game — and that frustrates you. It irritates you. And just like selfish, pouting children, you justify your rejection of God's righteousness with shallow and foolish excuses. 'John neither eats bread nor drinks wine — he must be possessed by a demon,' you say to yourselves. 'And this Jesus! He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners — if He were a true teacher or messenger of God, He wouldn't do that. He's just a glutton and a drunkard,' you whisper among yourselves."

1.5 In other words, Jesus is telling His people that He and John refuse to play the game that the Pharisees were promoting in the marketplaces and streets of Israel. When the Pharisees realized that neither Jesus nor John would join in their game, they acted like sulking children, trying to convince others that their game was the best, while portraying Jesus and John as foolish or mad for refusing to play along.

1.6 Moving on, at the end of the passage Jesus says, *"Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."* It's not entirely clear what He meant, but I believe He was speaking of the divine wisdom that both He and John proclaimed to the people. Earlier, Jesus described this generation as childish — whiny, irrational, driven by selfish emotion, especially when things do not go their way. And when a person is in that state, they are not open to reasonable, rational conversation; they do not want to listen to wisdom — they find it unpleasant, even offensive, and insist on going their own way.

1.7 On the other hand, the children of God love wisdom. They love to listen to what is reasonable and logical; they are drawn to the idea that life has meaning and coherence — and divine wisdom gives them that understanding.

1.8 The Book of Proverbs connects beautifully to this. It describes "wisdom" — who she is, who created her, when she came to be, and what happens to those who listen to her and to those who reject her. The passage is long, so for the purpose of this message, I'll highlight just a few verses.

1.9 (**Proverbs 8:32–36**) *Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, for blessed are those who keep my ways. Heed instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death.*

1.9.1 These verses can certainly be applied to the ministries of John and Jesus. The good news they proclaimed to their people was the wisdom that contained life within it.

— Those who listened to it received favor from God the Father, while those who rejected it — loved death. Perhaps that is what Jesus meant when He said that "wisdom is vindicated by all her children." —

THERE WERE PHARISEES WHO CAME TO LOVE JESUS' TEACHING

2. That concludes that passage. Let's move on carefully through the text.

2.1 (**Luke 7:36–38**) *Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought*

an alabaster vial of perfume,¹ and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

2.2 We read that a Pharisee invited Jesus to dine at his house. That's surprising. Why would a Pharisee want Jesus to come to his home? From earlier events we know that the Pharisees followed Jesus' ministry not with the intent of learning from Him, but to expose Him before the people as a madman speaking foolishness.

2.3 Let's briefly recall something important. The Pharisees were a movement that promoted their oral traditions alongside the Old Testament Scriptures. They believed that their interpretive system was the sole authority the people had to follow. Within their movement were the experts in the Law, the scribes, the teachers of the Law — all those who, while teaching from the Scriptures in the synagogues, were in fact promoting their doctrine. As I mentioned earlier, the term Pharisee means "separated." In other words, they believed they had been set apart by God for a special purpose.

2.4 That being said, it's no wonder the people highly respected them. In the eyes of the nation, they were the perfect example of what a person devoted to God's Law should look like. The people believed that if anyone would inherit the kingdom of God, it would be the Pharisees. But from the Gospels we know that Jesus dismantled that belief — one that had taken deep root among the people for decades, perhaps even centuries. Through His teaching, supported by miracles, Jesus revealed that the Pharisaic religious movement was filled with lies, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, pride, and selfishness — in short, with heresy itself.

— No wonder the Pharisees hated Him. —

2.5 Yet this Pharisee did the opposite of his peers — he invited Jesus into his house for a meal. That was something no Pharisee had done before. Many biblical scholars suggest that Simon — the name of this Pharisee — invited Jesus with the hidden intention of trapping Him. In other words, he wanted to engage Jesus in conversation to find some weakness that he and his fellow Pharisees could later exploit. That may well be true; we know that during His ministry, Jesus became public enemy number one on the Pharisees' list.

2.6 However, we also know from the biblical record that there were Pharisees who came to love Jesus' teaching — who believed that He truly was the promised Messiah. The Book of Acts testifies to this. For that reason, I personally believe that Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus into his home because he was genuinely interested in His teaching.²

HE ALWAYS HAD TIME FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

3. We read in verse 36 that Jesus entered the Pharisee's house.

¹ Alabaster Jar — a small vessel made of alabaster, a semi-precious stone of light, milky color, which in ancient times was often used to store precious oils and perfumes because of its impermeability and aesthetic value. In biblical and archaeological contexts, alabaster jars are often associated with anointing and ritual acts.

² Luke 7:36; John 3:1-2; 12:42; Acts 15:5; 23:6

— That's Jesus — only He could, after everything that movement had done to Him, still have a merciful heart, a heart that desires to save every soul. —

3.1 What we see throughout the Gospels is that Jesus never devoted Himself to dealing with institutions — they simply didn't interest Him.

And what do I mean by that? Institutions have always existed, and each of them has its own religious mind — a mind independent of any one human being. The people who belong to the institution are merely instruments through which that collective mind promotes its ideas in the world. When those individuals die or leave, the institutional mind continues to exist. Why? Because it always finds new followers willing to carry out its agenda. And as long as this world endures, institutions will continue to exist.

3.2 With that said, I believe Jesus knew this perfectly well. That's why I say He didn't have time for institutions — He knew it was futile to fight against them. He knew they would persist even after He returned to the Father.

3.3 Yet, although Jesus did not have time for institutions, He always had time for the individual. That individual could come from any institution active in His day. In other words, Jesus never rejected a person simply because they came from a group or system that had wronged Him countless times. His teaching was far too precious for Him not to try to rescue an individual from the spiritual bondage — the claws — of the institution that held them captive. And that is exactly what Jesus did. I believe this is the reason He entered the house of Simon the Pharisee.

3.4 Let me pause for a moment before continuing with the text. I believe you've already sensed that I'm critical of modern institutions known as Christian denominations. And you're right. I believe they are full of falsehood, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and pride — just like the Pharisaic system of old.

3.5 In other words, although I publicly criticize Christian denominations, that does not mean I condemn the individuals who have sincerely committed themselves to serve God within one of them. I firmly believe that within every denomination, or institution — whatever name we give it — there are children of God. Children chosen by Him, whom God personally teaches, through His Spirit, the wisdom to walk by faith while fulfilling the unique role He predestined for them before the foundation of the world.

3.6 Likewise, I believe this is the biblical perspective. That is why I am willing — even toward a movement that may have rejected me or branded me a heretic — to enter the home of those who belong to that denomination. My desire, like my Master's, is to share the teaching that might help them gain the wisdom necessary to inherit eternal life. And I believe that is what we are all called to do.

3.7 I'll conclude this topic with these words: Jesus did not come to create a new religious movement called Christianity. His primary purpose was to help the individual understand who God is and what God requires of them if they wish to inherit eternal life. Likewise, none of us is called to build yet another movement within the pyramid of what the world calls the Christian religion. Like our Teacher, our foremost mission is to help others understand what they must do if they wish to inherit eternal life — provided, of course, that we are equipped with the Spirit of God and His wisdom to do so.

ADMIRATION FOR ONE'S GUEST

4. All right, let's move on. In verses 37 and 38 we read of an event where a woman enters the house of a Pharisee — uninvited, of course. She approaches Jesus' feet, weeping, and begins to wash His feet with her tears. Then she wipes them with her hair, kisses His feet, and anoints them with expensive perfume.

4.1 Personally, I find this to be a very unusual scene. When I picture it visually, I can't help but think, *"What a strange way to express affection toward another human being."* To me, the natural response of affection would be to hug someone I deeply care about.

4.2 In that sense, I'm sure many of us have experienced moments in life when someone meant something extraordinary to us. I remember when a doctor once saved my life during a complicated surgery that could have easily gone wrong. When I woke up after the operation and realized what he had done for me, I couldn't hold back. During the next ward round, I got up from my bed, tears of joy streaming down my face, and I embraced my savior tightly. I didn't care who was watching, whether it was considered "appropriate" between a doctor and a patient, or that "I'm a grown man, I shouldn't cry in front of others." I didn't care about any of that.

4.3 So, in a way, I understand how the woman must have felt when she did what she did — though the manner in which she expressed it still seems strange to me.

4.4 Yet while her reaction may seem strange to us, to her it was completely natural. Once again, we must step into the shoes of an Israelite to understand why she chose to show gratitude to Jesus in that particular way.

4.5 There are several similar accounts in Scripture: John 12:1–8, where Martha — the sister of Lazarus, whom Jesus deeply loved — does the same thing as the woman in Luke's Gospel. Another is found in John 13:5, where Jesus Himself washes His disciples' feet with water and dries them with the towel He was wearing.

4.6 Although each of these events carries its own distinct meaning, we can see that the washing of another's feet was a customary act in Jewish culture — primarily as a gesture of hospitality toward guests entering one's home. If a household had servants, they would be the ones to wash the guests' feet. If there were no servants, the host would do it personally, or guests would wash their own feet before entering the house.

4.7 Why was this done? Because the roads of Israel were dusty and unpaved, and people walked in sandals. Before entering their own homes or a neighbor's, they would rinse their feet in a basin placed by the entrance to remove the dirt from the road.

4.8 As I said a moment ago, washing someone's feet was usually the task of a servant, not the master of the house. However, if someone wanted to show special honor to a guest by personally washing their feet — even though they had servants — such an act demonstrated humility, admiration, and love toward that guest.

4.9 With that in mind, I believe this is exactly what's happening in both biblical accounts. The woman in Simon's house and Martha, the sister of Lazarus, both anoint Jesus' feet with costly perfume. From that, we can conclude that their love for Jesus was immense. Through that act, they were showing that Jesus held a special place in their hearts.

THEY DID NOT CARE WHAT THE RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW THOUGHT OF THEM

5. Let's continue. Alabaster perfume was used only on rare occasions, and whoever possessed it would keep it for the most special moments.

5.1 We read that these women poured the perfume on Jesus' feet while wiping them with their hair — which is strange, because the custom was to anoint the guest's head as a sign of affection and honor.

5.2 We also read that they loosened their hair in public to wipe His feet — again, strange. Why strange? Because, according to Jewish custom, respectable women always covered their hair in public with a veil or shawl. No honorable woman would ever expose her hair in public — it was considered shameful.

5.3 So when we gather all the details together, we see that both women, overwhelmed by gratitude, humility, and love for Jesus, stopped caring about anything else in that moment. They didn't care what others might say. They didn't care that the perfume was expensive and that they might never possess such a thing again. They didn't care about cultural expectations or whose house they were in; they didn't care about the religious authorities who had likely scorned them and kept them enslaved by the belief that forgiveness from God was impossible — that they could never be in right standing with Him. No, they didn't care about any of that.

5.4 And why didn't they care? Because standing before them was the Savior — with a capital "S." The Savior who brought a message of grace and forgiveness. That's why they were willing not only to be rejected by society — they were willing to give their lives for their Savior. I believe the woman in Luke's Gospel was proving exactly that through her deeds — through the fruit of her love.

5.5 All right, we're nearing the end of this message. We'll continue with this event in the next teaching, but before we close, there's one more thing I want to highlight.

5.6 In these same verses, the author calls the woman a "sinner." It's very likely that she was a prostitute, known in her community for her immoral lifestyle. That's why Luke describes her as a "woman who was a sinner."

5.7 Because of that label, in the eyes of the Pharisaic movement — and therefore of the people — she was someone doomed beyond redemption. As I mentioned earlier, the Pharisees used the term sinner as a technical label to identify anyone who, according to their doctrine, was not in right relationship with God. In their view, such a person was already condemned. They demonstrated this by avoiding any contact with them — no physical touch, no greeting, no gesture of kindness. Any act of compassion toward such people would, in their eyes, be a religious offense of enormous magnitude.

5.8 In other words, because of Pharisaic teaching, this woman had most likely been condemned and ridiculed by society. In every possible way, her culture made sure she knew that they despised what she was.

5.9 All right, we'll stop here. The interaction between Simon the Pharisee and Jesus will be the focus of the next message.