

Courageous Worship
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We are in a sermon series titled ‘Higher Praise - Deeper Worship’.
 Previously, Pastor Joe has preached 4 powerful messages. We’ve learned about:

Consecrated worship – which means we are totally devoted to God, and we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Concentrated worship – which means we concentrate on God, and we do not offer watered-down worship.

Considerate worship – which means we consider what God wants in worship first. We also consider how our worship or lack of worship impacts others around us.

My message today is “Courageous Worship.” This is the last message in our series.

Remember – you were created to worship, and God seeks those who worship in spirit and in truth. Because of that – Satan fights very hard to keep us from worshipping. So, it takes courage to have consecrated, concentrated, and considerate worship. Courage is the common denominator in high praise and deep worship.

I want to begin by defining courage. Courage is the mental or moral strength to persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.

Synonyms: Bold, brave, fearless, heroic, undaunted, valiant.

Antonyms: Cowardly, fainthearted, fearful.

It takes no courage to worship when life is going great or when everything is going our way. Instead, worship is courageous when it is given during danger, difficulty or disappointment. Worship is courageous when it involves sacrifice. Worship is courageous when we stop at nothing to worship.

My text today is Luke 7:36-50. It gives a great example of courageous worship.

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so He went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with her hair, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, 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."

Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." Jesus said, "You have judged correctly."

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 anoint My head with oil, but she has anointed My feet with perfume. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven — for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 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."

In this passage we see Simon the Pharisee had invited Jesus to come to his home to dine. We also read about the uninvited woman who comes to see Jesus. Not only does Simon NOT worship Jesus - he also criticizes the woman who does. This unnamed woman displayed the courageous worship that was missing in Simon's life. This nameless woman is an outstanding example of courageous worship. So, let's look at 3 characteristics of courageous worship from her life.

1- This woman had the courage to worship despite her past.

One of the most significant aspects of this woman's life is seen in verse 37 which reads: *a woman in the city who was a sinner*. How would you like to be referred to as a person who was a sinner? Most of us would be offended by this. Yet this woman didn't let her shameful past keep her from worshipping Jesus. She didn't try to clean herself up before she came to Jesus. She only cared about getting to Jesus.

Obviously, everyone knew she was a sinner. She knew she was a sinner. Commentaries say she was probably a prostitute. Someone who the Pharisees looked down on. Yet, despite her past she had the courage to barge into Simon's house uninvited and unwelcomed and worship Jesus.

But Simon gets all bent out of shape. He's thinking to himself...if this man were a prophet, he would know what sort of woman this is. So, Jesus responds to Simon's disapproval. In verse 40 Jesus says: *"Simon, I have something to tell you."*

Then, Jesus tells the parable about a moneylender. He had two debtors...one who owed him five hundred denarii and the other owed 50 denarii. They were both forgiven their debt.

So, Jesus asks Simon which one will love the moneylender more. Simon answers the one who was forgiven more. Jesus tells him that is correct.

So, here's the point. Because this woman was forgiven more, she loved Jesus more. Yes, this woman had sinned...but could her past sin - which was forgiven- be what fueled her present courage to worship Jesus?

This woman obviously knew she was forgiven a great debt.
And she knew who to thank for it.
She didn't care what anyone thought.
She just wanted to worship Jesus.

So many times, we let our past hold us back from worshipping God.
We're ashamed of what we've done. But this passage clearly shows us that...
Despite our past we can be forgiven.
Despite our past we can come to Jesus.
Despite our past we can worship Him.

Never let your past sin keep you from Jesus. Instead, let your past give you a reason to courageously worship the one who forgave you, delivered you, took away your shame and made you righteous in His sight.

2 - This woman had the courage to worship despite her pain.

It seems obvious to me that this woman would have had a lot of pain in her life. I would think some of her pain was because of her past and the fact that everyone knew she had sinned. There was probably a lot of shame because of this.

Listen to verse 38: ...and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with her hair, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

Imagine the courage it took to walk into a room full of Pharisees who she knew would judge her and worship and weep at the feet of Jesus. Were her tears, tears of joy or tears of pain? Probably both. But God has a lot to say about tears. Psalm 126:5-6 says:

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

I can honestly say with all sincerity that the most healing and meaningful times I have had with God were through my tears. I mean the kind of gut-wrenching tears that come from deep within. And I've seen the most monumental breakthroughs after crying my heart out to God.

Now guys if you think this is only for women...then listen to this. Hebrews 5:7 says:

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission.

Jesus cried loudly and he is our example. Paul cried too. In Acts 20:19 Paul says:

I served the Lord with great humility and with tears.

Notice Paul connected humility with tears. Psalm 51:17 says:

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The word broken means to burst, to break in pieces, bring to the birth, to crush. Notice that when we are broken, we are birthing something. Our tears can be the beginning of new life.

Henri Nouwen said, "It is often difficult to believe that there is much to think, speak or write about other than brokenness. Even so many believers do not realize we have Biblical freedom and even admonition, to pour out our soul before God in deep and sorrowful tears of brokenness. It is not just an option. It is essential."

Listen, all of us go through difficult times when we feel crushed and in pain. But our pain can either drive us to Jesus OR drive us away from Him.

You see, it's these times that God is wanting to birth something in us IF we have the courage to worship Him in our pain... like the nameless woman courageously did.

And her worship wasn't unnoticeable or unexceptional. Remember she was kissing His feet that were wet from her tears and then drying them with her hair and then pouring perfume on them. What a courageous act of worship.

Do you know the word for kissing here is one of the most frequently used Greek words for worship in the Bible? It's the Greek word *proskuneo*- which means to kiss towards. From this we see that to kiss his feet was an act of courageous worship.

3- This woman had the courage to worship despite the price.

She paid a courageously high price to worship Jesus. Verse 37 says: *she brought an alabaster jar of perfume...*

Alabaster was a fine translucent stone, used to make decorative pieces. The ointment was probably very valuable because it was in alabaster.

It was also possibly bought with money earned by prostitution. Pouring out this perfume meant giving up the very thing she had compromised herself to get.

Very likely it also represented her savings account because widows and unmarried women of that day rarely trusted their funds to bankers. Gold coins and costly spices were stored as savings.

In 2 Samuel 24:24 – King David tried to buy a threshing floor from Araunah. Araunah offers it to David at no cost. Here's David's reply:

"No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."

The underlying principle here is that worship will cost us.

Here's another price she probably had to pay. It was obvious nobody approved of her or wanted her there. She had to be right there when Simon was warning Jesus about the kind of woman she was. She had to endure the insults and humiliation of having her sins exposed in front of everyone.

But this amazing woman only cared about one thing. Worshiping Jesus. Despite her past, despite her pain and despite the price...she did just that. And here's the best part... She gets Jesus' attention. Verse 44 says:

Then He turned toward the woman and said to Simon...

So, Jesus is talking to Simon, but He turns toward her. I find this interesting. Usually if you're speaking to someone you look at them. But Jesus was looking at her while speaking to Simon.

I just think Jesus was giving her a message.
I think He wanted her to hear what He's about to say.
I think He was saying "I see you, I see your heart, I receive your worship."
That makes me want to be the most courageous worshipper on the planet.
Just to have Jesus turn towards me is worth it all.

Then Jesus leaves no doubt who has His approval when he puts the spotlight on this woman. He says to Simon "Do you see this woman? He's saying...look at her - See how she has worshipped me. Simon, you gave me no water, but she washed my feet with her tears. You didn't kiss me...but she hasn't ceased to kiss my feet. You didn't anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with perfume. So, Simon her many sins are forgiven for she has loved me so much.

This is such a descriptive example of courageous worship. It leaves no doubt what God desires in worship. For many of us – the price of worship is the risk of embarrassment or humiliation.

Years ago, Pastor Joe and I attended a non-spirit filled church. We were there because the pastors asked us to help them learn to move in the spirit.

We explained how the gifts of the Spirit are part of a worship service.
1 Corinthians 14:26 says:

When you meet together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation.

This shows that giving words is part of worship. One of my spiritual gifts is giving prophetic words. Since they were trying to move in the spirit, I asked how to give words. So, the pastor set up a protocol for me to give words.

I'll never forget the first time I had a prophetic word during the worship time...I did exactly what the pastor told me to do. He said that I should get his attention and he would give me the mic.

So, I tried to get his attention, but he wouldn't acknowledge me.
So, I walked over to him, and he turned his back on me.
Finally, I tapped him on the shoulder, and he gave me the mic.

For me though, this was so embarrassing. I was humiliated. It took all the courage I had to step out in front of the whole church and give the word God gave me. But when I stepped out in courage, it resulted in a move of the spirit and people at the altar weeping.

The enemy uses fear to try to keep us from offering courageous worship. That's why Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:6-7

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind.

that the context of the verse on a spirit of fear is about moving in the gifts of the spirit. It takes courage to worship like that!

So, let's look at some other examples of courageous worship:

1. Even though David's wife despised him for dancing in worship before the ark of God's presence David courageously declares:

— I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes.

2. Remember Job who lost his oxen, donkeys, camels, sheep, his servants, children – he was afflicted with painful sores all over his body, his wife told him to curse God and die, and his friends said it was all happening because he sinned... Yet Job offered courageous worship. Job 1:20 says:

...He fell to the ground in worship.

3. Who could forget Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who courageously refused to bow down and worship an idol of gold and as a result were thrown into a fiery furnace? Yet God delivered them!
4. When a vast army came against Jehoshaphat instead of being discouraged and afraid, he courageously led the people to victory by singing and praising God.
5. How about Daniel who courageously defied the decree to pray only to the King. Instead, he was thrown into the lion's den for praying and worshipping God. But God delivered him.
6. Paul and Silas courageously praised God in prison until the prison doors flew open, everyone's chains came loose and the jailer and his household were saved.

All these individuals courageously praised and worshipped God in the face of danger and despite the risk. And God came through for them!

They didn't quit worship because of what others said.

They didn't stop worshipping when things got unbearably tough or when they lost everything.

They didn't bow down to other gods to save themselves.

They didn't allow fear or discouragement to steal their worship.

They didn't let prison chains silence their praise.

No! Instead they courageously worshipped and kept on worshipping no matter what the enemy tried to throw at them. They were bold, brave, fearless, heroic, undaunted, and valiant.

And if we want to go higher in praise and deeper in worship, so must we be. Like it says in Psalm 34:1-

I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips.

And why do I praise Him? Psalms 96:4 says why –

For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise.

So, stand to your feet and give Him some praise.

Despite what you've done in your past – He is worthy of praise!

Despite what you're currently going through – He is worthy of praise!

No matter the pain or the price – He is worthy of praise!

So offer Him some courageous worship today – for He is worthy of praise!