

## Loving Like Jesus 7 – Healing Love

Luke 7:36-50

Have you ever noticed how two people can see the exact same thing, yet see something completely different? I've got some optical illusions that illustrate this fact. You may have seen these before.

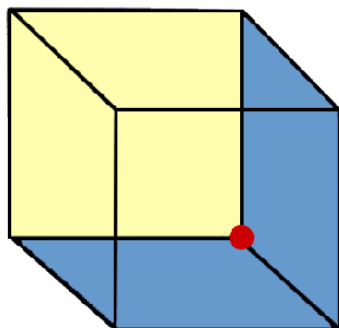


Figure 1 Is the Red dot on the near corner or far corner.



Figure 2 Vase or Two Faces



Figure 3 Young Lady or Old Woman



Figure 4 Blue & Black or White & Gold?

The same thing happens in everyday life in how we see people. We see the exact same person in the exact same situation and see two completely different things. A few weeks ago Roy and Carmen told a story at Bible Study that illustrates this perfectly, and it fits so well with this sermon, so I've asked if they would share this story with you.

(Story of going to restaurant where they had terrible service. Roy was so upset, he didn't want to leave a tip. Carmen's sensed that the waitress was having a bad day and needed some healing love.)

One of the things that set Jesus apart from everyone around him and enabled him to change so many lives, wasn't just that he had supernatural understanding or

miraculous power, but that he saw others with a healing love. He saw people and their situations differently from everyone else, and this allowed him to engage with them in a way that transformed their lives.

Now, I want you to listen to another story. This one comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 14, and beginning with verse 1:

*1 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. 2 And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. 3 And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" 4 But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. 5 And he said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?" 6 And they could not reply to these things.*

The setting is dinner at the house of one of the leading Pharisees. So there are Pharisees there, and teachers of the law, what our passage calls lawyers. So, right away, you know when there's multiple lawyers present, there's going to be problems.

Have you ever noticed how many of these stories of Jesus take place around the table? Mealtimes were ripe with opportunity to engage with people. I love how Jesus plays no favorites. He's as comfortable eating with tax collectors and sinners as he is at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees.

Here we find Jesus eating at the house of a Pharisee. In addition to Jesus and his disciples, the Pharisees and religious lawyers, there's someone else— a man sick with what our text calls dropsy. Some ancient versions call it "gathering waters." The NIV calls it abnormal swelling. His modern medical diagnosis would likely be some sort of edema, which is the accumulation of fluid in certain tissues of the body. It can have various causes and can be extremely painful.

What is unclear, is what is this man doing here in the home of the ruler of the Pharisees. He's not the kind of person who would usually be welcomed here. The Pharisees would have seen his illness as a judgment of God for some unworthiness in his life, and so they would have seen him as unworthy.

It's also the Sabbath day, a day they are to remember and keep holy. It was to be a day of worship and rest, and not a day of work. The Pharisees had developed an extensive list rules as to what counted as work and what didn't. Their desire to honor the Sabbath was a good one. The problem is that they valued their own rules over relationships, traditions over truth, and saving face over saving people. Their rules were

burdensome and unyielding, and missed the point of Sabbath rest entirely. In the collection of Jewish traditions known as the Mishnah, twenty-four chapters are devoted to Sabbath observance. So, what God takes 8 verses to say in the Ten Commandments, they made into a freakin' book. You talk about petty and tedious. These rules didn't put the focus on the goodness of God, but on how good you were at following rules. And rule following became the litmus test by which they judged everyone. And Jesus called them on it...repeatedly.

Look at the end of the first verse. It says, "*they were watching him carefully.*" They weren't watching to learn from Jesus. They weren't watching to follow his example. They were scrutinizing him, hoping he'd mess up. They wanted to catch him breaking one of their precious rules. They wanted to embarrass or discredit Jesus.

Jesus was just the opposite. He didn't care for their rules and traditions, especially when it got in the way of loving people. Here was this man who needed healing love, and Jesus wasn't going to let the traditions of the Pharisees get in the way of that. And so Jesus turns the test against them, "*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?*" In those twenty-four chapters on observing the Sabbath, is there anything that will allow you help a hurting person?

Now, Jesus already knows they will permit themselves to render aid, as long as it serves their own interests. Verse 5, "*Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?*" There's something wrong with rules that allow you to help yourself, but not someone else.

Jesus, however, made God's opinion quite clear when he healed the man in verse 4. You and I can't perform miracles like Jesus did. We may not be able to heal people physically like Jesus did, but we can love them with the same healing love. If we are going to love like Jesus, then we need to love people with a healing love.

What does a healing love look like? What does it do? There are three things we see in this story.

## **I. Healing Love Sees Others**

First, we've heard this before, healing love sees others. I've made the same point in a couple of the other sermons in this series. I repeat because it's important. I repeat it because love sees people differently. Jesus saw people differently. **When others see a problem, healing love sees a person.** Other people in the room may have only seen his

illness, but they didn't see the person behind the illness. I think what the Pharisees saw was a prop. We can't know with certainty why the man was there, but if you'll permit me to read between the lines, here's what I see. I see the Pharisees watching Jesus carefully looking for any misstep he might make. I think the reason they were doing this is because they knew this man was there, they knew how Jesus had responded in the past to sick people on the Sabbath, and they were watching to see what Jesus did. They wouldn't want this man there unless he was a tool to serve their interests.

But Jesus didn't look at his illness and ask what he did to deserve it. He didn't worry about navigating all the rules concerning the Sabbath. He wasn't concerned about satisfying the political interests of those there. He simply saw a man who needed healing love and he showed it.

What do we see when we see someone in need? What do you see when you see someone hurting or someone who needs help? Who do you see? Do you see a who or a what? I want to thank Roy and Carmen for their openness and vulnerability, especially Roy, since he came out as the goober in the story. They saw two different things. Roy saw a what, a problem, bad service. Carmen saw a who, woman having a bad day, a woman who needed healing love. Who or what you see, will change what you say and what you do.

When we learn to see others with the eyes of Jesus we will see them with healing love. We will not merely see where they've been, or where they are, or even only what they need. We will see who they can be and where they can go when they receive the healing love they so desperately need.

Think of what Jesus saw when he saw others. Mark Labberton writes in his book, *The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor*,

Jesus didn't see a sick woman, he saw a daughter of God. He didn't see an outcast from society, he saw a child of Israel. He didn't see a sinner, he saw a person in the image of the Creator.

Here, Jesus doesn't see a man with an edema. He sees a man who's been invited to the great banquet of God.

Immediately after this healing, Jesus tells two parables, and I really wish we had time to get into them. However, I do challenge you to read these later when you're at home. Make them a part of your time with God this week. The first parable, in verses 7-

11 is about a wedding feast. In this story, the person sitting in the worst seat at the wedding feast is invited by the host, “*friend, move up higher.*” This person goes from having to sit at the kids table to being moved to the guest of honor.

The second parable, from verse 12 to 24 is about a banquet where invitations are sent to the poor, crippled, blind and lame. To those that everyone else ignores, they are given special invitation in vs. 17, “*Come, for everything is now ready.*”

If you’re here this morning and you need healing love, let me talk just to you for a moment. Maybe you’ve spent your life being seen as a what, not a who. People look at you and they see failure. They see unfulfilled potential. Maybe they see an ailment or disability. They see a shortcoming. They see mistakes and foolish choices. They see the abuse and neglect of others. But do you know what Jesus sees? He sees an honored guest. He says, “Friend, move up higher. I’ve saved the best seat for you. You are my guest of honor. Come, for everything is now ready.” That’s how healing love sees people. And because healing love sees others, healing love speaks up.

## **II. Healing Love Speaks Up**

Secondly, healing love speaks. **Healing love speaks up even when everyone else remains silent.** Jesus takes a room full of people who love the sound of their own voice and who believed their opinions were the very thoughts of God, and he renders them silent. I love how Jesus turns the tables here. The Pharisees were always asking Jesus questions to trick him, to test him, to trap him, but Jesus is the one who asks the question here they can’t answer. “*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?*”

Vs. 4 says they remained silent. Vs. 6, “*They could not reply to these things.*” Not one of them says, “You’re right, we should do what we can to help this man.” Nobody says, “Jesus, you’ve healed so many others, could you please heal this man.”

There are places where we are supposed to be silent. The library, a museum, weddings, when you’re in your tree stand or duck blind, during a test, in a courtroom, in the bathroom. Ladies I don’t know what it’s like in the girls room, because you all go as a herd. I assume you’re all talking in there. In fact, guys just assume you’re talking about us. But in the boy’s room, there’s an unwritten rule. When you’re standing in front of the urinal, you don’t talk to the guy next to you. You keep your eyes straight ahead and your mouth closed, until you are zipped up. We don’t get a whole stall, we just have these little dividers that don’t hide anything.

Another place we are told to be silent is in church. Do you know how many times I got shushed growing up? There are times to be silent and there are times to be noisy in a worship service, but when it comes to the people of God, it's time for us to be silent no more. We need to speak up for those who have no voice. We need to speak up for the hurting, the lonely, the neglected, and the forgotten. When we see others with the healing love of Jesus, we can speak up, even if everyone else remains silent.

### **III. Healing Love Acts Courageously**

Thirdly, healing love acts courageously. **It isn't enough just to say something. Healing love does something.** Too often we promise prayers never prayed, and offer blessings and sympathy, but do we do anything? Now, I'm not saying that praying is doing nothing. Prayer is powerful. Sometimes, prayer is the most powerful thing we can do. James 5:16 says, "*The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*"

Doing nothing is when we say we will pray for someone, but then we don't. Don't use the promise to pray like a Christianized version of wishing someone well. It sounds nice and polite, but if you promise it and don't do it, then they are empty words. I know how it is. We're busy, we get distracted, and we forget. I've been there. I see someone in church and then I remember, "Oh, I told them last week I would pray for them. Oh, crud, what did they need prayer for? Did I pray for them. I'll say a quick prayer. Dear Lord, please be with whatever it was they needed. 'Hey, how are doing? I've been praying for you.'"

Do you know what's even better than praying for someone? Praying with someone. "Can I have a word of prayer with you right now? Let's just step into the other room here and have a word of prayer." Two believers come together like that in the presence of God. That's powerful stuff.

Once we've prayed for somebody, then we need to explore this question— how might God want to use us as a part of the answer? How might I be an answer to their needs? How can I be a part of the life change that happens here? This is where the healing part of healing love comes in. Healing involves repairing, making better, enabling someone to do what they couldn't do before. We can be a part a God's healing hand in someone's life.

I've already picked on Roy and Carmen this morning, I'll pick on Carmen once again. One of our kids in the church has been having a real struggle with reading, and Carmen has been doing some one on one tutoring with this child. This week I heard a really happy mother tell me how their child just tested at grade level in reading. That's love that makes a difference. That's healing love. And each one of us can do it in our own way.

And healing love doesn't just act. It acts courageously regardless of what others think. Jesus was outnumbered in that home. He was surrounded by Pharisees and religious lawyers. He was on enemy turf. This wasn't like being in the home of Mary and Martha. These were people hoping to see Jesus fail, but Jesus acted courageously.

Remember this, these people all thought they had good reasons, spiritual reasons for not helping this man, but they weren't reasons. They were excuses. Whatever reasons we think we have for not showing compassion, even if they sound like spiritual reasons, they are not reasons at all. They're just excuses.

Sometimes the most courageous thing we can do is love other people. You see love not only confronts the enemy in the world. It confronts the enemy in our own hearts.

Jesus sees. Jesus speaks, and Jesus saves. We need to see. We need to speak, and we need to save. No, we can't save like Jesus does, but whenever we act in love we are reenacting the salvation of Jesus each in our own little way.