

Luke 7:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

Analysis

A woman appears: 'And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner' (Greek 'gunē hētis ēn en tē polei hamartōlos'). The designation 'sinner' indicates notorious reputation—likely prostitute or adulteress. Her presence at a Pharisee's dinner was shocking—ritually unclean person in pure environment. That she knew where Jesus dined suggests His accessibility was known. She brought 'an alabaster box of ointment' (Greek 'alabastron murou')—expensive perfume in sealed stone container. Her preparation indicates planned action, not spontaneous impulse. Reformed theology sees here repentance's nature—genuine contrition drives to Christ regardless of social barriers. The woman's desperation overcame shame, propriety, and fear of rejection. Luke 15:2 records critics' complaint that Jesus 'receiveth sinners,' to which Jesus responds with parables of God's joy over repentant sinners.

Historical Context

Alabaster boxes held expensive perfumes—nard, myrrh, or spikenard. Breaking the sealed neck released fragrance for one-time use. Perfumes represented significant financial investment, sometimes a woman's dowry or life savings. This woman's use of expensive perfume demonstrates the costliness of genuine worship. Ancient Jewish culture strictly separated men and women; a woman of ill repute approaching men at dinner violated multiple social norms. Her boldness testified

to desperation and faith. Early church welcomed converted prostitutes, showing gospel's transforming power.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does the woman's disregard for social barriers teach about genuine repentance?
2. How does her costly gift demonstrate authentic worship versus token religiosity?
3. Why are those who recognize their great sin often more passionate worshipers than the 'respectable'?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἰδοὺ,	γυνὴ	ἐν	τῇ	πόλει	ἣτις	ἦν	ἁμαρτωλός
And	behold	a woman	in	G3588	the city	which	was	a sinner
G2532	G2400	G1135	G1722		G4172	G3748	G2258	G268
ἐπιγνοῦσα	ὅτι	ἀνάκειται	ἐν	τῇ	οἰκίᾳ	τοῦ	Φαρισαίου	
when she knew	that	Jesus sat at meat	in	G3588	house	G3588	the Pharisee's	
G1921	G3754	G345	G1722		G3614		G5330	
κομίσασα	ἀλάβαστρον	μύρου						
brought	an alabaster box	of ointment						
G2865	G211	G3464						

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 1:9 (Sin): Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

Luke 5:32 (Sin): I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Luke 18:13 (Sin): And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Matthew 21:31 (References Jesus): Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

1 Peter 4:18 (Sin): And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Romans 5:8 (Sin): But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

John 11:2 (Parallel theme): (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

Luke 5:30 (Resurrection): But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?