

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

Psalm 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 οἴδού, γυνὴ ἐν τῇ πόλει ἣτις ἦν ἀμαρτωλός
And behold a woman in the city which was a sinner
G2532 G2400 G1135 G1722 G3588 G4172 G3748 G2258 G268

ἐπιγνοῦσα ὅτι ἀνάκειται ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ Φαρισαίου
when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in house to the Pharisee's
G1921 G3754 G345 G1722 G3588 G3614 G3588 G5330

κομίσασα ἀλάβαστρον μύρον
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?