**Thesis:** Do you find yourself at a place in life you’d rather not be? Maybe one you didn’t expect? Because of the Good News of Jesus Christ, it doesn’t matter where we find ourselves now. What matters is how we respond to the gospel and the salvation that is found in our Lord.

**Introduction:** Welcome to The Jesus Podcast, a year of stories showcasing the depth of Christ’s love and the glory of God’s truth. I’m Zak, your host from Pray.com. Today brings us a story of brokenness. But more importantly, it brings the message of redemption and how we can be made whole in Christ. Follow the podcast to hear more captivating retellings of some of the most profound moments with Jesus in the Bible.

**Context:** There’s something truly beautiful about watching Jesus at work in the gospels. Especially when we get to see moments like His encounter with the prostitute from today’s story. As we jump into the life of Ahava, we find a young woman who had, somewhere in life, allowed bad choices to pile up until she found herself where no one planned to be, selling her body just to make ends meet. With the emotional and physical dangers she faced each day, we’ll see that Ahava was ready for something different. Determined to see her life turned around, she takes decisive action to see a positive change in her life for once. Filled with nerves that shake her to her core, she overcomes her fear of the ridicule of others to have but a small chance to worship at the feet of Jesus. Cutting, scandalous, and brimming with Christ’s love, today’s story will surely draw you closer to the heart of the Father.

**Message:** Ahava is no different from us. Though many of us may consider ourselves far better off than she is, the reality is we’re all broken apart from Jesus. We all have experienced the agony of the consequences of our poor choices and the sting of sin. But what the story of the prostitute shows us is that the best way to work through our brokenness is to worship at the feet of Jesus. Worship aligns our hearts with God’s, resets our priorities, and reminds us of His goodness. As we follow along with the actions of Ahava, we’re given an amazing picture of what genuine worship looks like.

**First, we’re reminded that worship helps us leave our shame behind.** It was likely hard enough for the prostitute to show her face in public during the day. But this woman was so determined to worship at the feet of Jesus that she willingly stepped into the dinner party of a Pharisee. A room filled with the religious elite was the last place a prostitute wanted to find herself in, let alone would be expected. But she wouldn’t let her shame hinder her coming before the Lord. She knew that whatever these corrupt men would have to throw at her in insults and piercing glares would be nothing if she could only look the One who called sinners to repentance in the eyes. Drawing near to Jesus in worship allows us to leave our fear and shame behind. As we lay our lives before Jesus, He lifts us up with Him. If you’re feeling any ounce of brokenness, or maybe are just so broken it feels like you could never be put back together, turn your attention to Jesus. Humble yourself in His sight and allow Him to free you from the weight of your sin as you lay it all down before Him. There is no need to carry it any longer. God wants to lift that burden from your shoulders.

We also learn another necessary truth in our story and that is that worship requires sacrifice. As every woman in the city had, the prostitute held in her possession a small alabaster flask of expensive ointment. This perfume wasn’t meant for cosmetics. In dire circumstances, this cherished item was a means of safety and security for one down on their luck who could sell it and secure the means to live. In the best of circumstances, it would be used as a promise of one’s love to their husband, a gift for their wedding. For Ahava, the small container meant something even greater: It was the means to a new beginning in life. Rather than hold onto it for any future use, Ahava considers it would have a much greater impact in her present situation. She would use this oil to anoint Jesus as an act of worship. Today, the idea of worship is often linked to music and the singing of songs. While this is a form of worship, there’s much more to it than that. At its core, worship is an overflow of our adoration for God. The word itself comes from the Old English word “worthship” - to declare something is of worth. And true worship of God requires sacrifice, declaring that God is worth giving up anything for. Whether it’s through financial giving, using our talents and gifts to serve others, or spending time praising Him for His greatness, there are countless ways we can worship God!

The author of Hebrews tells us in *Hebrews 13:15 “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.”*

Though worship may be a sacrifice, we will never be at a loss because of it. To give up the world but gain Jesus is the best trade we could make any day.

When we worship, we have to come before God with the right heart. First and foremost, this means knowing that worship isn’t a means by which we gain or earn God’s approval, but rather is made possible through God approving of us. We don’t lift our voices and raise our hands during worship to get God’s attention. But like a child looking up into the eyes of their loving Father, we reach up to the God who gazes upon us with radical love. Genuine worship in Spirit and in truth is a blessing to God and pleases Him. But understand that before any act of worship on our end, God has already poured out the fullness of His love for us. Worship is not the initiation of our relationship with God, it is an extension of the relationship that He initiated through extending His love to us. When you worship, allow it to flow from a place of experiencing God’s love. Let your heart be filled to overflowing with His affection for you, and reciprocate that love back towards Him in worship.

Jesus’ encounter with the outcast prostitute teaches us one more insight on the nature of our worship: Worship is a response to God’s truth. The prostitutes' decision to worship Jesus wasn’t a random idea inspired out of thin air. In our story today, we learned that Ahava had previously heard the Lord teach, and His bold claim that He came to call sinners to repent rang over and over in her ears. Words that were driving out her fear. Words that were shattering her shame. Words that were mending her broken heart. As she reflected on the truth Jesus shared, a seed was planted in her heart. It was the word of the Lord that deeply moved in her soul. Though many worship what they do not know, genuine spiritual worship of God is experienced to its fullest potential when we have a solid understanding of the object of our worship. In Acts 17, we can follow along with the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. While in Athens, he seized an opportunity to teach the people about God.

And we read in *Acts 17:22 “Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.”*

Paul makes note that the people are very religious. That is to say, they had invested a lot into their spiritual practices. However, he reveals that their worship has fallen short as they were ignorant of the very thing they worshiped, to the point that they had even created an altar to “The Unknown God”. It was here that Paul began to proclaim to them the gospel of Jesus Christ, laying out the foundation of understanding who God is so that they might truly worship Him.

Sin has broken God’s beautiful creation. But the Savior has come to bring revival, renewal, and redemption. As He picks up our broken pieces, He puts us back together so that we can worship Him fully, completely, and freely. Lift up a shout of praise for the God who heals us and makes us new.