

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 5 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Now keep in mind from our last study that Jesus was rejected in His hometown of Nazareth and is now going to focus in the area of Galilee, which had some 3 million people in an area smaller than the size of the state of Connecticut.

Also, Luke leaves out the year that Jesus spent in Judea that John covers in chapters 2-5 of his Gospel.

So with that in mind let's pick up our study in verse 1 of Luke chapter 5 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through God's Word.

LUKE 5**VERSES 1-3**

Keep in mind that the Lake of Gennesaret was another name for the Sea of Galilee, as it is more commonly known. It was also sometimes called the Sea of Tiberias.

And we see people coming out to hear Jesus teach because when He taught He spoke with authority. Not only that but He had power over sickness, He had the power to heal.

So you can imagine the crowds that had grown. Things got so bad here that Jesus decides to get into a boat and teach from there to prevent anyone from being trampled over trying to get to Him. The boat that Jesus used was Simon's, who was well aware of Jesus, having heard Him teach and was going to hear Him teach again. And as tired as Peter was, as the Lord asked for his boat to teach from, Peter allowed Him to.

Now for these fishermen, it was a long night of fishing and as we will see, they were skunked, they caught nothing. Now, after a long night they were washing their nets. And keep in mind that this kind of fishing was backbreaking work. They would lay out the nets in a semicircle, maybe encompassing some 100 feet, and then they would draw it in hand over hand. Then they would remove the fish and throw it out again, over and over again! But with all their labor, they caught nothing!

Why was it so important to wash their nets and stretch them? If you didn't they would rot! You see, they would be washed with fresh water, stretched, making sure there were no breaks in the net.

I like that. You see, that is exactly what we need in our lives so we don't become rotten! We need the washing of the Word of God and the stretching of the Holy Spirit so that we can remain useful! What an important lesson for us to learn and apply to our lives!

VERSES 4-5

As Jesus ends His teaching He tells Peter to take his boat and go out into the deep water and cast your nets in once again.

Here is the problem. Peter and his men were fishermen, and as hard as it was to admit, they were out all night and caught absolutely nothing, not even a minnow! Their nets were now cleaned and they were going to call it a day, not much of a chance to catch any fish now since it was the heat of the day.

Peter knew this was a foolish idea, but notice, he calls Him "Master" or "Boss" you might say. And he obeys the words of Jesus. It wasn't that Peter had a little confidence in what Jesus said, but he was obedient to what Jesus said.

There may be times in our life when God calls us to do something that in our minds is foolish. Can we say like Peter, “**... nevertheless at Your word I will ...**”?

I will give you one example in my own life, our radio station. We have been on the air for some 9 years now and ever since the radio station was being put together, we wanted a taller tower. The problem was that the city said we can only go 15 feet above our building with the tower as we are within the city limits and they will not allow us to go any higher with a radio tower.

So, for some 9 years we have been desiring to get this tower higher and we tried all kinds of ideas, and they just did not work. Finally, we felt that we needed to get started and if they will let us put up a 40-foot steeple on the church, which they would do, then another 15 feet for the antenna and we are up to 55 feet.

In the process, we had two neighbor's trees removed for a better signal output for the station. We also contacted A. C. E Building and they were working with us on this steeple. That is until they spoke with the city and they agreed that we can put up a 55-foot tower without the steeple.

I truly believe that God was guiding us here and calling for us to launch out into the deep and let down our nets and see what He can do! And look at what He has done! The Gospel message, sound Bible teaching will be going forth and reaching more and more people! Praise God for that.

But it was a step of faith, we caught nothing you might say and the Lord encouraged us to go forward and the net is overflowing you might say! May we learn the lesson and be like Peter, and say, “**... nevertheless at Your word I will ...**” Take those steps of faith because God is in the business of taking the impossible and making it very possible!

VERSES 6-7

Peter allowed Jesus to use his boat and Jesus blessed Peter with a huge fish story! You see, you can't out give God. Whatever we give to Him to use for His glory He gives back abundantly to us.

What are you holding back from God? Has God asked to use your time, your money, your talents, and you are having a hard time giving them to Him? Maybe you just don't have the confidence that there will be a great catch with your efforts. But if the Master is calling you, you need to move forward like Peter, maybe not with a lot of confidence, but in obedience to the Lord.

One writer put it like this, "The story shows us that the worse excuse for not doing what God wants you to do is because you've been a failure in the past. Peter had fished all night with no results, but was instantly blessed when the Lord directed his work."

Remember what Paul said in II Corinthians 9:6-8, "**But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.**"

That is exactly what we see here!

Now think about this for a minute because there is another important lesson for us to learn. When the net was filled with fish Peter didn't say "They are all mine! Get away from that net! This is my fishing spot!"

No, Peter called to the others for help, he needed assistance in the work and what a great lesson for us. There are so many reasons why people won't work together for the cause of Christ and the majority are unbiblical reasons, they are selfish. They are building up their kingdom instead of the Lord's. They might be more successful than us if we let them help, or whatever. Learn from Peter for if he refused the help, he would have been sunk!

Let me share this story with you because it will show you that we need each other's help because we are working for the Lord and His Kingdom, not ours! We are told,

Peter had to work with others to get the job done. This is reminiscent of what God did in a man named James McGready on the frontiers of Kentucky starting in the 1790s. In Kentucky he pastored three small churches that met in roughly built shacks. He said that the winter of 1799 for the most part was weeping and mourning with the people of God and that it was like living in Sodom and Gomorrah on the rough, lawless, and often godless frontier. McGready started the concerts of prayer, but he also got his congregations praying for him and for his ministry of the word of God – for a half hour before they went to bed on Saturday night and for a half hour when they woke up on Sunday morning. In 1800 came an extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and so many people began to come to Christ that McGready called out: “Any preacher of any kind who loves the Lord Jesus come and help me.”

- David Guzik

What a great lesson. Step out in faith as the Lord leads and work together with others for the Kingdom of God!

VERSES 8-11

Peter now sees Jesus as who He really is, more than just a man, more than just a teacher, and it exposes his own sinful condition. When a person truly has an encounter with Jesus, they will see themselves as they really are, sinful compared to a holy and righteous God.

How can a holy and righteous God dwell with sinful man? Only by having the righteousness of Christ imputed into their life by faith! We can't be good enough for heaven but all of us are surely bad enough for Jesus to come and pay the penalty for our sins!

Also, Peter did not say, "Hey, what a great fisherman I am!" No, he acknowledged the Lord and praised and worshiped Him because apart from the Lord, they caught nothing!

And as they witness all of this, they became fearful and Jesus tells them to stop being afraid! In the grammar of the ancient Greek, this is literally *stop being fearful*; it calms an existing fear.

Why were they not to be afraid? Because Jesus is with them and they are no longer going to catch fish, but men! Clarke says that the word "**catch**" signifies to catch something *alive*. That is true evangelism; it isn't to bring dead people into a building, but to bring real life, to give life to the dead!

Now, let's take a minute and think about the benefits of forsaking all, like these men did, and follow Jesus! You will be poor, probably no place to sleep, people will mock you, beat you, some of you will be killed for your faith, there will be hardships and-so-on. So, who would like to follow?

I'm sure some of these men may have thought that fishing was not too bad after all compared to this. And yet, all of them left their professions and followed after Jesus. What faith! And God does the same with us as He gets our eyes off of the temporal and on the eternal things, on people instead of possessions!

VERSE 12

Leprosy was an incurable disease that destroys nerve endings and because you can't feel pain, you can disfigure yourself very easily as you burn yourself or whatever. Or rats can chew off your nose, fingers, toes and-so-on. Even today there is Leprosy bacilli that are resistant to some of the drugs that are used to treat it.

And here is this man who seems to be in the late stages of the disease, which caused him to live in isolation, unable to touch or be touched by anyone. He was probably disfigured from the disease.

Not only that but the people looked down upon those who had leprosy, especially the religious leaders who saw this as a judgment from God. And, according to Jewish law and customs, one had to keep 6 feet from a leper. If the wind blew toward a person from a leper, they had to keep 150 feet away. The only thing more defiling than contact with a leper was contact with a dead body!

Now think about how sad that is. Those who had a need were isolated, and we see that even today with those who are sick with sin, and the religious leaders, religious people keep them at a distance, refuse to touch them.

So, this man, with no hope, comes to Jesus for help and he believed that Jesus had the power to heal him, but he wasn't sure if it was His will to be healed. So, he takes that step of faith to see if God will heal him. The result? Let's read on and see what Jesus does.

VERSE 13

I love what Jesus does here. He touches this man who was untouchable, it broke the ceremonial law, but God places people above those laws, as He did here. And if you think about it, Jesus did not have to touch him to heal him, He could have just healed this man with leprosy from a distance. But Jesus touches the untouchable because He loves us that much. And in touching this man Jesus did not become unclean, but this man became clean.

I love this as well. He not only touches this man but He tells him “**I am willing; be cleansed.**” The man was wondering if it was God's will for him to be healed, and Jesus says it is, and he is healed!

Now let's look at the spiritual ramifications of this cleansing because leprosy in the Bible is a type of sin! Think about it. Leprosy starts out unnoticed, under the skin, and it deadens the nerve endings or it deadens us to the effects of sin as we become disfigured, numb and lonely. And there is no cure for leprosy just as there is no cure for sin by the works of man. Only God could cleanse leprosy and only God can cleanse us of our sins!

But we must reach out to Him, bow before Him and ask Him to cleanse us just as this man did. For this man, he had to humble himself before the Lord, he had to come to the end of Himself and rest in the Lord and we see that as soon as Jesus touched him, he was cleansed! And as soon as we do, as soon as we humble ourselves before the Lord, as soon as we repent of our sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of our lives, God cleanses us!

VERSES 14-15

Remember back in Leviticus chapter 14 God gave instructions of what was to be done when a person who was a leper was cleansed of this incurable disease. In the Old Testament, there were only two people mentioned that were cleansed of leprosy. Miriam in Numbers 12 and Naaman back in II Kings 5.

So, it was not a common thing to see someone cleansed of this disease. And so, this man, once he is healed was to go to the priest and follow the rules of Leviticus 14. Now can you imagine the priests in a situation like this, “It’s a Leviticus 14, what do we do?” I’m sure they had to dust off that portion of Scripture for it was rarely used, never by them until this point. And what a sign to these religious leaders that there is something special about this man named Jesus!

It is as Isaiah 35:5-6 says, “**Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.**”

Now Luke tells that Jesus “**... charged him to tell no one.**” Why does Jesus not want this man to let everyone know what happened to him? Because He did not want the crowds to follow Him for the miracles, because this was only a temporary healing. This man, like all of us will eventually die. He came to bring everlasting spiritual healing!

Also, He wanted the crowds kept down, they wanted to make Him King, but it was not time yet. You see, back in Daniel chapter 9 we are told of the exact day that Jesus would come as King, and that would be 173,880 days after the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was given, which occurred on March 14, 445 B. C. and the fulfillment of the prophecy was on April 6, 32 A. D., Palm Sunday, as Jesus came into Jerusalem as the Messiah the King. But the news spreads quickly and the hopeless were being drawn to Jesus, the One who can give a person hope. And may we do that today, point people to Jesus, for He alone gives us hope!

VERSE 16

Remember that Jesus is our example and during a time of being very busy, with the multitudes seeking Him out, what does He do? We are told, **“So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness to pray.”** Wow, this was not a onetime thing that Jesus did. He often got alone to pray, to seek direction from the Father, to be refreshed.

Now I will be honest with you here. Here is a struggle for me. As I get busy my prayer time seems to decrease. But, for Jesus, as He got busy, as the demands of life pressed down upon him from all directions, it drove Him to pray. That is a great lesson for me and I’m sure for you. Some say “I don’t have time to pray!” That is not true, the reality is “You don’t have time not to pray!”

I like what Clarke wrote, “He made it a frequent custom to withdraw from the multitudes for a time, and pray, teaching hereby ministers of the Gospel that they are to receive fresh supplies of light and power from God by prayers, that they may be the more successful in their work; and that they ought to seek frequent opportunities of being in private with God and their books.”

May we take that time to pray, to seek direction from the Father, to be refreshed. Like I have said, we don't have time not to pray, it is that important! If it was important to Jesus it should be to us and I don't think we are busier than Jesus!

VERSES 17-19

Now this is interesting to me. With all that Jesus was doing we see that Jesus got the attention of the religious leaders and they came to see what He was all about, the things He was teaching. And they were willing to travel long distances to hear Jesus, not because they agreed with what He was teaching, but they wanted to catch Him saying something wrong and bring Him down.

Also, Luke tells us that “**... the power of the Lord was present to heal them.**” You see, Jesus is not only going to teach us, but His Words can transform our lives. That tells me that from the common person to the religious person, Jesus wants to touch their lives if they would only allow Him to!

But that was the problem for these religious leaders. The power was there to heal them but as we see in John chapter 12, “**But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him . . . Therefore they could not believe . . .**” John 12, 37, 39.

Who were these religious leaders that came to hear Jesus? The Pharisee's were very conservative in their views. In fact, their name means “*separated one.*” You see, they had separated themselves as holy and the recipients of the love of God while everyone else missed out. They separated themselves from the common person.

Yes, the power was there to heal them, to change their lives, to be touched by Jesus, and yet, they refused to allow that to occur because of their proud hearts, and we see the same today in churches across America, people leave as they came in, unchanged because they are unwilling to be touched by Jesus. The power is there, they just refuse to receive it into their lives!

Now Mark tells us that this incident with the paralytic who is healed by Jesus took place in Capernaum, probably in Peter's house. And the place is packed as Jesus was teaching. It was standing room only!

Now four men, carrying their paralyzed friend because he couldn't walk, arrive. And they can't get in because of the crowds of people, there was no more room. Now for most, they would leave and come back another day. But their desire to bring their friend to Jesus so that he may be healed, made whole, able to walk again was more important than a room filled with people.

And thus, when one door closes another open's or should I say, a hole in the roof open's up! You see, yes, there was no room and they are so determined they carry him to the top of the flat roof and they open up a portion of the roof and let their friend down right in front of Jesus. They let nothing get in their way of doing this. Does our behavior, our actions, reflect what we believe to be true about the Lord? It should! What is in your way of bringing your friend to Jesus?

Now for the Jews, illness was a result of sin or so they believed. But please understand that not all illness is a result of sin in a person's life, like some try to tell you. But this man's illness was most likely a result of his sin for most paralysis in those days was due to syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease. Thus, he is now at the end of his life, no hope, and he is brought to Jesus, the one who can give us hope. That is a recurring theme here, isn't it! Jesus is our hope! That never changes.

I like what Spurgeon wrote regarding the quality of these men who brought their friend to Jesus. He wrote, “They need be strong, for the burden is heavy; they need be resolute, for the work will try their faith; they need be prayerful, for otherwise they labor in vain; they must be believing, or they will be utterly useless.” May that be the passion of our lives, to bring people to Jesus so that He can heal them from their sin, cleanse them from their sin!

VERSES 20-21

Why did these men bring their friend to Jesus? To be healed, he could not walk, he was paralyzed. And what does Jesus tell them? “**... ‘Man, your sins are forgiven you.’**” I don’t think that is what they wanted to hear but Jesus gets to the heart of the matter, He sees the repentance of this man and He forgives his sins. You see, his friends could only bring him so far, to Jesus, that is as far as they could go. Now it was his own faith that brought the forgiveness of sins as he repented and came to Jesus.

Also, keep in mind who were sitting in the front row to hear Jesus! The religious leaders, they were the ones who had front row seats because of their position. And as soon as they hear those words from Jesus they jump all over Him for saying He has the power to forgive this man’s sins.

Why were they so upset? Simply, it was the fact that only God can do that. In Isaiah 43:25 we are told, “**I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.**” Don’t miss the point. Jesus was telling these religious leaders and all those who were there that He is God and He thus, has the power to forgive a person of their sins!

Remember what we read in verse 17 of Luke chapter 5, “**... And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.**” Yes, the power was there to heal those religious leaders as well as this man, but the religious leaders just refused to receive it! Jesus could have extended that forgiveness to them, but they rejected Jesus being God.

I do appreciate the honesty, at least here with these religious leaders, they clearly saw that Jesus was claiming to be God and that God alone can forgive sins, they got that point right. They just did not accept the fact that Jesus was who He said He was, Almighty God! So many today want to deny that fact that Jesus taught that He was Almighty God but Scripture is filled with examples of Him doing that as well as the other writers of both the Old and New Testament!

Today man tries to justify his sins, tries to work his way to heaven, work his way out of his sins, let the good deeds outweigh the bad, but only Jesus can save us from our sins.

It is as Isaiah 25:8-9 says, “**He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. And it will be said in that day: ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.’**” You see, we don’t have the power or the authority to forgive ourselves, but God can as we apply the blood of Jesus to our lives by faith!

Also, no man, no Pope, no one has the authority to forgive sins, only God does! Listen carefully to what the Pope said regarding women who have had abortions and how those sins are forgiven, not by God but by the priests. This started in December of 2015 and went on for one year, it just ended. We are told,

Pope Francis, who has defined his short tenure by taking on the most controversial issues from gay marriage to climate change, waded for the first time into one of the thorniest topics of his papacy Tuesday when he said priests can forgive the “sin of abortion” for women who are sorry about it.

In a letter published by the Vatican, the pontiff - who has been striving to build a more inclusive church - said priests will have the power during a special “Holy Year of Mercy” that begins in December.

“I have decided, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, to concede to all priests for the Jubilee Year the discretion to absolve of the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it,” the pope said.

The church considers abortion such a grave moral offense that anyone who obtains or aids in obtaining one is excommunicated. Priests normally need a bishop’s approval to grant absolution. The pope reaffirmed the church’s stance against abortion, acknowledging society’s lack of “sensitivity to welcome new life.” But he says some women don’t comprehend the implication of terminating a pregnancy or believe they have no other option.

“I think it’s very significant,” John Thavis, a former Catholic News Service reporter and author of *The Vatican Diaries*, said. “Pope Francis is making a bold statement. He is saying that there is no sin that can’t be forgiven.”

Jon O’Brien, president of the advocacy group Catholics for Choice, applauded Pope Francis for “trying to bridge the gulf between what the hierarchy says and what ordinary Catholics really do in their lives.”

I am sorry but we don't have the power to forgive a person's sin, only God can and He does, through Jesus Christ. And I guess, for those women who have abortions now, the church will not forgive their sins, 2016 is over! How sad that truly is! And if you look at what Jon O'Brien said, about what the Pope is doing, *“trying to bridge the gulf between what the hierarchy says and what ordinary Catholics really do in their lives”* he is just feeding into the sin nature. If you sin, don't worry, the Pope and his ministers will forgive your sins. Crazy, wrong and they are making people comfortable with sin, thinking they are okay when, apart from Christ they are still dead in their trespasses and sins!

VERSES 22-24

Picture what is going on here when these religious leaders said, **“Who can forgive sins but God alone?”** They were coming against Jesus' claim that He is God and thus, you can imagine the anger on their faces as they waited to hear how Jesus was going to answer this.

And Jesus asks them which is easier, to forgive a person's sin or have a paralyzed man walk? Obviously, it would be easier to say your sins are forgiven than to say rise up and walk to a man who is paralyzed.

One you couldn't see the results, the forgiveness of sins. But the other you could, here is this man who could not walk and he is walking!

Thus, Jesus is showing these religious leaders that He has the power to forgive sins and He demonstrates that by telling this paralyzed man to stand up and walk. If this man didn't, then Jesus didn't have that power, but if He did, then Jesus is God and He can forgive our sins. What happened when Jesus said, **“I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house”**? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 25-26

As soon as Jesus spoke, this man was healed and he stood up and began to walk! And this man, as he picks up the cloth or bedding that he had been lying on, goes home, walking home, praising God. I bet he was!

Not only that but we also see that the people rejoiced, they praised God, they gave glory that is due His name because of what they saw. Jesus showed that He had the power to forgive sins and He demonstrated that power by healing this man! There was also some fear because they had never seen anything like this before!

Now, all who were there saw this man stand up and walk but they all did not believe! You see, as the religious leaders challenged Jesus and Jesus met their challenge, they did not receive what Jesus was saying but they just hardened their hearts to God. They were set in their ways and were not going to be moved even if this paralyzed man stood up and walked home, and he did!

You see, the evidence was before them, they just chose to ignore it or they came up with an alternate explanation for what happened. It is a sad state to be in when a person goes to such extremes to deny the truth, but we see that even today!

And it drives home that point that we have read a couple of times this evening already, that, “**... the power of the Lord was present to heal them.**” Luke 5:17. Yes it was, but they refused that healing in their lives and they limped home while this paralyzed man walked home and he walked home praising God. They were not praising God, these religious leaders, they went home angry, mad, frustrated that they failed in bringing Jesus down!

Now let me also say this. Let me make this applicable to our own lives. As God uses us, as we stand up and walk for Him as we come to that saving faith, does it bring praise and honor unto us or unto God? You see, it is all His, not ours.

In Isaiah 42:8 we are told, **“I am the LORD, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images.”** You see, it is all His!

Also, in Matthew 5:16 we are told by Jesus **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”** Make no mistake about it, from our salvation until we go to be with the Lord, all that we do He enables us to do them. Thus, He gets the praise, He gets the glory, not us!

Make no mistake about it, what we do for the Lord should bring praise unto Him, not unto us! You see, we were created for His good pleasure as Revelation 4:11 says, **“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”** KJV. May we not forget that!

VERSES 27-28

I think that many times, when we read the Scriptures we don't think much of the situation that was taking place. For instance, Levi, also called Matthew in Matthew 9:9, was a tax collector.

Now, to get you focused on what people thought of Levi, think of taxes today! Okay, not too much, I don't want your blood pressure to go up too much!

And what we think of tax collectors today, multiply that much more in Jesus' day. The Jews considered tax collectors' traitors because these Jews worked for the Roman government. Not only that but they had the power of Rome behind them and thus, if someone refused to pay their taxes, the Roman soldiers would come and make them pay!

Not only were they traitors but they were also extortioners because they could keep whatever they over-collected! Thus, there was great incentive to over-charge and cheat any way they could because this was pure profit for them. These taxes collectors were usually very wealthy!

Lane points out how the Jews felt about these men, these tax collectors. He wrote, "When a Jew entered the customs service he was regarded as an outcast from society: he was disqualified as a judge or a witness in a court session, was excommunicated from the synagogue, and in the eyes of the community his disgrace extended to his family."

Think about this one. These fishermen who are now disciples of Jesus, probably paid taxes to Levi for the fish that they caught and distributed. Not a lot of love for Levi I bet. And again, these tax collectors were excommunicated from the Jewish faith. They could not be used as a witness in a court setting because they could not be trusted to tell the truth. No one wanted to be around them, they didn't trust them.

And here comes Jesus and He calls out to this tax collector, the one people would avoid, Levi, and asks Him to follow Him. Can you imagine the looks the other disciples were giving Jesus and Levi at this point!

And we read that when Jesus asked Levi to follow Him, that “**. . . he left all, rose up, and followed Him.**” Again, keep in mind that this was a good job. Tax collectors were usually very wealthy, very rich, and so for him to leave this all behind was truly a sacrifice. Also, keep in mind that once he left this he could not go back! He left everything to follow Jesus.

Now let me ask you this. What is it costing you to follow Jesus? Friends? Family? Positions at work? You see, it does cost you something, but for Levi, there was no turning back for what the world had to offer did not compare to what Jesus had to offer him. He left it all to follow Jesus and what a great example that is for us to follow!

One more point I would like to make before we move on and that deals with the names of this man, Levi and Matthew. First of all, we see that the name Levi means “to be joined to” and he was joined or shackled to the world until Jesus came and touched his life, and now his name is Matthew or “a gift of God.” He was set free from that bondage just as we are when we come to Jesus.

VERSES 29-32

Levi left all to follow Jesus but he does not want to follow Jesus alone. He knew that he was sick and in need of healing and when Jesus healed him he needed to gather his family, his friends, other tax collectors to come and meet Jesus and be healed as he was!

I am sure for the other tax collectors, any time to gather with people who didn't hate you was a great thing and we don't know how many or if any came to receive the healing touch of Jesus upon their lives, but they had a chance because Levi gave them that opportunity by inviting them to hear and see Jesus!

Are you willing to gather up your friends and bring them to church? Levi was! And I love it because church wasn't dead, it was a party, a celebration! Now some may be offended by that, but think about it, Jesus taught those at this party the Word of God, it was church. It wasn't stiff, dry, dead, but alive! Too often churches are like funeral homes where people come to mourn the dead and that should not be!

Interestingly enough, probably watching from outside Levi's house, were these religious leaders and when they saw that Jesus was eating with these sinners, they were offended by it! To them, to associate with these kinds of people made you unclean, dirty, and they were far above that, at least that is what they thought.

But notice what Jesus tells them, “**... ‘Those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’**”

You see, Jesus has come to heal those who were sick, those who were in need of it, and are willing to receive it. Again, the power was there for them to be healed, they just refused to receive it! Too often today people come to Jesus for some cosmetic surgery, and that won't do it, they need a heart transplant! Before they could be healed they had to recognize they were sick and the only one that can heal is the Great Physician, Jesus Christ!

Let me also say this. When Jesus said that He did not come to heal the righteous He was not saying that these religious leaders were righteous. In fact, the Bible tells us “**As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one.’**” Romans 3:10.

That word “**none**” in the Greek, means *NONE!* There is no one who is righteous before our Holy God and thus, we are all sick, we are all in need of the Great Physician to be healed by Him. The problem is some don't see themselves as sick. Others just think they will get better. Others just try their own remedies to get healed.

But as Peter reminds us, **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”** Acts 4:12.

Now let me make one more point because there are some Christians who feel we are not to associate ourselves with sinners or people who are not saved. That is foolishness. Yes, we are not to have that close intimate relationships with them, but how are we going to share the Gospel with the lost if we isolate ourselves from them?

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 5:9-11, **“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner - not even to eat with such a person.”**

We tend to do that exact opposite of what Paul wrote here. We fellowship with the brother who is living in sin and refuses to repent and we isolate ourselves from sinners. And I love Paul’s point. If we truly wanted to live apart from the ungodly, the immoral people of this world, we would have to leave this world!

May the lost see the love of Christ in us and through us as we serve Him. Don’t isolate yourself from them, let your light shine before them so that they may see Jesus!

VERSES 33-35

This is kind of funny to me. They accused Jesus and His followers of being too happy, of having too much fun! What is wrong with that? Absolutely nothing, there is joy in the Lord, and we should be celebrating what He has done in our lives, not moping about like someone died!

That does not make you more holy acting like that, even though some think that way. It is as Psalm 16:11 says, **“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”**

Now this whole idea of fasting, please understand that Jesus is not saying that fasting was wrong but many times fasting was done out of the wrong heart, to get the attention of others showing them how spiritual you were. And thus, the disciples of John the Baptist were upset because they were fasting twice a week, because of Jewish tradition and not because God commanded them to fast.

In fact, God only had one fast per year, on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, (Leviticus 16:29, 31). And the reason John’s disciples were so upset is because they saw the disciples of Jesus eating and drinking, they were having a good time. And I guess you could say that the disciples of John were all wrapped up in Jewish tradition and they needed to be released.

So, to answer their question to Jesus why His disciples were not fasting He speaks of a Jewish wedding celebration, which would last some seven days. And, of course, it was a celebration.

We see Jesus portray Himself as the Bridegroom and as long as He is there, then it is not a time of mourning. But He also warns them that there is coming a day when He will be taken, speaking of His death, and then they will fast and mourn!

VERSES 36-39

What is Jesus saying here? Jesus is saying that He did not come to work within a dead religious system, which Judaism had become, but He came to call people into a joyous relationship with Him. You can't patch an old garment with a new piece of cloth, for the old becomes more ragged and the new will not match the old. In fact, as it shrinks it will pull apart from the old wineskin. In other words, you can't take these old religious practices that were not of God and put them into the new, it will be fatal!

Secondly, if you put new wine into old wineskins that are brittle, dry, when the new wine ferments it will burst the wineskin. He wasn't putting new life into the dead practices of Judaism, but starting afresh.

It is as Darby said, "A man accustomed to forms, human arrangements, father's religion, etc., never like the new principle and power of the kingdom."

Some are stuck in dead religious practices and they may say something like this, "It is the way my great, great grandfather did it and it worked for him, so why change." That is ridiculous! God gives us new songs, new life, fresh ways of reaching the lost for Jesus. His Word does not change, and that needs to be spoken, but how God works in various communities and with various people, will change.

As I close tonight let me leave you with this to think about. We need to be careful that we are not closed to what God wants to do, but we are open to the Spirit's leading in our lives and in this church. We don't want to put God in a box. You see, just because people are more comfortable with the old ways, doesn't mean it is better! Let me leave you this evening with this thought, the epitaph on the tombstone of many dead churches that reads: ***"WE NEVER DID IT THAT WAY BEFORE!"***