

I. Calling the apostles

(Luke 5:1-8) One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, 2 he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

- A. Acoustics from a boat actually work well in this location.
- B. Peter's faith and humility is immediately evident. He did what Jesus said and acknowledged the miracle as such.
- C. Why did Peter react as he did? According to John, Peter had been with John the Baptist and was surely aware that Jesus was the one prophesied by John. He surely had seen him healing. What did this miracle do to change his perception? (Went from an idea to a fully realized understanding — he couldn't deny the "God with us" part of Jesus.
- D. Why was he afraid? He was aware of his sinful state and so afraid that Jesus could perceive it.
- E. When we encounter Jesus, we can either arrogantly pretend to be good enough or we can recognize our weakness and sins. Peter had a genuine humility.
- F. Why didn't the entire audience react this way? There were hundreds, maybe thousands, there. Partly because Peter understood the miracle of the fish more than others (but there were surely many fishermen in the crowd). It's really a question of the heart, being honest with God about who you are. And this is why he was approved by Jesus despite his sinfulness.
- G. We now see that Jesus has power over nature as well as diseases.

(Luke 5:9-11) For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, *10* and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "**Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.**" *11* So they pulled their boats up on shore, **left everything and followed him.**

H. Notice that Peter just had the catch of a lifetime—worth lots of money—but he and his friends left the boats — and presumably the fish — behind to follow Jesus

I. What do you suppose they understood by “you will catch men”? We know, having read Acts, but what could they have understood at the time? Or did they even care?

J. Apostles are of a type with Jesus’ followers. We must do as we are called to do.

K. Mission of Jesus is first stated as preaching the gospel. Now we add fishing for men — Jesus is here to make disciples, not just teach lessons. Disciples give up everything for Jesus.

II. More miracles

(Luke 5:12-16) While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

13 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

14 Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

15 Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. *16* But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

A. Jesus touched him! This man had likely had no human touch since childhood. He was unclean and leprosy was considered highly contagious.

B. Jesus did honor the Law of Moses by requiring him to go to the priests, but this was essential so he could be considered clean and live a normal life.

C. Jesus’ humanity is evident from his need to escape the crowds at times.

D. Why did Jesus spend so much time in prayer? He’s the Son of God, part of the Godhead. Why was this so important to him?

E. If we were advising him today, we'd likely say, "You've only three years to change the world. Use your time wisely and efficiently. Don't just go off and pray. You could have done that and stayed in heaven! Be busy with preaching and healing!"

F. Jesus obviously had the human/physical need for rest and occasional solitude, but he spent hours in prayer that he could have spent with friends or other activities. Prayer was very important to Jesus.

G. Why don't we pray as Jesus prayed? Why are our priorities so different?

H. Go back to Jesus' encounter with Peter. Peter, realizing he was in the Divine presence, was afraid. Are we afraid of prayer? Does being the presence of holiness convict us more than we want to be convicted? Is it terrible to have to be honest with God?

I. How can we discipline ourselves to better pray? What should we give up to make the time?

(Luke 5:17-26) One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.

18 Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. *19* When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? *23* Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? *24* But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. *26* Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

J. This is the first contact with the Pharisees. They had come from across the country. Why? Because he threatened the status quo and they liked the status quo.

K. They refused to believe he had power to forgive sins until he healed the man. Just so, no one will believe that our message is from God until we demonstrate that we are willing to heal those whose lives we touch.

L. Forgiving sins was a claim to more than being the Messiah—it's a claim to be God. And the Pharisees knew it. Hence, it appeared to them to be blasphemy.

M. First Century Jews thought disease was punishment for sins, so healing proved to them that forgiveness had occurred.

N. This is the first time a healing appears to be in response to faith—not so much that faith makes it possible, as faith persuades Jesus to act. But it wasn't the faith of the paralytic, it was the faith of his friends.

O. At this point, though, the Pharisees were more amazed than angered.

P. Notice that the crowd was unimpressed with the forgiveness of sins. No one was excited until Jesus healed the man—then they were amazed.

Q. Just so, in our own ministries, no one takes us seriously when we offer forgiveness of sins. In fact, modern Americans don't feel the need for forgiveness. It's not until they see love in action—changed lives, people helped—that they are willing to listen to the message of salvation.

R. Forgiveness of sin is (to us) an intellectual act, proven by the Bible. But helping those in need is deeply emotional and changes people. Hence, Mother Teresa is widely admired and sometimes imitated. However, great theologians are not.

III. Calling of Matthew (Levi)

(Luke 5) 27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

A. Notice the recurring theme: "left everything and followed him". Compare Luke 5:11 (Peter, Andrew, James, John). Mark 10:28. Matt. 19:27 (Peter). Why does Luke say this twice?

29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 30 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

31 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

B. Did Jesus mean the Pharisees were righteous? Is he saying some people don't need to repent?

C. Do we eat and drink with sinners? How would we follow this example today?

D. Notice that Jesus is sensual — he enjoys life. He is no ascetic. It's not necessary to be miserable to be holy. You can and should enjoy friends, food, and drink.

E. We have inherited a little Gnosticism from the early church, via Catholicism and Calvinism—the idea that God is happiest when we are miserable. Hence, if I give up red meat for Lent I've pleased God because I'm less happy. The truth is that God gives us gifts and enjoys it when we enjoy his gifts. Any gift can be abused (gluttony, alcohol abuse) but any gift can also be enjoyed in all righteousness.

F. Jesus understood that you reach more hearts by eating together than by preaching. The social element of the gospel is huge. We are invited into a community, not just to mission but to the pleasure of holy friendships. This produces encouragement to do mission but also community, comradery, friends, and such. God means for this to happen. It's not a side effect; it's taking people and rebuilding their lives into what God always intended—and we are designed to be in community, to have friends and to be friends.

G. God Himself exists in community in the Trinity, together with the heavenly host. We are not designed to be alone.

33 They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking."

34 Jesus answered, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? 35 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."

H. And so, are we now living the age of fasting and praying — or eating and drinking?

I. Jesus plainly teaches that the Kingdom of Heaven is about joy and includes enjoying the pleasures of God's creation—but doing so in holy ways. We are given a hard, important task. There's no reason to be miserable, nor does being miserable make the job easier. In fact, being surrounded by a loving, vibrant, supportive community makes all the difference.

J. Table fellowship—eating together—became a part of the worship of the early church. They enjoyed a "love feast" (Jude 12) where they ate together. The love

feast was used to supply the needs of the poor as well as to draw the community closer together. There's really nothing more Christlike than eating with brothers and sisters in Christ.

K. 1 Cor. 11 teaches us that the love feast can be abused. Social isolation, refusal to share, lack of concern for the poor—can all destroy the purpose of the celebration.

36 He told them this parable: "No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. 37 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. 38 No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. 39 And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"

L. What's the point of v. 39? Is it a reference back to v. 33—when you eat and drink people will complain that you don't fast and pray. Fast and they'll want to eat. You can't go by what makes people happy. They don't always even know.

M. V. 36 says neither the old nor the new will benefit from combining the two. V. 37 says adding new to old doesn't work. What were the new and old things he had in mind? John the Baptist? Pharisees?

N. How does this fit into the larger narrative? Jesus has to supplant John and the Pharisees. Their time is completely over, there's no mixture. Jesus has now demonstrated that he's the Messiah, so it's now time to move into high gear.

O. There is no blending of legalism with grace. Refer to Galatians. By attempting to add circumcision to the gospel, the Judaizing teachers destroyed the gospel and fell from grace. We try to hold onto our legalism. We grew up with it. We know how to live in that world (miserable as it is). We are afraid of the new because we have little experience. We don't know what new demands will be made of us. And so we cling to the familiar, even when we know it's not good for us.

P. It's like the man who won't throw away his old shoes even though they stink, or the woman who won't clean out her old magazines even though she knows she'll never read them and they are years out of date. We're all a little neurotic. We are afraid of the new. The old is at least familiar.

Q. Jesus warns us that it's just not possible. We have to learn to let go.