

# Calling Sinners to Repentance

Luke 5:27-32

## 1. Introduction.

- a. A major theme of Luke's 5<sup>th</sup> chapter is discipleship.
  - i. Verses 11 and 27-28 form bookends, framing out most of the chapter with the theme of discipleship.
  - ii. The key phrases are, "leaving everything," and "follow."
- b. When you combine the four accounts of Jesus gathering His first disciples (vss. 1-11), with the leper, the paralytic, and Levi, we see a full picture of discipleship.

## 2. The Call (27-28).

- a. All three synoptic accounts (e.g., Matthew, Mark, and Luke) put the story of Levi right after the story of the paralytic.
  - i. This is significant because the Gospel accounts don't always agree in their chronology. They are more concerned with making a theological point than a chronological point. As such, they order the Gospel very intentionally.
  - ii. That all agree on the chronology of this event is significant.
- b. The clear purpose for this is that Luke anticipates a question in the reader's mind.
  - i. The account of the paralytic tells us that we can have our sins forgiven. However, the natural question in the reader's mind should be: to what extent will Jesus forgive the sinner. Can Jesus pardon my sin?
  - ii. To answer this question, Luke, along with Matthew and Mark, give the account of Levi—the worst of sinners.
- c. Background on tax-collectors.
  - i. They were reviled, hated, and viewed as traitors. There was no one lower in the Jewish world. In fact, they were considered unredeemable. In 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish culture, a prostitute had a greater chance of redemption.

- ii. There were Great Mokhes, who contracted with Rome, and Little Mokhes, who were hired by a Great Mokhes.
    - iii. Levi was a little Mokhes, and responsible for collecting travel tax.
  - d. Levi is described as sitting in his booth—a reference to sitting in his sin (27).
    - i. The point to observe is that Jesus comes to Levi.
    - ii. In the previous two accounts (i.e., leper, tax-collector), we see the helpless coming to Jesus, but here, we see Jesus going to the helpless.
    - iii. The term, “noticed,” is used to speak of “fixing one’s eyes upon.”
      - 1. It illustrates divine election.
      - 2. Jesus comes to a person in the midst of their sin, when they are not caring about Jesus or their sin.
  - e. Jesus gives the command to follow (28).
- 3. The Commitment (29).
  - a. The natural progression of being forgiven is you, then, follow. There is a commitment and desire to become like Christ.
  - b. There is a stark contrast between this rich tax-gatherer, and the rich young ruler (ch. 18). Levi leaves everything and follows. The rich young ruler keeps everything and walks away. “Leaving everything” is a reference to repentance. It is not speaking of selling everything you have and becoming a monk.
  - c. Levi throws a very large party for Jesus and invites all of his sinful friends. Why does he do this?
    - i. There is much joy in turning to Christ and following after Him.
    - ii. In turning to Jesus, you do what Jesus does—affiliate with the sinner. Having been found, you now seek the lost.
      - 1. “Reclining at the table” speak of an extended time of discussion. It is describing how to engage the sinner.
      - 2. There is a relationship that ought to exist.

4. The Controversy (30-32).

- a. The Pharisees and their Scribes do not like this. As a result, they confront the disciples of Jesus.
- b. Jesus responds on behalf of the disciples (31-32).
  - i. Jesus has come for the sinner, not the righteous (i.e., self-righteous).
  - ii. He has come for those who know they are sick and need a healing.

5. Conclusion.

- a. Jesus is setting up a contrast between those who know they need Him, and those who don't. He is also creating a wedge between Himself and the religious institution.
- b. Jesus is described as a friend of sinners. This begs the question as to who is Jesus' enemy.
- c. There are two kinds of "righteous" people in the world.
  - i. The religious righteous, who seek to earn God's favor.
  - ii. The morally righteous, who have established their own standard of justice.
- d. Jesus can save neither. He can only save the sinner. That is, those who know they are a sinner.