

**The Rock: 02-06-2022**

**A year with the Master**

**First reading: Philippians 2:1-8**

**Title:** Building the team (Pt. 2)

**Scripture:** Luke 5: 27-32 (black bible Pg. 809)

**Theme:**

Jesus calls the sinful, the broken and the misfit (all of us at some level) cures us and sends us.

**Introduction:**

As we start again this morning looking at building the team, there is an important thing which Luke notes for us, that I believe we need to see.

We find it in verse 16:

**-Luke 5:16 (ESV)**

"But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray."

This is the second time Luke has noted this for us and we would do well to pay attention to it. Jesus, once again getting alone.

It seems to me, that the busier life got, the more people pressed in on Jesus, the more methodical and intentional in his down-time, He became. Finding the balance in all the noise, the pressure and the chaos is a lesson we dare not miss.

It seems to happen also at times of great pressure and big decisions. I don't find it a coincidence that Jesus is picking His core group and team here, and it is noted that He gets away and alone to pray.

We tend to find ourselves taking off into fits of hyper-activity when things get busy and the pressure is on. Finding that we don't have much space for slowing down and praying.

Afterall, things need to get done, people need me, the situation will collapse without my constant state of attention.

Only to run ourselves ragged and those bouts of hyper activity end up being surrounded by chronic states of inertia. Where we have zero energy to do anything. It's a great recipe for burn-out and it happens too often.

There is an imbalance, which Jesus avoids and we must learn from. When we find ourselves living for the applause of ONE, namely God, instead of the many, our

desire to produce and perform based on worldly reasons, dwindles.

It's also helpful to see that when it comes to people and the human condition, Jesus cares very little about worldly opinion. That is seen in this section of Luke.

### **The Story:**

The surrounding text then become very important to us as we see the calling of Levi (Matthew), as we discover in life that nothing ever happens in a vacuum.

The Leper, for instance in Luke's gospel:

#### **-Luke 5:12-13 (ESV)**

"While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him."

Jesus touches this social outcast and sends him on his way to fulfill the requirements of Moses. Doing everything in the wrong way.

Jesus seems to be that pilgrim Kris Kristofferson wrote about: "He's a

walking contradiction, partly truth, partly fiction, taking every wrong direction on his lonely way back home.”

Yet, he is not. It only seems that way because Jesus is looked at through tainted, self-righteous eyes. Judging the rightness of who can and should cross His path for help.

Defining what we consider to be proper and good behavior, looking always at the outside and forgetting the transformational power of God and His working on the inside of a person.

We come across the paralytic with no faith at all:

**-Luke 5:18-19 (ESV)**

“And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus.”

The faith of his friends moved Jesus to heal and forgive. Crazy story for all those who like to say that we aren't healed because our faith isn't strong enough.

Seems this fella had none, and he was living on the good graces and the dime of others:

**-Luke 5:20 (ESV)**

"And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

That was good enough for Jesus, yet too often I'm not so sure it's good enough for us.

Just look at the legal-eagle bean counters -Following Jesus around, not to learn, but for the express purpose of "keeping him in line, and making sure His theology is right, and His behavior is satisfying and acceptable to them."

"You can't forgive sins!" (Verse 21) Jesus goes right to the heart of the matter after that comment is made. Literally, and puts it right out there and gives the Apostle Paul something to write about years later.

The Kingdom of God is not mere words, he would tell the Corinthian church, but a demonstration of the Spirit's power!

**-1 Corinthians 2:4 (ESV)**

"...and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in

demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

“Listen guys, anyone can stand here and say: ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ Heck even you people do it, for the right price and correct prayers. I’m gonna show you what it is really about.”

**-Luke 5:24 (ESV)**

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.”

It’s about power, Kingdom power, it’s about forgiveness, it’s about healing and making whole, it’s about the outcast, the broken, the marginalized, the one who thinks and feels and believes that their life is hopeless.

It’s also about the one who has it all, where everything is clicking, the finances are good, the marriage, health, home and family are all good.

It’s for all them and for all the in-betweens! Because it’s a heart matter.

This section leading up to the calling of Levi (Matthew) shows us that! Grace is that crazy, that wide, that deep. It is

the only thing any human being can brag about.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts it this way:

"It is grace at the beginning, and grace at the end. So that when you and I come to lie upon our death beds, the one thing that should comfort and help and strengthen us -there is the thing that helped us in the beginning. Not what we have been. Not what we have done. But the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Christian life starts with grace, it must continue in grace, and it ends with grace..."

If Peter, Andrew, James and John were the obedient Jewish men (fishermen), Levi was anything but!

Levi was despised by anyone who was a faithful Hebrew. He had become a tax collector for pagan Rome. Given permission by them to make money at the expense of his fellow countrymen. He had become as unclean as you could get without having leprosy.

Rome would have given him a territory to work in as his zone. It seems in and about Capernaum was that zone. He had a set amount that he needed to collect and send to Rome, but there was no rule that said he couldn't gather more.

If he wanted to press someone for more, he could and he would. After all, what could Joe and Mary from 3<sup>rd</sup> and Vine really do about it anyway?

Nothing at all! So, most tax collectors, like Levi and Zacchaeus, became very wealthy by collecting exorbitant "fees" along with the taxes required.

Doesn't really make you first on the list for the Sabbath day brunch at Synagogue, does it? But this is Levi, and here comes Jesus:

**-Luke 5:27-28 (ESV)**

"After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything, he rose and followed him."

Again, it seems as though Jesus just shows up on the scene and these guys abandon everything. They do, but we need to remember that Jesus is doing all these things we just talked about publicly.

I can only imagine an ostracized Jew like Levi was paying close attention to the healing of a leper (social outcast) and a faithless paralytic. (Levi had abandoned his faith, it is clear).

Then to see and hear the open rebuke of the "powers that be" for their spiritual arrogance. All of this is happening in his sphere of influence. And it is clear that Levi took notice. I am sure nothing was missed in this small port town sitting on the shore of Lake Galilee.

He didn't up and leave a lucrative business without conviction and a change of heart. He, through the working of the Holy Spirit, decided to be obedient to the sovereign call of God.

Acceptance is a funny thing -Jesus takes us all as we are, but doesn't want to leave us that way. Yet, here is Levi now following Jesus, doing what he would normally do to celebrate after a good day -He's throwing a party. This is life, and his framework.

But it seems, he forgets to tell his "old friends" they weren't allowed. Or did he?

**-Luke 5:29 (ESV)**

"And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them."

Jesus didn't balk at the invite, and the religious police followed right along, not to learn, but once again, to accuse.

Nothing ever changes in life or in the human condition. The cultural, the social and the religious elite will always function this way. Everything is conditional -ALWAYS.

Just as an aside- To clarify once again, we need to remember that Jesus accepts us where we are, but does not desire to leave us there.

We are called to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus. (Rom. 8:29) So, I'm not saying here that we throw out the Scriptures and every time someone says: "You know the Bible tells us we ought not to do that."

That we tell them to get lost we can do whatever we want. That is also wrong, and not at all what Jesus is doing or ever did.

Alistair Begg along with Samuel Bolton, an old Puritan author:

Begg:

"It is no surprise that the Christian relationship to the law has been a problem since New Testament times, considering obedience to the law and freedom in the Spirit creates a tension that makes it easy to misunderstand and to be misunderstood."

**-Pathway to Freedom Pg. 29**

Bolton:

"The Law sends us to the Gospel that we may be justified; and the Gospel sends us to the Law again to inquire what is our duty AS those who are justified."

**-True bounds of Christian freedom Pg. 71**

We want to be careful then to think in those terms as we look at what Jesus is doing.

If we aren't, it ends up being defined, as it does here by one's tribal point of view. I'm in, you are out, so that's that. And these religious people had pre-determined that Matthew's tribe was out.

It's crazy how it is always the same -yet in the simplicity of Jesus -yes, the simplicity- God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.

AND -The Son (That beautiful Triune God-head) was willing to be given for us, on our behalf:

**-Philippians 2:5-8 (ESV)**

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form

of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

This is God's love for the world- this is Jesus' love for you and me. God gave, and Jesus was willing to be given.

Don't think for a minute that in His quiet time with the Father, those times Luke is so careful to record, that Jesus talked in a shocked and surprised tones at how messed up humanity really was.

"These people are far worse than we thought, father. I'm not sure this project of salvation for these people is worth it, worth the cost and sacrifice.

No! That would be a grave mistake on our part to think that way. Nothing any of us can do will separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus.

You see, He actually knew and knows our condition far better than we even know ourselves. He sees it far more clearly than we ever could, and He still loves us. He still wants the best for us. If we will simply come to Him, and Levi did.

Gathered together at his house with what would be considered the dregs of society, the unclean, the un-faithful, the

outcast, Jesus walks right in the front door.

Instead of trying to see how, through Jesus, God would work to change these hearts and minds: In typical fashion they attack and accuse instead:

**-Luke 5:30 (ESV)**

"And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

We shouldn't be with these kinds of people. Tax collectors (still seen in the same way today, if we are honest), sinners and thieves.

They are right, to a degree. People who should know better, need to do and be better. That is what Jesus is trying to show them here. Get in the room, change the temperature of that room.

I'm not a fan of the analogy as it's so over used, but it works here: Don't be a thermometer, someone who checks the temperature of the room and adjust accordingly.

Be the thermostat -and change the temperature. Define the culture, challenge the status-quo when it is damaging the human condition:

**-Luke 5:31-32 (ESV)**

"And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

We cannot subvert or change a culture by standing just outside the door, railing at the darkness within. Accusing, belittling, and in general just screaming about the wrongness of it all.

A culture is always subverted from within, and it is done so by agents of change who hold the line. Think in terms of a Daniel, of a Jeremiah, of a Paul even.

One would think that it is the Pharisees who are right here, and that Jesus is wrong. Frankly a case would perhaps be made for that view.

Yet, it is not just about how we behave. You see, in medical terms (sticking with Jesus here) behavior is just the symptom of a deeper problem.

A deeper sickness which the Pharisees were failing to see and had infected them as well as these party goers.

For them it was all the outward action, the performance as it relates to checking the boxes of God's commands.

They failed to see that it was at the least that, but it was so much more than just that.

They thought God loved them because they had checked all the right boxes. They failed to understand that He loved them in spite of any boxes being checked or unchecked for that matter.

They were already loved -but they forgot to love in return, they forgot grace.

I close here:

Matthew's crowd, Matthew included, I am sure were surprised that Jesus showed up and asked for a place at the table.

But Jesus came looking for the sick, and we are all sick, and are all in need of the great physician!

Calling sinners to repentance -Four obedient Jews are now joined by one disobedient Jew. What did they have in common?

1-They knew they were sinners in need of saving.

2-Even though they didn't fully understand it yet, they knew somehow that Jesus was the answer to that dilemma.

How about you? How about me? Do we know this, and are we prepared to admit it?

Prayer