

Luke 5:27-32

Jesus deliberately associates with potential objects of God's mercy

Introduction: A shift from those suffering physically and spiritually to those who are social outcasts. Jesus goes from forgiving sinners to openly engaging with them.

Jesus calls Levi/Matthew to follow Him—5:27-28

- 1) Jesus does three things—5:27²⁷ *And after these things ...*
 - a) *He went out*
 - b) The perception of His calling grace—*and saw* [θεάομαι] (look with special interest on) *a tax collector* [τελώνης] *named Levi sitting at the tax booth* [τελώνιον].
 - i) From NET Bible: The *tax booth* was a booth located on the edge of a city or town to collect taxes for trade. There was a tax booth in Capernaum, which was on the trade route from Damascus to Galilee and the Mediterranean. The “taxes” were collected on produce and goods brought into the area for sale, and were a sort of “sales tax” paid by the seller but obviously passed on to the purchaser in the form of increased prices. It was here that Jesus met Levi who was ultimately employed by the Romans, though perhaps more directly responsible to Herod Antipas. It was his job to collect taxes for Rome and he was thus despised by Jews who undoubtedly regarded him as a traitor.
 - (1) Capernaum was the last stop in Galilee ruled by Herod Antipas before crossing the border into Gaulinitus ruled by Herod Philip.
 - ii) Levi is a minor tax collector whereas Zacchaeus is a chief tax collector [ἀρχιτελώνης] (cf. Luke 19:2).
 - c) The power of His calling grace—*And He said to him, “Follow Me.”*
 - i) Jesus takes the initiative with the rejected.
- 2) Levi's repentance-driven obedience—5:28
 - a) Negatively—*having left everything*, (walking away from any loyalty competing with Jesus)
 - b) Positively—²⁸ *And having stood up, he followed Him.* (cf. 5:10-11)
 - i) A traitorous Jew follows the Jewish Messiah!
 - c) He doesn't know where the road will lead, but he is willing to follow the One who called him.

Levi/Matthew hosts a reception at his house to honor Jesus—5:29-32

- 1) The reception—5:29a²⁹ *Then Levi gave a big reception for Him in his own house;*
 - a) Conversion brings joy to the sinner's heart, and he desires to share that with other sinners.
- 2) The guests—5:29b
 - a) Significant numbers—*and there was a large crowd ... who were reclining at table with them.*
 - b) People of poor reputation—*of tax collectors* [τελώνης] *and others*

- c) Levi goes to great trouble to bring Jesus to many who might not normally be expected to have contact with a religious dignitary. (Bock)
- 3) The confrontation—5:30-32
 - a) The charge of inappropriate associations—5:30 ³⁰ *And the scholars and the Pharisees (the separatists) complained (used in OT for sinful grumbling) to His disciples, saying, “Why do you^{pl} (the disciples and Jesus) eat and drink with tax collectors [τελώνης] and sinners [ἁματωλός]?”*
 - i) A seemingly innocent question that is loaded with accusation.
 - ii) Jesus aggressively formed relationships that would help lay the basis of an acceptance from which the challenge about lifestyle could be made. (Bock)
 - b) Jesus’ compassionate response—5:31-32 ³¹ *And having responded, Jesus said to them, (cf. Matthew 9:13; Hosea 6:6)*
 - i) Real-life proverb—5:31
 - (1) Negatively—*“Those who are healthy [ὑγιαίνω] have no need of a physician,*
 - (a) Those who are not prepared to be treated for something they do not recognize as diseased.
 - (2) Positively—*but those who are sick (lit. “have it bad”) do (need a physician).*
 - (a) Those who are painfully aware of their position before God.
 - ii) Real-life application—5:32
 - (1) Negatively—³² *I have not come [pf. act. ind.] to call [aor. act. inf. καλέω] the righteous [δίκαιος],*
 - (a) The righteous cannot and will not repent because they do not see their need.
 - (b) Jesus is NOT saying the Pharisees are genuinely righteous, but only that they perceive themselves as such.
 - (2) Positively—*but (I have come to call) sinners [ἁματωλός] to [εἰς] repentance [μετάνοια].”*
 - (a) Jesus goes to those who perceive their need and He seeks to meet that need.
 - (b) Repentance is a change of mind that involves not just Jesus but an embracing of God that changes one’s orientation in life. ... The sinner is challenged to look at things in a way that pleases God. ... Spiritual restoration and healing can be accomplished only where the acceptance of “illness” is present. (Bock)

Take-home truth: Jesus desires that people follow Him based on genuine faith, for not all following is done in faith. Some follow Him simply out of curiosity. Jesus goes where an opportunity for a genuine response of repentance and faith exists.