

The Church of the Servant King
Survey of the Bible Series – Luke
SB_LK5_Some Disciples Called

Luke 5

Four Fishermen Called as Disciples (5:1-11)

The Lake of Gennesaret is the Sea of Galilee. Obviously, this was not the first time that Jesus had contact with these men. Luke has already indicated that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law (4:38-39); therefore, this denotes previous contact with both Peter and Andrew. Also, in John 1:41, we read that Andrew told Peter that he had found the Messiah. Apparently, these men had not been following Jesus on a full-time basis, but were very aware of Him since Jesus called them (Simon, Andrew, James and John) in Mark 1:16-20.

As an experienced fisherman, Peter knew that he would not catch anything at that time of day when the fish were deeper in the lake. However, he obeyed Jesus' word. The result was not only a huge haul of fish for these men, but Jesus established His authority. He called these men to full-time discipleship.

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority with Further Healings (5:12-26)

These two healings resulted in a confrontation with the religious crowd and leadership. This is the first confrontation with the religious leadership recorded by Luke. Both of these healings authenticated Jesus' claim to be the Messiah.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper (5:12-16)

Leprosy was broadly used to apply to or describe almost any skin ailment. The Mosaic Law required that the leper be isolated from the rest of Israel, but they could be restored to the community when they recovered (Lev 13:45-46 cf. 14). However, healing from leprosy was extremely rare. The Scripture records only Miriam (Num 12) and Naaman (2 Kings 5) as having been healed of leprosy.

The person with a case of leprosy could be declared clean by the priest. According to the Mosaic Law, if one came into contact with a leper and touched him, then that person became unclean too. Luke portrays Jesus as the source of ceremonial cleansing for this person. The implication was that Jesus was the source of ceremonial cleansing for the nation also.

Once again Jesus commands that no one be told (v. 14) similar to having told the demon to be quiet in 4:31-37. The reason is the same – Jesus did not want those healed to indicate the source since the true spiritual condition of the nation had not yet become manifest. As we've seen Jesus was evaluating the spiritual condition of the nation to see if its spiritual condition was receptive and ready for the kingdom (Matt 5:3-11). He was not interested in being perceived as a political revolutionary against Rome.

Notice that Jesus withdrew often into the wilderness and prayed (v 16). Contact with a fallen world on such an intense basis necessitated that even our Lord in His humanity had to pray. Prayer is absolutely necessary to maintain perspective as we face the challenges of operating in the world.

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralytic (5:17-26)

Some people of faith brought to Him a paralytic to be healed. The phrase "their faith" (v. 20) includes the faith of the paralytic. Jesus uses the occasion to distinguish between those who were of faith and those who had come to be entertained with another miracle. (Entertainment

mechanisms were not as ubiquitous then as they are today, so no doubt the news about Jesus got around faster than the news about a good movie today). The religious leaders fell into the second category.

Jesus did not immediately heal the man's body, but He forgave His sins first. This is very important to the argument that Luke presents in this section. Luke's point is that Jesus had the authority to call disciples including people such as Matthew (vv 27-39) who were not thought of as righteous not to mention touching an unclean person and remaining ceremonially pure Himself (vv 12-16).

When Jesus pronounced that the sins of the paralytic were forgiven, it exposed the true attitude of the unbelievers. They accuse Him of blasphemy since only God can forgive sins (Ps 103:12; Mk 2:7; Lu 5:21). This is the first opposition from religious leaders towards Jesus and they accused Him of speaking blasphemy and this same charge would eventually lead to Jesus' death (22:70-71). Jesus did not use His divine attributes (e.g. omniscience) to peer into these religious people's souls and discern their intent and attitudes. This is just a reference to the fact that Jesus knew what was in man (Jn 2:25).

It is easier to say "your sins are forgiven" than to say "arise and walk" since anyone can say the former because there is no way of empirically verifying whether they have been forgiven or not. However, one can easily determine whether a paralytic has been healed. It required even more authority to forgive sins. His healing of the man was proof that He had the authority to forgive sins.

The reaction by the crowds was one of fear or awe and implies a recognition of the authority behind His actions. There is a close connection between Jesus' acts of healing, His forgiveness of sins, and the offering of the Messianic Kingdom. The Kingdom is made possible by the death of Christ, the Messiah. Therefore, the blessings of the Kingdom, which include health, are related to Christ's payment for the sin of man (see Matt 8:16-17 where Matthew makes this connection by alluding to Isa 53:4).

Jesus Calls a Tax Collector to Become a Disciple (5:27-32)

In 5:27, Jesus calls Matthew (Levi) to be a disciple and Matthew's response is immediate and decisive in contrast the manner in which Jesus dealt with the other disciples who have been called so far. Matthew was a tax collector in Capernaum. Tax collectors sat in something similar to a toll booth alongside the highway to levy taxes on merchandise transported on the road. Tax collectors were considered to be traitors by the Jews since they collected taxes for the Romans. They were despised because they generally collected more than necessary and pocketed the difference. Since they were a despised lot, they could only socialize with the wrong crowd (v 29) instead of the more acceptable crowd that included the religious of Jesus' day (v 30).

Notice the contrast here between the response of Matthew toward Jesus and the response of the religious crowd toward Jesus. Matthew invites Jesus into his home and hosts a dinner. Many of Matthew's associates were present. The Pharisees never manifested such any openness to Jesus. The Pharisees would have never opened their door to anyone they considered to be sinners. Expecting a Messiah who would crush the sinful and support the righteous, they had little place for one who accepted and transformed the sinner and dismissed the righteous as hypocrites.

Jesus' response demonstrated that His ministry was directed toward those who realized that they had a need. Sick people need a doctor. The religious leaders did not think they were sinners. The Pharisees always brought the proper sacrifice, but they were totally lacking in any type of compassion toward sinners.

Principle: When mercy is lacking, then religious formalities are meaningless (Hosea 6:6 – “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings”). True mercy only originates from the spiritual believer.

Jesus is Questioned About Fasting (5:33-39)

Question for the group: To which two dispensations are the contrasts that Jesus presents in this passage related? Age of Israel verses Church? Age of Israel verses Kingdom (Millennium, New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34)?

It was right for John and his disciples to fast, for they were calling people to repentance in preparation for the coming kingdom. In contrast, Jesus was the King presenting His kingdom. Jesus describes His kingdom as a great feast similar to a wedding banquet. A feast is often used in Scripture to portray God’s kingdom on earth (see Matt 8:11; 25:10; Is 25:6; Lk 14:15-24; Jn 2:1-11; Rev 19:7-9). Since the King was present, it was not appropriate that He or His disciples fast. At a wedding banquet, people are happy, not mourning or fasting.

However, Jesus knew that as the Messiah, He would have to experience a propitiatory death for the sins of the world (Psa 22; Isa 53). He knew that He would be resurrected to rule over the promised Messianic Kingdom. Therefore, He added that a time would come when the bridegroom would be taken away. Then He pictured the relationship between His ministry and that of John the Baptist. John was a reformer who was attempting to inspire repentance among those steeped in the traditions of Judaism.

In contrast, Jesus did not come to patch up an old system like sewing a new unshrunk cloth on an old garment which would then tear. He did not bring the wine of a new kingdom to be poured into the law of another age (the Mosaic Law of the Age of Israel). Jesus had come to lead a group out of Judaism into the kingdom that was based upon His righteousness and not the self-righteousness that had become so commonplace in Judaism. The righteousness of the Kingdom offered by Jesus was not built upon the Law or upon Pharisaic tradition.

In verse 39, Jesus makes the point that someone who likes the old wine (the Law) will not even try new wine (the righteousness of attitude suitable for the kingdom). The religious crowd was satisfied with the old (the Law).