

## “Calling Sinners”

Luke 5:27-39

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### I. Introduction

- A. In 1928, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse was speaking at a conference in Montrose, Pennsylvania, where about 200 young people were present. One day, two women came to him in horror because some girls were not wearing stockings. These women wanted him to rebuke the others. Barnhouse’s reply is classic. As he tells it: “Looking them straight in the eye, I said, ‘The Virgin Mary never wore stockings.’ They gasped and said, ‘She didn’t?’ I answered, ‘In Mary’s time, stockings were unknown.’ So far as we know, they were first worn by prostitutes in Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the Renaissance began. Later, a lady of the nobility wore stockings at a court ball, greatly to the scandal of many people. Before long, however, everyone in the upper classes was wearing stockings.”
- B. One of the great dangers in the church and the Christian life is that of legalism
1. What is legalism?
    - a) A fleshly attitude which conforms to a code for the purpose of exalting self
    - b) It’s easy for us as Christians to forget that we are sinners saved by God’s grace and that we are sanctified or grow spiritually by grace
    - c) *“The radical regenerating work of Christ sours when redeemed people lose sight of their continuing need—when they forget that though, their eternal future is secure, in the daily walk they are frail and need. The church can easily become a self-righteous subculture with no room for sympathy for sinners.”* – R. Kent Hughes
    - d) We become self-righteous and look down on others who don’t meet our standards
- C. In our text today, we find Jesus calling sinners, loving them, eating with them, and reaching out to them, and we should do the same. And because of this, He is criticized and brought into conflict with the self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees.
1. They were legalists who did not understand Christ’s ministry, methods, or motives.
  2. As we examine this passage, we learn the important distinction between Jesus and religion and come to understand why He came.
    - a) “I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (v. 32)

### II. The Setting for the Conflict (Luke 5:27-30)

- A. It took place “after these things he went forth...” (v. 27)
- B. Jesus “saw” (it refers to a contemplative look) (v. 27)
1. What did Jesus see?
    - a) A publican
    - b) His name was Levi, or better known as Matthew
    - c) He was sitting at his tax booth
- C. Jesus called Levi to follow Him (vv. 27-28)
1. Literally “be following me”
    - a) It’s a call for Levi to attach himself permanently to Jesus

2. God gives grace to those that the world writes off
  3. Perhaps the other disciples were upset with the Lord's choice
  4. Others saw Levi the tax collector, but Jesus saw Matthew the "gift of God"
  5. The cost to follow (v. 28)
    - a) Unlike the others, he couldn't go back
    - b) "To find your life, you have to lose it"
    - c) He didn't quite leave all, for he took up his pen (the gospel)
    - d) What could God do with a life surrendered to Him?
- D. Levi or Matthew throws a party (v. 29)
1. If anyone could throw a party, it was a tax collector
  2. Why did Matthew throw a party?
    - a) To celebrate his new life
      - 1) No greater occasion for rejoicing than new life in Jesus
      - 2) *"It is a far more important event than being married, or coming of age, or being made a nobleman, or receiving a great fortune. It is the birth of an immortal soul. It is the rescue of a sinner from hell! It is a passage from death to life! It is being made a king and priest for evermore! It is being provided for, both in time and eternity! It is adoption into the noblest and richest of all families, the family of God!"* – J.C. Ryle
    - b) To honor Jesus
      - 1) Without him, there would have been no celebration. The desire to honor and glorify God is the natural reflex of the soul that has received divine grace.
    - c) To introduce his friends to Jesus
      - 1) Before it's too late
      - 2) All three reasons are evidence of true conversion
      - 3) What a party, but not everyone was rejoicing
    - d) Jesus is criticized
      - 1) What were they doing there?
      - 2) In their view, Jesus had defiled Himself by consorting with sinners
      - 3) They were sadly unaware of the fact that they, too, were sinners in need of God's grace of forgiveness
      - 4) They were out of accord with the very heart of God
      - 5) Religious observance of rites and rituals without love and mercy for needy sinners is a false religion
        - a. This often happens to Christians
        - b. Illustration- In the eighteenth-century Church of England, the common man was not welcomed in the church
        - c. May God help us today!

### III. The Sermon from the Conflict (Luke 5:31-39)

- A. The physician (vv. 31-32)
1. To Jesus, Matthew and his friends were patients who needed a physician
  2. The Lord's answer is from logic (v. 31)
    - a) Why Jesus came (v. 32)
    - b) Sin is like a sickness, and Jesus is our Great Physician
      - 1) He comes to us in our need

- 2) He makes a perfect diagnosis
  - 3) He provides a final and complete cure
  - 4) He pays the bills (the cross)
3. The Lord's answer was also from Scripture
    - a) In Matthew 9:13, Jesus quoted from Hosea 6:6: "I will have mercy and no sacrifice"
    - b) The Pharisees were quick to diagnose the needs of others, but were blind to their own sin
    - c) Like the elder brother in Luke 15
    - d) (Matthew 7:1-5)
    - e) The first link between my soul and Christ is not my goodness, but my badness; not my merit but my misery; not my standing but my falling; not my riches but my poverty.
    - f) We are all sinners and need to repent
      - 1) Jesus came to save sinners
- B. The Bridegroom (vv. 33-35)
    1. The first question in verse 30 had to do with the kind of company Jesus was keeping. This second question raised the issue of why Jesus and His disciples were having such a good time
    2. It's the same today. The legalists often criticize the person with liberty in Christ
    3. The Christian life is to be a feast, not a funeral
    4. Jesus came to bring us fullness of joy
  - C. A Parable (The Garment and the Wineskins) (vv. 36-39)
    1. A new patch and an old garment (v. 36)
    2. New wine and old wineskins (vv. 37-39)
      - a) Jesus was teaching that His way, the way of grace, and the way of the Pharisees, the way of the law, are simply unmixable
      - b) Jesus' teaching was considered by the Pharisees and religious leaders to be like new wine, and they wanted no part of it. They said the old is better. (v. 39)

## IV. Conclusion

- A. Jesus came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance
  1. As the Physician, He offers you new life
  2. As the Bridegroom, He brings new joy
  3. He comes to give us the robe of righteousness and the new wine of the Spirit
- B. He's calling you to follow Him!