

This week we have looked at LUK 5:27-39 “**And after that [After what? Everything we noted in the first 26 verses] He went out, and noticed a tax-gatherer named Levi, sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, Follow Me And he left everything behind, and rose and {began} to follow Him. And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax-gatherers and other {people} who were reclining {at the table} with them. But here comes the party-poopers, And the Pharisees and their scribes {began} grumbling at His disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with the tax-gatherers and sinners?” And Jesus answered and said to them, {It is} not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” And they said to Him, The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers; the {disciples} of the Pharisees also do the same; but Yours eat and drink. And Jesus said to them, You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? But {the} days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days. And He was also telling them a parable: No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one, after drinking old {wine} wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good {enough.}”**”

We watched as Jesus gathered at the house of Levi along with the tax collectors and sinners (LUK 5:30-32). We saw how the Pharisees could not believe it. The Lord’s response of course may have had a hint of humor in it when in essence He says it is not the righteous (like you Pharisees) who need help, but rather people like these. This is a great culmination to this chapter. Perhaps also it was that the lost were more enjoyable and even easier to be around than those “righteous” Pharisees. The so called righteous are often critical, some Christians even think they have such a right to be critical. Most Christians have pretty much built their own little world around one another. A few points on what seems to be going on in Christianity today:

1. Most Christians were closer to more non-Christians when they were saved, than they have been since that time. This is especially true if you were saved as an adult. Your circle of friends was basically those who were lost.
2. Most Christians remove themselves from this non-Christian world as much and as quickly as possible. Now, there are exceptions, but therein lies the reality, they are the exceptions.
3. Most Christians recreate their own world, which is usually a small-protected bubble they can control. Though this may not be true for many of you, consider that many young people go to Christian schools. Christians looking for Christian (the key word is Christian) Physicians, Dentists, Counselors, Mechanics. Reading Christian books, poetry. Listening to Christian radio, watching Christian television.

It’s not that we deliberately distant ourselves from all non-Christians, it just seems to happen. You know, Jesus did not do that. How often have you arranged an evening where you can be with the lost.....just to be with them? A neighbor, a friend at work, a family member?

Now the question is, is that right or wrong? Is that wise or unwise? Is it healthy or unhealthy?

You see most Christians distort the doctrine of separation. Some of you are thinking, "Well doesn't the Bible say that we shouldn't be unequally yoked with the unbelievers?" (2CO 6:14-18).

I am not talking about being yoked.

Now take 2CO 6:14, what does it mean when it says “**Do not be bound together with unbelievers;**”

The Apostle Paul is talking about partnership and fellowship, he is not talking about total separation. Fellowship here means fellowship, communion, joint participation, intercourse or intimacy. This does not mean we cannot be around these people, but we are not to partake of the lifestyle. We are talking about spiritual things here not natural, for both believers and unbelievers have many things in common in the natural realm.

In verse 17 **"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.**

And the interesting word is the verb to be separated, which means to mark off from others by boundaries, to limit, to separate. In other words, there is a limit or a boundary as far as how far you are willing to go with the lost. To be yoked up or to be bound in a union with such individuals in marriage, or a business partnership, that is another issue entirely because eventually you will hit crossroads with different morals and values. You may think it is going to be all right but eventually there comes a crossroad. The Christian is not to co-mingle in marriage or in business with the lost person, that's Biblical. However, how about as a friend?

You know many Christians will "Amen" what the Lord said in MAR 16:15 **"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."**

They will say we should go into the entire world, preach the Gospel, and let every part hear God's message.

They'll say, **"We must be motivated and moved to share the Gospel and the liberating word of God throughout the entire world"**,

Yet, now watch it, here comes the deep revelation, how about telling the person across the street, at the next desk, or over coffee some evening?

Again, this is because God does not fit into their little box.

And this is all an introduction to the last part of Luke chapter 5, where we will see our Lord teaching us that it's alright to party with sinners. We will continue to see His life and lifestyle.

a little leaven leavens the whole lump

Some interpret what the Apostle Paul in 1CO 5:6-8 says about a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? to mean to get away from the old life, the old life style, the old friends, the old classmates, the old members of the same bar, and the same club, and get on with a life of purity that's free of malice and wickedness. But the context of the passage is the church. Paul is saying to the people of the church in 1Co five, "Clean up the church". It ought to be a place where there is not leaven, a little leaven will spoil the whole group.

He is not talking to people who are living in the world; he is talking to people who are worshipping in a church. Now what about the world? Verses 9-10 **"I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; [However] I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world."**

If you want to live free of all immorality than you better take the next rocket out to the next planet. You cannot be free of all immoral people. You cannot be free of all who drink, and carouse, and run around and live lives of debauchery. Those who do not care about their addictions.

1CO 5:11 **"But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother or fellow believer if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one."**

He is talking about fellowshiping with the carnal Christian who is deliberately living a raucous, carousing life.

Interesting observation.

You will have the hardest time convincing Christians to watch out whom they hang around with in the family of God. In addition, those are the ones who really influence them in the wrong way.

Those are the ones who malign and gossip and discredit and criticize and find fault (JUD 1:16)

We are much more comfortable around those who are saved, though carnal then we are around those who are absolutely and without shame, lost.

How strange?

We need to be wise in our balanced walk.

1CO 15:33 **"Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."**

You have seen that, I have seen that.

We have seen that among Christian friends, we have seen that with teenagers, we have seen that even with kids that our kids have played with.

It is a risk.

Bad company can corrupt good morals.

There's no difference, so what it boils down to is this.

Is it OK to party with sinners?

I have a two word answer, Jesus did!

Looking at the life of our Lord in relationship to boasting and glorying in Him and His ministry, we are now noting Luke 5:27-39.

In Luke chapter 5, He is still in the beginning of His ministry.

He has not yet called all twelve of his disciples; there are a few yet to be reached on the list.

As a result, we meet one of them here in the fifth chapter of Luke.

In verses 27 and 28, we meet him in the name of Levi.

Now, we don't know much about Matthew.

/We know he was a tax collector or a local intermediary collector, Mat 9:9-11.\

The Jewish people hated these tax-collectors, not only for their corruption, but also because they worked with the despised Romans.

Therefore, Matthew was really an unpopular fellow among the Jews, but apparently the Lord saw something in him that they didn't.

In the ancient world, tax-collectors were ranked with murderers and robbers, and a Jew was even permitted to lie to them if necessary. As a tax-gatherer, Matthew was considered a traitor, for he earned his living by taking money from fellow Jews, giving the Romans their due, and hoarding what he overcharged.

Now, that's Matthew.

Certainly, the Lord did not approve of the tax-gatherers' thieving lifestyles, but He was able to look past Levi's reputation and see him as a potential disciple. That is a great biblical principle. Learn to look past someone's reputation and see him or her as a potential disciple.

Remember what the Lord said "after" the dispensation of the hypostatic union?

Now, can you imagine Levi's group of friends?

They're all at the party.

Can you imagine the grace of TLJC calling a tax-collector to join a group of His disciples?

Moreover, while your trying to control your shock, can you imagine this man "leaving everything behind

In LUK 5:28 And he left everything behind, and rose and began to follow Him.

You did not do that, I did not do that.

He left everything!

To follow Jesus, he would be trading a business gold mine for an uncertain life on the road.

However, Jesus was offering him the "bread of life", as it were, the eternal treasure.

Now, what follows is an interesting series of events.

Bursting with generosity and gratitude, Levi threw a reception for Jesus and His disciples in his huge and elaborate home.

He gave the Lord a big reception.

So in honor of Christ, Levi planned a big reception in his own house.

LUK 5:29 **"there was a great crowd of tax-gatherers and other {people} who were reclining {at the table} with them."**

They are reclining because they are very relaxed around TLJC.

I mean, these are fellow tax-gatherers right, and they are all sitting at the table, everything is great, except for one fact, Jesus is there, with His disciples.

I say it's great "except for the fact that Jesus is there" because I'm looking at it through the eyes of a Pharisee," because you know Pharisees were not invited to this party.

However, peeking through the doorway, was a group of scholarly snobbish Pharisees and scribes, standing with their arms crossed, disgusted by what they saw.

The separated ones, the Pharisees, why they would not even let the skirt of their robes touch the likes of Levi or Matthew.

Obviously, because the Pharisees were not invited they had to be looking in through the windows. Look at how Luke puts it again.

LUK 5:30-31 **"And the Pharisees and their scribes {began} grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax-gatherers and sinners? Over-hearing them grumble to His disciples, Jesus stepped in to answer their accusation.**

And Jesus answered and said to them, "{It is} not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick."

Don't you love it that Jesus answered the question that was given to the disciples?

The Mentor speaks in defense of the disciples, I love it.

"I have not come to call righteous men but sinners", that is why I am with them.

The implication is; **"I can't reach you "self-righteous and so-called healthy Pharisees and scribes",.....but I find this crowd rather open."**

I like how our Lord uses His sense of humor with divine sarcasm as He quickly wrapped His firm rebuke in a tongue-in-cheek compliment.

His statement implied that the Pharisees were the healthy ones who did not need to repent.

Nevertheless, He knew their hearts.

Their righteousness was really self-righteousness--nothing more than a thin veneer of purity stretched across their hypocritical soul.

/Later on He would shock this crowd in MAT 21:31 **"Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you."**

They decide this is their chance since now that they have Him near the window.

Each Monday and Thursday, from sunrise to sunset, they would sanctimoniously deny themselves food--having first whitened their faces so everyone could see what exhausted and weary martyrs they were.

Jesus, of course, wasn't against fasting.....but He was opposed to hypocrisy and to any tradition becoming set in concrete, for when that happens, hardened traditionalism is formed.

By traditionalism, we mean an attitude that resists change, adaptation, flexibility or alteration.\

It clutches tradition so tightly that the blood supply to our spiritual brain is cut off, distorting vision and blurring the distinction between custom and commandment.

Traditionalism is suspicious and censorious of the new, the innovative, and the different.

Always being critical and wanting to censor everything.

In addition, as we have seen, they have added many things to the law.

One of the many things is that attached to their backhanded criticism was a tradition of fasting that defined their version of true spirituality.

Jesus, of course, wasn't against fasting.....but He was opposed to hypocrisy and to any tradition becoming set in concrete, for when that happens, hardened traditionalism is formed. (see MARK 7:1-12)

Traditionalism is suspicious and censorious of the new, the innovative, and the different.

Traditionalism is always being critical and wanting to censor everything.

Jesus is telling the Pharisees to, "Loosen up their legalistic girdles!"

Sure, there is a time to fast, but there is also a time to feast.

Another thing that the Pharisees added was that a person was required to keep certain days of the week as being more sacred than others, which was another legalistic rule, nothing in the Scripture says it. Paul dealt with this in COL 2:16-18.

And so, they said to Him in LUK 5:33 **"The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers; the {disciples} of the Pharisees also do the same; but Yours eat and drink."**

But yours....., **"Your disciples eat and drink."**

"Your students eat and drink."

Implied: **"Don't you know the rules?"**

"Don't you know your not suppose to do that?"

LUK 5:34-36 **“And Jesus said to them, You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? But {the} days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.”**

“You will hear no laughter when the cross is lifted and I hang to die.”

In His response, Jesus gives us the first hint concerning His tragic destiny.

The sorrowful days of the Cross would come, but now, it was time to celebrate.

The Pharisees, however, remained stuck in the mud of traditionalism.

So Jesus tried pulling them free with a parable that illustrates the wisdom of letting go of the "old" when God is doing something "new".

LUK 5:36 **“And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.”**

If you ever tried to patch a pair of faded jeans, you know what this is talking about.

Here, the old garments are the hand-me-downs of traditionalism.

As they added to the word of God and developed habits, and customs, patterns and routines that they followed, they began to elevate those things rather than the message from God.

In an attempt to iron out the interpretation of God's Law, the Pharisees had added over six hundred new wrinkles. Then to add even more punch to His message, Jesus draws a metaphor from the great reception or the party.

He says in LUK 5:37-39 **“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one, after drinking old {wine} wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is good {enough}.”**

The application is "now", while He is with His disciples! And remember He is fulfilling the law at this time. So, what is this all about since we do not carry around wineskins?

Well, the old wineskins would get brittle, like old leather, they would split when stretched or pushed or pulled. When you put new wine in the old wine skins, as the wine ferments and continues to release its' gasses, naturally the bag will enlarge, and it has to have the elasticity to grow with it and to shift with it.

In other words, it has to be flexible!

And if you got the old wine you can handle it, but if you got new wine, you need new wineskins.

What in the world is all of this about?

/Well it's about essentials and non-essentials, flexibility and non-flexibility.\

It is about God who is a God of new things.

His gospel is always new in some way.

It is presented in "new" ways throughout history.

Same gospel, just different presentations.

His word is always fresh.

His message is always revolutionary.

/However, times change, methods vary, things adjust, to make room for something new that God is doing, or a fresh touch, as it were, from TLJC.\

The prominent message seems to be, "don't put God in a box."

Do not develop a list or concept of what God is like and then when you hear something new, like the Pharisees did, you reject it.

If you take freshly made wine and pour it into an old, worn, brittle wineskin, you're in for a leaky surprise.

It won't be long, thanks to the fermentation process, before chemical changes in the wine will cause the bag to stretch like a balloon and finally burst.

The old, traditional skin of Judaism was simply too brittle for the new wine of God's kingdom that Jesus was offering. In our Lord's Day, Judaism had become so inflexible that it was not able to recognize this new era of God's grace. The point is that we have nothing to protect in building style. We do not have to do things like the church down the street.

We do not have to follow some success story. We have nothing to defend in worship order. There is nothing sacred of the hour or the time of day we meet. We may choose to meet on a Saturday night, there is nothing sacred about a Saturday night. There can be worship. There can be prayer. There can be singing. There can be teaching.

However, all that is the wineskin.

As long as there is fresh wine, God is a God of new things.

He will change His policy from time to time to shock us so that we will become dependable upon the temporal and make an idol out of that which He is doing.

The point is, we should never be afraid of adventurous thought.

We should never be afraid of trying something a different way, as long as it is based upon doctrinal principles.

I'm not talking about changing your beliefs or your doctrine, I am talking about be open and flexible with regard to your ambassadorship, your evangelism, your talent, your spiritual gift.

First, try moving closer to the unsaved.

Take some interest in their lives.

Meet them on their turf.

You can be mighty in the Scriptures but you still need to learn the way of God more accurately.

(ACT 18:24 –26)

If we are to be the body of Christ, Who was the Great Physician who came to heal sinners, then we must not be afraid of adventurous thought.