

Series: God Saves #1390

Title: Romans 8.28c; Luke 5.31-32

Calling Sinners to Repentance

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We have had, I think, an insightful and profitable week in this fifth chapter of Luke's Gospel and the conversion of Levi-Matthew to Christ, along with many of his friends. And there is a reason we are here. That is to get a hold of the clear and bold statement Jesus makes concerning the purpose of His ministry. God has a definite purpose for the life of Christ, and Jesus attests to this in Luke 5, verses 31 and 32. In response to the grumbling the Pharisees made over Christ reclining at the table with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus says this. (I am reading Luke chapter 5, verses 31 and 32.)

“And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” There is His purpose: “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Jesus gives this the negative emphasis: “I have *not*...” He puts it in the negative. “I have not come to call the righteous,” that is those who think of themselves as being righteous. “But sinners...” Jesus has not come to call the righteous, *but* He *has* come to call the sinners. The people who interest the Lord are the sinners. The people who do *not* think of themselves as being righteous. That is why Christ employs this basic, but highly effective analogy of the physician. He says what we all know: it is not those who are well, it is not those who are healthy, who need a doctor, it is those are sick.

The point is the tax collectors and sinners around Levi-Matthew's table were sick and they knew they were sick and in desperate need of the physician. The Pharisees and their scribes, observing from the doorway, they thought they were perfectly healthy. Therefore, they had no need of the physician. It is only those who will admit they are sick who call for the doctor and welcome him when he comes. And, obvious to the text, Jesus *is* The Physician. The sickness is not physical, but spiritual. The tax collectors and sinners were sin-sick, they knew it, and so they welcomed the Great Physician, Jesus. The Pharisees and their scribes positioned themselves as perfectly healthy. They assumed of themselves *not* to be sin-sick, and so they rejected the Great Physician.

Of course, in reality, the Pharisees and scribes were very sick, spiritually diseased, but they would never acknowledge it. Whereas the attitude of Levi-Matthew and his friends was totally different. They had the terminal illness of sin, they knew it, they felt it, and so rushed over to Levi-Matthew's house to recline with *the* Doctor Jesus Christ!

I want to come back to the story itself and its implications for us, but just before that there are two words in what Jesus says that I want to make certain we do not gloss over. The first word is “call.” The Lord says, “I have not come to call...” This word in the Greek language was regularly used for inviting a guest to one's home for food and lodging. Get this. Jesus is saying my purpose is to call, to invite into God's home for food and for lodging, *sinners*. “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners...” Jesus' purpose is *not* to call into God's home self-righteous men and women. It is not the good, the religious, the healthy whom Jesus calls. It is, rather, the bad, the non-religious, and the sick whom Jesus calls. If you want Christ to call, to invite you into God's home, to eat with God, to lodge with God, then you will have to be a sin-sick person who knows it, acknowledges it, and responds positively to Christ's call.

The second word to take note of is the word “repentance” at the very end of Luke 5, verse 32. Again, the words of our Lord, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” The sinner is always called to...repent. It is the repentant person, the one who turns from their sin to Jesus, these are the ones whom find fellowship in the home of God with Christ and other saved sinners.

Do not think for one minute that by reclining at the table that day with tax collectors and sinners Jesus was relaying the message that God doesn't care about repentance. God *does* care about repentance. He commands that we turn away from our sins to *Him*. The Lord dealt with Levi-Matthew's sin. The Lord dealt with the sin of each person in Levi-Matthew's home. But He did that in the context of gathering together with the tax collectors and sinners, of associating Himself with them, of befriending them. Their sin did not keep Jesus away. Just the opposite. Jesus was drawn towards them, because they were sin-sick. And He called them to repentance.

Of course, what really irked the Pharisees was not that Levi-Matthew and his friends associated with Jesus, but that Jesus associated with *them!* This, they found, so disturbing. But this, we find a true and satisfying delight to our hearts. Why, because we are all sinners like the tax collectors and others at that table. We are sin sick and we know we need Jesus the Physician to associate Himself with us; to make a house call. To come right into our dining rooms and to eat with us, to lodge with us, and to forgive our repentant lives for all of our sins. We are needy and only Christ can meet our need.

I say this, unless of course, you are like the Pharisees and the scribes (the Jewish religious rulers). Do you think you are already righteous? Do you think you are healthy? Do you say that you have no need of the doctor? Because if that is how you feel, then you ought not expect for Jesus to come calling you. He said, as plain as He could, "*It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.*"³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Here is the truth: we have many people who present themselves as Christians who think, act, and speak just like these Pharisees. As a pastor I have met quite a number of members in the churches I have pastored who have the attitude that "I am well, *but* that person over there, my, he or she is *really* sick!" And there emanates a "holier-than-thou" attitude from such Christians. So there is a kind of division in the church between those who think they do not really need Jesus (the self-righteous) and those who express their need *for* Jesus (the ones who are only righteous because Christ is their righteousness). And so I ask, based on our text and also based on my experience, are there any Pharisees listening in?

Take what Jesus does and says here in Luke 5 to heart. Let the Word of God bring conviction into your life this weekend. I must do this also. We all need to search our hearts and honestly assess: do we find our righteousness in Christ alone or do we think that we have contributed to our own righteousness? If we look into the crevices of our being and we find that, indeed, we think we have somehow contributed something to God for Him to see us as a righteous one, then it is time for us to repent of the sin of pride. It is time for us to move into Levi-Matthew's house from the doorway where we have stood with the Pharisees, and to sit down beside Jesus, the equivalent of today's tax gatherers, the murderers, the robbers, the prostitutes, the drug addicts and drug pushers, the abusers, the liars, the cheats, the others and to sit with Jesus and say, "Lord, forgive me." It is time to see ourselves as sinners in need of Christ.

Jesus states His purpose: "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." On Monday, I want to come back to this one more time, and relay to you truths from a sermon that someone else has given, preaching that has impacted me (and I think will impact you) on the interaction Jesus has with Levi-Matthew, and friends, and Pharisees. But let me end the week by etching this in your mind. God has a purpose. In Romans 8, that we return to next week, verse 28 describes those who (quote), "are called according to *His* purpose."

It has been my purpose to use Luke 5, verses 27-32 to demonstrate to you Christ who teaches us the purpose of God and then to connect this back to Romans 8, verse 28. That is what we have done this week. And what we will see in the days ahead is the purpose of Jesus calling sinners to repentance; how that works, from the divine perspective. From God's perspective. So, do plan to be with us all next week, will you?

Think on these things. Apply them to your life and join us Monday because God Is!

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