

JESUS THROUGH THE EYES OF – LEVI

Luke 5:27-32

Sermon for Peace Church

January 10, 2010

PURPOSE - to present the healing love of Jesus for sinners to come to

MAIN IDEA – For those “love-sick”, Jesus is a healing Physician.

I. INTRODUCTION

Let's open our Bibles to Luke 5:27.

1. We're beginning the year drawing our sermons from the gospel of Luke, taking a fresh look at WHO JESUS IS and HOW HIS LIFE CHANGES OURS!

(i) This passage follows immediately after the 2 read earlier in the service. In line with those, it presents Jesus as a HEALER – DR. JESUS CHRIST!

2. Read Luke 5:27-32

3. WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU VISITED YOUR DOCTOR?

DO YOU LIKE TO VISIT YOUR DOCTOR?

Some of us, (men in particular), do all we can to AVOID visiting the doctor.

The AMA (American Medical Association) recommends annual visits. 90% of us ignore that advice – we only go when we're ill.

(i) Or, if we do visit, we can become hesitant to follow the doctor's prescription about health, exercise, diet.

I.e. – One patient came back to his doctor a month after his previous visit and declared that he still felt miserable. The doctor said, “Did you follow the instructions on the medicine I gave you?” The patient replied, “Sure did – the bottle said: KEEP TIGHTLY CLOSED ... and I did!”

4. In the passage just read, Jesus refers to Himself as a DOCTOR.

Responding to the Pharisees and teachers of the law who questioned why he ate and drank with tax collectors & “sinners”, He said:

It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

JESUS IS THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

(i) Now you know that Jesus made that statement to the Pharisees TONGUE IN CHEEK – because the religious Pharisees were people He diagnosed as VERY SICK!

Elsewhere He called them “white-washed tombstones” – Looked really good on the outside (painted white) – but underneath / within: so sick, they were actually DECAYING & DEAD!

(ii) The problem was that the Pharisees did not share that diagnosis! They did not consider themselves sick – so they had NO NEED to visit Doctor Jesus, to consult & draw health from Him.

THEY WERE OK. They were HEALTHY. They were ALL-RIGHT - GOOD TO GO!

A. But Jesus does not save good people. Jesus does not save good churches.

As a doctor, Jesus does not heal those who think they’re healthy. He can’t! HIS MINISTRY IS TO THOSE WHO KNOW THEMSELVES TO BE ILL!

5. DO YOU NEED A DOCTOR? HOW LONG’S IT BEEN SINCE YOU’VE SEEN HIM?

Lest we misdiagnose ourselves as the Pharisees did, let’s understand Jesus’ healing ministry in Levi’s life – because his story ties to the other 2 read.

II. LEVI

1. Levi was a tax-collector. Probably most of you know that tax-collectors in that day were a despised, shunned group of people – for good reason!

Here's the background in the words of commentator, Tim Keller:

(i) "Israel was a conquered nation, under military occupation. Their conquerors, the Romans, levied oppressive taxes on each colony as a means for transferring most of the nation's wealth to Rome and its citizens. This left the colonial societies impoverished, which kept them subjugated. The only people who lived in comfort and ease in Israel were the Romans who ruled and their local collaborators, the tax-collectors.

The tax system depended on officials who were charged with extracting, for their Roman overlords, the tax income from each region targeted for collection. Everyone despised them. The people called them sinners – which meant apostate or outcast. If you want to get a sense of how these functionaries were regarded, think of what people thought of the collaborators who, under the Nazis, oppressed their own people during WW II; think of drug-lords who get rich enslaving thousands of the weakest people in the inner-city; think of modern-day "robber-barons" who buy out and then destroy companies, or sell common people mortgages they cannot afford, while making millions for themselves.

Why would anyone take such a job as a tax collector? Money. Backed by military force, the tax collector was allowed to demand much more money from his fellow Jews than he had contracted to pay the government. Today, we call this extortion. It was extremely lucrative. Tax collectors were the wealthiest people in society, and the most hated."

2. THAT'S THE PERSON Dr. Jesus calls to be his follower!

Isn't that amazing! A Bernie Madoff ... A Chicago drug-lord! ... A Nazi-collaborator!

In fact, Levi becomes one of the inner 12 disciples, is renamed Matthew, and later writes a gospel – the first book of the New Testament!

(i) But what was LEVI'S SICKNESS?

A. In himself, he was obviously addicted to wealth – things, comforts, money. GREED was one of his diseases.

B. But deeper than that, Levi was an EXTORTIONIST. He USED people for his well-being. In relationship to others, he was a TAKER, not a giver. In the paradigm of LOVE, he was SELF-absorbed. He was an EXTORTIONIST.

3. But then he met the Doctor. He met HEALTH. *He met a man who down to the core of His being who did not use people for his own ends, but SERVED people for THEIR BETTERMENT – for the sake of God’s good in their life.*

THAT’S HEALTH – Jesus said, “I did not come to BE served, but to serve and give my life as a ransom for many.” (Mk. 10:45) HE IS HEALTH PERSONIFIED.

(i) So the prescription that Doctor J. gives to Levi is to leave his life of USING PEOPLE and follow Him into a life of SERVING OTHERS – for God’s good in them.

Come follow me ... and I’ll make you fishers of men.

A. That’s the first prescription Dr. Jesus gives to all his patients.

... “Come, follow Me.”

= Come, learn of Me ... Come, absorb Me ... Draw health from Me!

4. AND LEVI GOES! He leaves everything behind & follows Jesus (v. 28)!

AWESOME – But it’s not just that he leaves the wealth behind ... He leaves behind the illness of using people to walk in step with the One who is God’s HEALTH on earth!

THIS JESUS IS STILL ALIVE TODAY – His Spirit & truth invite us to walk with Him and be counseled in the ways of healing & health!

5. We see evidence of Levi’s growing health immediately. The first fruit that describes his salvation is HOSPITALITY.

V. 29 – He holds a GREAT banquet for Jesus at his house. (The Greek term emphasizes that this was a MEGA-BANQUET.)

(i) Hospitality is an act of SERVING OTHERS – making others feel like they MATTER, they’re important, they belong to you, that they have a sense of PLACE in your life; that not only do you want to get to know them better ... EQUALLY IMPORTANT, you want them to get to KNOW YOU better.

- For as Christians, like Levi, we are hospitable so that people will meet Jesus! Levi wants people to get to know him, as his life now has JESUS in it.

(ii) Hospitality serves others by MAKING ROOM for them to know you.

So, yes, it’s a ministry of your home – making space at our tables / in our living rooms.

A. We really need to recapture this Biblical fruit of salvation in our day. It’s counterculture. The world calls us to use our homes to COCOON. Not Scripture!

Hospitality is a sign of salvation. That’s why Biblically it’s an expectation of those who are in leadership in the church.

Hospitality is the way we GROW the church.

(iii) Hospitality is giving others PLACE in your life.

It is the opposite of extortion. It is serving others, not using them.

How can we convince people that we love them – not just want them to come to church so that our church gets stronger?

How can we convince people of other ethnicities that we love them, not just want them for our sake to make our church look differently – but that we love them AS PEOPLE? ... HOSPITALITY

So LEVI BEGINS TO SHOW A LIFE HEALED by Dr. Jesus!

III. SIN & SALVATION

Prior to meet Jesus, Levi was a LEPER, a PARALYTIC in love.

Let’s connect with the other 2 stories because they illustrate the impact of SIN in our life.

1. SIN ISOLATES US FROM PEOPLE. SIN IMMOBILIZES US.

(i) Before he met Jesus, Levi's life was the ANTITHESIS of hospitality!

A. He was like a LEPER! Lepers were outcasts in society. Levi was an outcast because of his own sinful choices.

B. Levi was a PARALYTIC. He could not walk in service to others. He was completely IMMOBILE in love.

Sin isolates us from people. Sin paralyzes us in love.

2. BUT JESUS IS GREATER THAN SIN & ITS EFFECTS. His life heals the sin-sick soul.

His love CONQUERS the disease that sin brings into our life!

That's the meaning of our healing stories!

(i) Just as Jesus broke through the ISOLATION in Levi's life, He broke through the isolation of the leper. HE TOUCHES THE LEPER.

Who does that? No one in his day! His love TAKES ON THE ISOLATING DISEASE of sin & touches it ... overcomes it.

A. *"If you are willing, you can heal me ... I am willing ... be clean!"*

The leper reengages into society &, despite being told to keep it hushed, can't help loving on God in such a way that other people are drawn to Jesus.

(ii) PARALYSIS too is an image for the effects of sin on our life. We are dead in sin (Eph. 3)

That's why Jesus first says to the paralytic: YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN. That word comes BEFORE He speaks the command to take up his mat & walk!

3. Jesus heals the paralysis & isolation of sin in the LIFE OF LOVE.

He HEALS by revealing a love that COMES TO YOU in those places, that TOUCHES you there.

(i) The FULL revelation of that love is the CROSS.

A. On the Cross Jesus became an outcast – a leper / a tax-collector – despised by men ... REJECTED ... ISOLATED

- So that he might reach you who feel outcast – either by your sins or the sins of others – to show He loves you – so that you'd hear his call to follow Him.

B. On the Cross, he became paralyzed, IMMOBOLIZED, NAILED INTO WOOD – to reveal God's love for you who are stuck in knowing how to love others ... and follow Him.

C. On the Cross, He allowed Himself to be completely USED by mankind – in order to be the servant of humanity – revealing our sins – and showing a love greater than them.

Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!

4. Jesus is a DOCTOR. His UNCONDITIONAL love breaks through sin and its disease. On the Cross, Jesus took on the leprosy; the paralysis; the extortion of sin – in order to reveal the fullness of God's love for you ... to pay for sin; to invite you to follow Him ... & BECOME YOUR HEALER.

IV. WHO JESUS HEALS

So we come back to Jesus' statement and our original questions:

It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

DO YOU NEED THE DOCTOR? HOW LONG'S IT BEEN SINCE YOU'VE SEEN HIM?

1. Obviously, it all depends on how you define health.

(i) By a number of standards, we're a pretty healthy people. We really are!
 Educationally - we're healthy – we have good schools;
 Socio-economically - pretty healthy.
 Family stability - we're healthy;
 We're certainly good citizens – obey laws of the land, pay taxes
 We give to society – help Roseland, Cary, DR

DO WE NEED JESUS? ... Honestly, DO WE NEED HIM today?

- That's not as TRITE a question as we might think it to be.

2. I think that the only way we answer that question AFFIRMATIVELY is by understanding the call of love and the impact of sin on the life of love.

(i) Love is what God's law is all about – Loving Him with all our heart, soul & strength; loving our neighbor as ourselves.

LOVE is what Jesus came to heal us in.

SIN IS FALLING SHORT IN LOVE. In that paradigm, can you see sickness?

3. LOVE IS HOSPITALITY – we prefer to keep our lives closed. We isolate, as if we have leprosy. We isolate as if others have leprosy.

LOVE IS REACHING THE OUTCAST / SINNERS – “tax-collectors” – do you look for those people Sunday mornings, Wednesday family night?

Can you recognize illness? We become discriminating in love like the Pharisees.

LOVE IS SERVING PEOPLE, NOT USING THEM – can you identify that illness in your heart. So many relationships at highschool are about the PECKING ORDER – using others for higher social status – Do you go to school to serve others?

Lust is using women to serve your needs – not serving them for God's good in their life. Pornography feeds it.

SIN PARALYZES US IN LOVE.

We've determined, as a church, that we want to love our community – especially cross-racially. Can you see how paralyzed we are in that?

Our social & educational systems isolate us from those needing love.

(i) In the paradigm of love's demands, we are weak, blind, leprous, paralyzed ... even extortionists!

4. As Levi's story makes clear, the REMEDY IS JESUS. It is not to try harder.

We overcome greed & lust by meeting Jesus – He is the healer

We overcome isolation by turning to Jesus – He is the healer

We overcome inhospitality by turning to Jesus

We overcome paralysis in love – by gathering in prayer and asking Jesus to come!

The issue in Christian growth is not to be GOOD. It's to be GOD'S!

Jesus IS THE HEALER!

(i) It's when we have HIM, that the fruit of the Spirit flow naturally

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control, even goodness.

= It was easy for LEVI THROWS A GREAT BANQUET FOR OTHERS – Why? Because he has Jesus!

V. CONCLUSION

DO YOU NEED THE DOCTOR?

HOW LONG'S IT BEEN SINCE YOU'VE SEEN HIM?

1. One great thing about Dr. Jesus – He still make house calls.

- Some of you grew up in a time when Doctors did that! Well, Jesus has never stopped!

2. Better yet, JESUS IS HERE. The Doctor's IN THE HOUSE. The healer's here.

Do you have a love-illness to speak to Him about?

Are you using someone more than serving them?

Are you feeling paralyzed or isolated in love?

JESUS IS PERFECT LOVE, JESUS IS FULL LOVE – revealed at the Cross.

He touches the isolated. He heals the paralyzed. He calls the extortionist.

He is willing

TURN TO HIM – He is with us – THE Doctor's in the house.

3. SONG – “Be Still for the Presence of the Lord”