

NOTES FROM PASTOR TIM'S SERMON –29th January 2023 am

NEW SERIES FROM LUKE'S GOSPEL "God's love for the lowest"

Part 7 "Who qualifies to be Jesus' disciples?"

Scripture references from the ESV

Luke 5: 1-11, 27-32 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷ They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."^[a] ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

²⁷ After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." ²⁸ And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. ²⁹ And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. ³⁰ And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" ³¹ And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

In his narrative of Jesus' life on earth, Luke is seeking to show us that Jesus came as a Saviour for all people who are descended from Adam. The series title is:

God's love for the lowest

because God's love reaches the people who are often considered unlovable, including us. This matters because:

- many people do not consider Jesus as relevant to them because they don't feel good enough, and think they have to clean themselves up before they can come to him, a task which is impossible
- God's people can be very good at making people in that category feel like outcasts

We are either so accepting of everyone that we fail to confront sin or we are so judgmental that we drive people away. We can be very inconsistent in our judgement so

- we may take a high moral line with things like adultery, breaking the rules around Sundays or LGBT lifestyles
- **but** we make excuses for ourselves and others when it comes to outbursts of anger, grumbling, gossip, greed, gluttony and discontent

We easily imagine ourselves to be righteous when we're just as unrighteous as everyone else, so ask yourself which of the above is true of you?

- Do you feel that you are too much of a sinner to come to Jesus, and perhaps religious people in the past have made you feel unworthy?
- Are you one of those with a judgmental attitude to those outside the church? Are there people groups towards whom you feel hostile rather than compassionate, who you would rather criticise than pray for and who you steer clear of because you feel you are above them?

Jesus, when confronted with criticism because he was reaching out to the unwelcome people groups, said: **Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.** ³² **I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance (vv31-2).**

When the Son of God came, he came for those who thought they weren't good enough, and he came for the

'unrighteous righteous' – those who think they're righteous but are not, because we are all sinners. He came to

restore us to the God from whom we are separated, the God who created us and to whom we owe allegiance.

- Ultimately, sin is not what we do wrong but the fact of our separation from God.

Jesus exposed sin, but in a way that would lead people to come to him. When they did, he turned their lives around so that they were changed. As we look at how he did this we will see that:

**the only qualification we need to come to Jesus is to know and admit that we are
helpless sinners**

1. **Jesus calls humble sinners (vv1-11 above).** Peter, James and John were fishermen who became the main leaders in Jesus' ministry team. Because of the crowds, Jesus made use of Peter's boat as a pulpit and when he had finished teaching them, he told Peter to put his nets out to catch fish. Responding in obedience (v5), Peter found that he caught more fish than ever before. Jesus had performed a miracle and Peter responded thus (v8):

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Before this, Peter might have thought himself to be an upright moral man. He was a Jew who attended synagogue worship, keeping Sabbath and the dietary requirements of God's law.

Yet as soon as he was confronted with the power of God incarnate, he saw himself as the sinner he was. He didn't say he had sinned – rather he declared himself to be a sinful man.

Like all who really encounter the living God, Peter was scared for his life. He knew, that in the light of God's holiness, he was a sinner who deserved eternal death.

He sought to deal with his guilt by asking Jesus to go away, because the presence of the living God exposed his sin and made him feel his guilt. One reason why we often sit in judgement over others is because we have never actually seen ourselves in the light of God's holiness.

- We know deep down that we are sinners but we deal with guilt by pointing the finger at people we think are worse than us.
- When God by his Spirit comes near, and we feel the weight of his holiness, then we know we are guilty.

It is a scary place to be – exposed and naked before God’s all-seeing, glorious holy eyes, with nowhere to hide.

Yet when Peter humbly confesses that he is a sinner, Jesus reassures him (v10 above).

Confession of sin doesn’t drive Jesus away.

The amazing fact is that humble acknowledgement of being a sinner opens the way into a life of acceptance with Jesus.

2. Jesus calls total outcasts. The next encounter Luke records is with an unnamed leper. **While he (Jesus) was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy (5:12).** In those days, leprosy was always fatal unless treated and it was highly contagious. Lepers were quarantined and not allowed to come into close contact with anyone. They were total outcasts. Yet this leper knew something that most modern people are unwilling to accept.

This leper knew that Jesus could heal him

He knew that Jesus had the power to heal him, but, in his humility, he did not know whether Jesus would be willing to heal an outcast such as him. He still asked, however: **Lord, if you will, you can make me clean (5:12).** No one is supposed to touch a leper, yet not only did he speak healing over the man but

Jesus reached out to touch the untouchable

It was an act of love extended to a total outcast, which would bring him back into the community of God’s people.

Jesus wasn’t repulsed by what others found repulsive

Many in churches sat in judgement over homosexual men infected by the AIDS virus in the 80s. If those men had come to him, Jesus’ reaction would have been very different. He would have done what he did with the leper and said **‘I will; be clean’.** (5:13)

This is the God we worship

3. Jesus calls the socially unacceptable (vv27-32 above). We know Levi better as Matthew. The name Levi tells us that he was a Jew, but he had sold out to the Roman occupiers, working for them as a tax collector. Paid by the Romans, he would have got rich by taking more money than people actually owed and keeping it for himself. For both these reasons, tax collectors were hated. The religious leaders saw them as traitors to the Jewish faith, people who would make

you morally unclean if you associated with them. No priest would have let a tax collector into the temple to worship God and no Rabbi would invite a tax collector to be his disciple.

Jesus does, though. Not only does he make friends with Matthew, but he also makes friends with Matthew's associates. (v29 above). When Jesus sat down to eat with Matthew and his friends, it was a way of showing that he accepted these outcasts from society as part of his family. The fact that they were unacceptable to their culture was no hindrance to them becoming friends with God (v30 above)

All the people in these three groups are the people Jesus came to save by dying on the cross. They have this in common:

- They are all sinners who have in some way been affected by sin and therefore they all need God's forgiveness and restoration.

Their acknowledgement of their sin, their cry of faith for help and their need for forgiveness

were the only qualifications they needed to experience Christ's forgiveness and friendship.

How are we meant to respond?

a) **We need to take notice of the warning of Jesus.** The only people who need to be afraid of their sin in the presence of Jesus are those who seek to cover over their sin themselves.

- Jesus is **not** saying: You're ok because you go to church and do the religious stuff
- Jesus is **not** saying: Some of you are righteous, while some of you are sinners

Instead, he is highlighting the difference between those who know they are sinners and those who won't accept that they are sinners.

The latter appeal to their good works and religious activity as a way of justifying themselves before God, as the Pharisees did, looking down on those they consider to be sinners according to their own rules. The 'unrighteous righteous' will not come in to the light of God's holiness to have their heart exposed, nor will they confess their guilt to God or anyone else. They always have to put on a mask of religious good works and respectability so that they look good to others and people think well of them.

If that describes you, then Jesus' warning is for you. You are in a worse state than the sinners who know they are sinners and come to Christ confessing their sin and seeking his forgiveness and healing.

- Ask yourself this: when you die and stand before God, what will you say when he asks why he should let you in to his home? If you begin by talking about what you have done, then you have not understood the gospel.

b) We need to take notice of the call of Jesus. His call is a call to repentance. We can see this worked out in the life of Matthew (v28 above). His life had been one of greed, deceit, theft and covetousness but when he heard the call of Jesus, he left that life behind and followed Jesus into a new life. He could never go back to his old life

because no one would employ him again.

The point was (and is) that friendship with Jesus is better than the life we leave behind.

With Jesus there is forgiveness for sin, a guilty conscience cleansed and a treasure that doesn't last just for this life but is eternal.

The ache in Matthew's heart that he had tried to fill by pursuing everything money could buy had been

filled through coming to know Christ.

There is nothing that can keep you from Christ except your pride in your own righteousness. If you have heard the call of Jesus, you can come as Peter, Matthew and the leper did.

That call of Jesus is a call to repentance. When Jesus calls us to himself, he does not leave us in our sin. He calls us out of it to follow him into a life of obedience and a life of ongoing repentance. We are to continually:

- Confess sin and our failure to be satisfied in Christ alone
- We are to seek him daily, even hourly, to cover all our transgressions rather than seeking to cover them ourselves.

c) We need to take notice of the compassion of Jesus. You may think that you are so bad that no one would want to come near. It may be that past hurt caused by

judgmental Christians has left you feeling you are untouchable. You are not untouchable. In his compassion, Jesus reaches out to all:

- To the humble sinner
- To the total outcast
- To the socially unacceptable
- Even to the unrighteous righteous

That is the compassion of Christ