

## LUKE 5-6:11

### 5: 1-11 – Jesus Calls the First Disciples

Jesus doesn't just do ministry on his own. He calls disciples, beginning with three who will become his closest: Peter, James and John. He uses their trade as fishermen, to call them to a different profession – fishing for human beings rather than fish.

From the very beginning, they have a deep respect and reverence for Jesus. Peter calls him 'Master', and even against his own judgement, casts the fishing nets out into the water again because Jesus asks him. Upon witnessing what he experiences as a miracle, Peter feels deeply his unworthiness: "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Peter is not worthy of the regard Jesus has shown him. Yet this is the pattern Jesus will follow throughout his ministry. Jesus accepts, forgives, heals and loves people first and they respond with faith, repentance and a desire to serve and give all.

### 5: 12-16 – Jesus cleanses a Leper

To be healed by Jesus is to participate in the healing with a cry for help, faith in what's possible, and a response of gratitude and inner change. A man calls to Jesus and challenges Jesus to 'choose' to heal him, believing Jesus can do something. Jesus chooses to heal him. He then tells the man to show himself to the priest so that he could be publicly declared clean and fit for joining human community again. Leprosy, like other diseases, makes a person unclean and therefore unfit to be around other people where they may come into contact. Jesus is breaking through all the prisons that keep people stuck in illness of spirit (sin), mind (demon possession) and body (disease).

### 5: 17-26 – Jesus heals a Paralytic

In this case, the initiative comes from the sick man's friends. Their faith not only causes them to bring their friend to Jesus, but to even go through the trouble of getting him down through the roof, given all the crowd blocking access through the front door. Jesus praises 'their' faith and heals the man, who receives the healing.

John the Baptist challenged people to repent. God would provide the forgiveness. In Jesus' case, he proclaims the forgiveness even before there is any sign of repentance. Coming to Jesus for healing is need enough. Forgiveness becomes the inspiration to live a holy life, healed and renewed. But does this mean Jesus is usurping the place of God? What about the whole temple sacrifice system for forgiveness of sins? Jesus is breaking all the rules and crossing boundaries. The religious officials are justifiably upset. Who does he think he is? Forgiving sins is an even more astonishing act than healing the body.

## 5: 27-32 – Jesus calls Levi

He is Levi here and 'Matthew' in Matthew's gospel. Another boundary Jesus is crossing is breaking bread with notorious sinners according to the religious rules and social opinion. Tax-collectors weren't good people. They were greedy and abusive in their power to collect taxes. By choosing to call one of them, Jesus would not make a good impression of his disciples. Yet if Jesus is all about showing the effects of divine forgiveness, how powerful it is to have a notorious sinner accept the call and in joy have a party inviting Jesus and all his friends. How many of them will change their lives? Probably not many as they are attached to their money even if it's dirty money. Levi, though, is ready for change and Jesus doesn't put up any barriers for him to join them. Once again, the officials are scandalized. What religion is Jesus teaching the people?

## 5: 33-39 – The Question about Fasting

Jesus is impossible to figure out. The religious officials are trying to understand, but understand not because they are open, but because he is a threat to all they are teaching. According to them, the way to restore Israel to God and bring about redemption is for Israel to become more religious in following the rituals and rules developed over centuries. Notorious sinners are a drag on the whole. Jesus' way of forgiving everyone who simply comes to him is undermining Israel's true hope in their point of view.

But Jesus tells them and the whole crowd present that he is the bridegroom (God's own messiah or Son of God come to liberate the people from their Exodus slavery) and it's not a time to fast (repentant act of sorrow for sin). There will be time later to fast, but now is the time to celebrate what God is doing among them through Jesus. Second, Jesus is like new wine you can't fit into the old wineskins of tradition or expectation of the Messiah and his mission. If you want to understand Jesus, throw out your old ideas and listen to the new ones. They are what God has always intended.

## 6: 1-5 – The Question about the Sabbath

Is Jesus just disrespectful of the Sabbath, or is he changing the priorities of what's important. To observe the Sabbath properly is to feed the hungry and heal the sick. Moreover, being who he is - "the Son of Man" (an ancient term found in Daniel referring to the Messiah to come) – he defines (he is Lord) what Sabbath observance is all about. Either Jesus is the most blasphemously arrogant peasant that ever walked the earth, or else...

## 6: 6-11 – The Man with the Withered Hand

Healing is work. The Sabbath is supposed to be a day of rest. But what if there is a man who has been sick for far too long? Jesus and the religious officials are at total odds on the matter. Jesus is breaking all the rules and claiming he has the divine authority to do it. And even worse, people are listening to him and following him. He must be stopped.