

Tommy Meador / General

Gospel of Luke / Luke 5:17-32

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## Introduction

- [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/india-hug-cows-valentines-day\\_n\\_63e51f42e4b07f036b9b338c](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/india-hug-cows-valentines-day_n_63e51f42e4b07f036b9b338c) Hug a cow? How about eat a cow?
- Everybody has an opinion as to what you need to find happiness, contentment, joy, etc. World thinks it knows what you need: money, sex, power, follow your heart, etc.
- You have an opinion of what you need to find happiness: a family that gets along, get out of debt, a week of vacation, etc.
- Do you really know what you need in this life because what you think you will always be what you pursue the most.
- By the way you do not passionately pursue your relationship with Jesus, an indicator that you don't think you need Jesus.
- The truth of the Christian faith: Jesus knows exactly what you need, and He knows how to give you what you need.
- Two shocking stories which Jesus demonstrates that Jesus knows how to give you what you need. What do you need from Jesus? Two gifts of Jesus that He knows you need. Two gifts that you need to embrace this morning.

## Jesus knows you need real forgiveness.

- Jesus returns to Capernaum. Probably returns to Peter's house
- Crowd gathers - Jesus preaches the Word - truth about Himself.

- Small home - maybe 75 people - shoulder to shoulder - listening. People outside looking in the window, blocking the door, etc. The scribes have a front row seat - waiting to hear Jesus say something that they didn't agree with.
- A paralyzed man - Jesus is his only hope. Four friends bring him to the home - who knows how long they traveled - they loved their friend, and they wanted to see him healed.
- Discouragement - they can't get in. Turn around and go home? What if Jesus leaves town again? What if this is their only opportunity?
- Climb to the roof - most houses had staircase on outside leading to a roof made of branches and sod. Making an opening would not have been difficult.
- Imagine the scene - you're a scribe sitting on the front row, a little dirt falls on you, you look up, and all of a sudden a hole in the roof. Four men frantically lowering their friend. **Jesus stands there and smiles - He sees their faith. (vs. 5)**
- The hope of the paralyzed man as he sees Jesus: "If I can only walk again..." I imagine that he thought if he could only walk again... Life would be good if he could just walk... BUT... getting what you want in this life might improve your circumstances but getting what you want does not guarantee a better life.
- Jesus words shock everyone - "Son, your sins are forgiven." **You could have heard a pin drop. Shocking!** Friends are disappointed. "Huh?" The hope of the paralyzed man quickly fades away. Scribes outraged. "Blasphemy!"
- Why the outrage? In the minds of the scribes, Jesus has no authority to forgive. Only God does... "Your sins are forgiven..." implies that the man had sinned against Jesus. For Jesus to say your sins are forgiven - Jesus was claiming to be God. The scribes know the rituals atone for sins, and this isn't it! Forgiveness is granted at the temple, with a priest, and a sacrifice. BUT... God is not at the the physical temple - the temple is standing before the paralyzed man. The God-man who would go the cross as a sacrifice for this man.

- The paralytic's greatest need wasn't physical but spiritual. **Your greatest need isn't physical but spiritual. We think our biggest problems are outside of us:**
  - What someone has done to us. The hurt someone has caused us.
  - The poor health that you face that you can do nothing about.
  - The lack of resources that you have because you don't have the ability to get a good paying job.
  - The lack of support you get from your family.
  - These problems pale in comparison to the problem inside of you... The problem inside of you can send you to eternal death.
- We think our biggest needs are the things that everyone else has that we want: a happy family, a bigger house, a nicer car, a finished degree, a bigger retirement account, cheap eggs, etc. Your biggest need is not to have your desires met. Your greatest need is forgiveness of your sin.
- Jesus could take away your bad circumstances. He could give you a better job, heal your sicknesses, or deposit money in your bank account. **Changing your life circumstances doesn't change your eternal destiny.**
- **Why do I need forgiveness?** The story of the Bible... We can't get it right... (You think you can get it right, but it's always short lived.) Sin = a total assault on the character of God. Sin says, "God, I know you created me. I know you know what's best for me, but my way is better than your way. I defy you. Your way is not good. My way is. I will create my own identity and kingdom apart from you." You have sinned thousands upon thousands of times, and you are guilty. God is holy and just. He must judge sin. He must punish you for your rebellion. But, He provides a way to escape punishment and instead experience forgiveness, new life, and life eternal. This is the Good News! God loves you, and He knows what you really need! A Savior!
- **Real love sees real need - but do you see your need?** Jesus has the power to give you anything you want, but He chooses to give you forgiveness - what you need. Do you see how much Jesus loves you?

He was crucified so that through His death what's killing you might be destroyed.

- **You'll have one of three responses to this message of forgiveness:**
  - **Anger** - Scribes angry because God alone can forgive sins, and by claiming to forgive sins Jesus is equating Himself with God. For the scribes, this is blasphemy! You're angry because: Self-righteous OR self-sufficient. (Who are you to tell me I'm a sinner?) We live in a culture that does NOT want to be told there is absolute truth - we want to define what's right and what's wrong. Not the way it works. You don't want to be told you're wrong either - because you don't want to be right.
  - **Ambivalence - The crowd: always present but never changed.** Could that be many of us? We're not unaware of the Gospel or opposed to it. But, we're not desperate because we haven't come to Jesus for what we need. Why are you here today? The positive environment, the friendships you desire, what your kids are offered, because it's the right thing to do, or because you know you need the reminders of grace and forgiveness - you need Jesus. Many in the crowd were there to hear and see, but many would never see their need for repentance. You're here for the show but not forgiveness. You gather to see and experience but not deeply affected.
  - **Amazement** - Jesus reads the minds of the scribes (vs. 6-8). They were fuming on the inside. Jesus speaks: It's easy to say the words, it is more difficult to actually heal. But, Jesus heals to show His power - to prove He is God, and as God, He has the authority to forgive sins - to completely pardon. Imagine the amazement of the paralytic when Jesus told him to get up. Imagine the amazement when it registered in his mind that not only was he physically whole but spiritually. Imagine the amazement of the friends and others who began to realize they were in the presence of God. Jesus doesn't tell the healed man to stay silent - Jesus wants people to know that this is why He came - to forgive sins.
  - What is your response to the offer of forgiveness? 1. Humble acceptance. 2. Worship 3. Forgiveness of others. You know you are

amazed by the forgiveness of Jesus when you are willing to forgive. If unwilling, you don't understand forgiveness.

## Jesus knows you need a real friend.

- The first story was shocking, and the second is perhaps even more shocking. Jesus is teaching and walking. He walks by Levi. Levi sits in a tax booth.
- Levi is not a likely candidate for discipleship. Not someone you would invite to join your D Group.
- **Tax collectors hated.** Levi is a Jew who collects taxes for Rome (their oppressors.) Imagine, Russia invades America, and everywhere you look, Russian soldiers walking the streets, asserting their authority, and your neighbor says, "I think I'm going to work for them. They pay well." You'd hate him!
- Jesus' bold move - Calls him out of the booth - in broad daylight. Calls him to follow. Levi has probably heard of Jesus, but he knows his lot in life. Why would the most famous man in Galilee choose to associate with Levi? Everyone shocked! No Jew associates with a traitor like Levi! But, Jesus has come to be a friend to sinners.
- After leaving everything to follow Jesus, Levi invites his friends to meet Jesus. He's so excited about his new friend, Jesus, and what Jesus has done for him. He wants his other tax collector friends to experience Jesus.
- Jesus goes to Levi's home - In 1st century Jewish culture, sharing a meal in someone's home was an intimate expression of friendship. Jesus eats with sinners - people who don't obey the Mosaic law - that don't live to God's standards or live out the religion the Pharisees think they should live out. Jesus is a friend of sinners ([Luke 7:34](#)). (Doesn't mean Jesus likes a good party, or that he overlooks are sin, but that He wants to change sinners like He changed Levi.)
- Pharisees infuriated - undoubtedly jealous. The most famous man in Galilee should be eating with them and applauding them for their

righteousness. **Instead, Jesus is embarrassing them - points out the flaws in their teaching.**

- Shocking statement: (vs. 17) - Jesus came not for self-righteous, but those who were aware of their real needs.
- **Beware of thinking you're someone you are not.** If you think you're a good person who has his act together, Jesus is not for you. He's not for cultural Christians who think faith is simply living a moral life and having a half-hearted commitment to the church but never really saying, "Lord, I need your grace." Jesus is a friend of sinners ([Luke 7:34](#)). Present, available, desiring to help us. What a friend we have in Jesus!
- **Beware of shaming people who are in the same condition you're in.** Instead, befriend the people you are tempted to shame.
- If you are a sinner who knows you are not right, Jesus is for you! He desires to be your friend. **Two beautiful truths about the friendship of Jesus:**
  - **Jesus was willing to be humiliated for you.** Jesus did not care what the religious elite or the crowd thought about His actions. He didn't care that associating with the lowliest in society was going to cost Him relationships with the elite of society. **Jesus didn't come to win the approval of man. He came to love and save mankind.** Ultimately, He humiliated Himself by going to a cross and dying in the place of sinful man. He humiliated Himself by being stripped and beaten and being hung between common criminals; all because of love.
  - Jesus is a true friend, and you've been called to imitate his friendship! To get involved in the lives of people that society looks down on - that no one else wants to associate with - all for the sake of the love of Christ.
  - Relational investment into people who need a friend is more important than superficial credibility in the eyes of others. What others think about you is nowhere near as important than you imitating Jesus passion for others.

- **Jesus was willing to commit to you.** What I love about Levi's story is that Jesus doesn't simply have dinner with Levi and let him get back to his tax collecting. Jesus commits to Levi - Levi is Matthew - one of the twelve - the Gospel writer! Jesus committed to Levi's complete transformation! And, Jesus has committed to you as well! (And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. [Phil. 1:6](#))
- There's another banquet coming. (And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." [Revelation 19:9](#)) **At that banquet, Jesus is going to feast again with invited guests. Those guests will be people like Levi - sinners. People like you and me. People who have seen that our greatest need wasn't physical but spiritual. We will sit around the table with Jesus and we will all have one thing in common - grace. Not one of us will deserve to sit at the table, but we will be there, because like Levi, Jesus came calling. He invited us to follow Him and we responded in faith.** We will be there because He committed to us - He committed to save us through His death and resurrection, and He committed to grow us into His disciples. A few questions:
  - Will you be at the banqueting table? Have you seen your need for grace? Have you given your life to the One who died and rose for you?
  - Who is your Levi? This passage calls us to imitate! Who will you humiliate yourself for? Who will you commit to?