

The Gospel of Luke
An Invitation to a Changed Life (Luke 5:27-39)
Following Jesus will change your life.

Open and Hook (?min)

In the Gospel of Luke we hear story after story of the outsiders of the world being called IN to a life with Christ.

They were the ones that had some of the lowliest jobs (and often the smelliest) like the shepherds and the fishermen.

But even the fishermen knew they were better than those traitors who robbed their own people, like the tax collectors. Or so they thought . . .

Jesus called the tax collectors too.

You see tax collectors collected taxes from the citizens to give to Rome and were also expected to take a commission for themselves.

Most of the tax collectors overcharged and kept even more profits for themselves.

Therefore, tax collectors were hated by the Jews because of their reputation for cheating and because of their alliance with Rome.

Today in Luke we're going to read about a tax collector that Jesus called to follow Him, *Many of you probably already know his name* . . . Matthew (who wrote his own book of the Bible too).

In Luke's story Matthew is still called Levi, but His life is about to change.

PRAY

Turn to Luke 5:27-32

This story picks up after Jesus has called the fishermen, Peter, James, and John to follow Him and He has been healing many people around Galilee.

***Luke 5:27-32**

27Later, as Jesus left the town, he saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at his tax collector's booth. **"Follow me and be my disciple,"** Jesus said to him. **28**So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.

Matthew (Levi) likely knew that when he left his tax collector's booth he would be guaranteeing himself unemployment, and yet he didn't hesitate for even a moment.

Many of the other disciples could always return to fishing, but for Matthew there was no turning back.

He left everything to follow Jesus.

He left behind an old life to begin a new, better life.

Because he knew that

***Following Jesus leads to a changed life.**

29 Later, Levi held a banquet in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor. Many of Levi's fellow tax collectors and other guests also ate with them. 30 But the Pharisees and their teachers of religious law complained bitterly to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with such scum?"

31 Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. 32 I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent."

The first thing Matthew does after leaving to follow Jesus is to have a party and invite all his fellow "outsider" friends.

He was demonstrating a posture of pursuit.

Of pursuing others and inviting them into a space to get to know Jesus.

That's the same thing we do when we invite others to church or into conversations about Jesus.

I love that our church believes in a posture of pursuit.

We will do anything (except sin) to reach others to know Jesus.

How many of you in this room are here because you were invited by someone else at one time?

I was invited to this church. Then I was invited out to dinner with people from church. And then I was invited into a Life Group where I developed even deeper relationships with people who have become my good friends.

This church has become my family, a place where I know that I will hear the Word being preached and be able to worship God together. Being a part of a church that is devotedly following Jesus has changed my life. And it all began with an invitation.

When we talk about evangelism and inviting others to church or even into conversations about Jesus we can sometimes feel apprehensive.

Maybe you've had thoughts like I know I have:

- I don't really know anybody else outside of my circle of Christian friends.
- I'm nervous about talking to people I don't know.
- I'm afraid I'll say the wrong thing.

These are all perfectly normal concerns to have.

I have good news though.

I have some ways to help us overcome these thoughts and have a posture of pursuit.

***Having a posture of pursuit. (3 bullet points)**

- First, pray. Just as in all things we should pray first.
 - o Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your conversations and give you the right words to say, wherever you are, or whoever you're talking to.
 - o He knows exactly what you need to say.
 - o When you are filled with the Holy Spirit you will be empowered with boldness to speak.
- Second, don't be discouraged if they say no.
 - o Sometimes you're just the one that's planting the seed, and someone else might be the one to water it. And God is the one who helps it grow.
 - o 1 Corinthians 3:7-9 says, "It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both

will be rewarded for their own hard work. For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building."

- And remember, even if someone isn't ready to come to church or have a conversation with you yet, it doesn't mean that it will never happen.
- We need to rely on God's timing, whether you're the seed planter or the waterer.
- Finally, listen for who God is leading you to.
 - God may be opening the doors to inviting the grocery store clerk or the mechanic or your dentist. Because the Gospel is truly for Everyone.
 - I believe you'll find that God has also already placed some people in your life who are searching for Him.
 - It could be that they are searching for a church or maybe they're already in church and need a life group or it could be someone who's searching for a relationship with Jesus.
 - You may already have some people coming to your mind right now.
 - Maybe you realized there are some friends or family members that you are thinking about.

So I want to take a moment for you to write down 3 names (or more if you'd like):

***Who will you invite?**

- **One person to invite to church**
- **One person to invite into a Life Group**
- **One person to invite into a conversation about Jesus.**

Wait 1 minute for people to write names.

Keep these names somewhere where you'll see them and pray over them every day.

Then listen and watch for the ways that God is working and be ready for whoever God leads you to.

***Following Him will change your life and the lives of others.**

I want to read verses 31-32 again using the Message version of the Bible:

*³¹⁻³² Jesus heard about it and spoke up, “Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? I’m here inviting outsiders, not insiders—an invitation to a changed life, changed inside and out.”

Let’s continue in Luke 5:33-39 to see what else Jesus says.

*^{Luke 5:33-39}

³³One day some people said to Jesus, “John the Baptist’s disciples fast and pray regularly, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees. Why are your disciples always eating and drinking?”

³⁴Jesus responded, “Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not.

³⁵But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

³⁶Then Jesus gave them this illustration: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and uses it to patch an old garment. For then the new garment would be ruined, and the new patch wouldn’t even match the old garment.

³⁷”And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the new wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. ³⁸New wine must be stored in new wineskins. ³⁹But no one who drinks the old wine seems to want the new wine. ‘The old is just fine,’ they say.”

In this passage I want us to focus on these last few verses where Jesus is talking about new wine.

In biblical times, wine was not kept in glass bottles but in goatskins that were sewn around the edges to form watertight bags.

New wine expanded as it fermented, stretching its wineskin.

After the wine had aged, the stretched skin would burst if more new wine was poured into it.

New wine, therefore, was always put into new wineskins.

Jesus is saying this because he didn’t just come to patch up the old rigid ways of religion and tradition in Judaism.

His purpose was to fulfill it and start something new.

Jesus Christ, God’s Son, came to earth to offer ALL PEOPLE forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God.

Maybe you feel that your heart has become rigid too, that you can’t change.

We need to keep our hearts pliable so we can accept Jesus' life-changing message.

Just like Matthew found out when he began to follow Jesus, we too are given a new life.

A life of love and acceptance – even of our flaws.

No, this life will not always be easy.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10

8We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. 9We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. 10Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

***We are a work in progress, but we're also given a new purpose.**

God has given each of skills and abilities to grow and utilize in His Kingdom now.

It's through these gifts that we build up the church body (not the building, and not just filling up seats), but truly inviting others into a life of following Jesus.

Because even in our suffering He promises hope and encouragement for a future where there will be no more suffering and all things will be made new – new bodies, new hearts, a new life.

This future is promised to all people who believe in Him.

He begins the work in us now, and through faith we look forward to living forever with God in His glory.

****Slide -- Following Jesus will change your life***

I want to share one last story of invitation. This one is about my dad. As a teenager my dad didn't know Jesus and was heading down a darker path of life . . . but he was invited to church by a good friend.

He went to church and finally understood why his friend was so "different."

He wanted that difference, **that peaceful presence**, for his own life and accepted Jesus into his heart.

It was at this same church that he met and married my mom.

He chose to follow Jesus and raise his children in a life with Christ too.

This simple invitation from one young friend to another was life-changing for my dad, and without it, I would not have been born.

Invitations are powerful.

PRAY

***QUESTION:**

In what ways do recognize Jesus inviting you to follow Him?

Benediction – **2 Corinthians 5:17-18**

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.