

“Jesus Demonstrates His Grace”
(Luke 5:27-39)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning,

We saw Jesus heal the paralytic

To show that He has authority

As the Son of God to forgive sin.

We also looked at

His cleansing of the man covered with leprosy –

Not only as an act of pure compassion,

But as a picture of what the Lord does for us spiritually:

We all came into the world

Spiritual lepers and outcasts from God’s kingdom;

But because of what Jesus has done,

The Father was willing to reach out

And take hold of in His mercy,

Cleanse us of our rottenness/corruption

And bring us into His family,

Through trust in Jesus Christ.

This is what God gives in His grace:

Now what we deserve –

Justice for our hatred and sin –

But what we don’t deserve –

Forgiveness, righteousness,

And a welcome into His family,

Because of what Jesus earned.

B. Preview.

This evening,

We see Our Lord show His grace

In several more ways.

II. Sermon.

A. First, we see it in His calling Levi (v. 27).

Jesus now calls His fifth disciple –

This time, a tax collector –

A man by the name of Levi –

Who is also known as Matthew:

The apostle who would later write

The Gospel by the same name.

Levi was not only a traitor to God –

As we all are as we come into the world –

He was a traitor to his own people.

He was paying the Roman government –

As all tax collectors did –

For the right to farm his own people:

To collect taxes from them

Not only for Rome's benefit,

But for his own.

That's why the Jews hated tax-collectors

As much as they hated Gentiles.

But this didn't stop Jesus

From reaching out to this tax collector in His mercy.

He came to Levi

While he was sitting in his tax booth –

His tax office –

And said to him, “Follow Me” (v. 27).

This was first of all an offer of eternal life:

“Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If *anyone* wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and *follow Me*’” (Matt. 16:24).

The fact that Jesus made this offer

To one of the most despised class of Jews

Is to remind us:

That we are not to withhold

God's offer of mercy

Even from the worst of men –

When Jesus tells us

We shouldn't cast our pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6),

He's talking about those we're tried to reach out to,

But who have repeatedly rejected and despised the Gospel.

This was second of all *a call to apostleship*:

It isn't yet clear that this is what He intended,

But it will shortly (Luke 6:15).

It's a great privilege just to receive

The Gospel call to salvation –

Not everyone has even this much –

But how much more is it

To be called to be one of the twelve?

This is our Lord's grace:

He calls the lowest and most despised

To make them princes in His kingdom.

B. Second, we see His grace

In making this call powerful to save him (v. 28).

Jesus said on one occasion,

“Many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14).

There are many more

Who will be called by the Gospel –

Who will hear the outward call,

In churches and evangelistic outreaches –

Than will respond to that call –

Who will receive the inward call:

The new birth from the Holy Spirit

That makes the outward call powerful to save –

Relatively few are chosen by God to eternal life.

Levi was one of these.

We see this from his response:

“And he left everything behind, and got up and *began* to follow Him” (v. 28).

This is what Peter and Andrew,

And James and John also did

When the Lord called them:

They left everything –

Their fishing boats and nets –

And they followed Jesus.

This is the difference

Between those who come savingly to Jesus,

And those who merely believe the facts.

Those who receive

The saving grace of the Spirit

Love Jesus enough

To give up everything to follow Him –

Even their own lives, if necessary –

While those who don't

Can't bring themselves to make this sacrifice –

Isn't that what we see in the rich young ruler:

Jesus called him to do the same as Levi,

But, “He went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property” (Matt. 19:21).

We know we have the inward call –

That we are born again of the Spirit –

When we are willing to give all we have to Him.

And if we are, it's purely by His grace.

C. Third, we see Jesus' grace in His willingness

To reach out to other sinners (v. 29).

When Levi left everything to follow Jesus,

He didn't lose everything –

Just as Peter still had a house,

So did Levi –

And he used it to honor Jesus.

He held a large reception

For Jesus in his house,

And used the opportunity

To invite his associates

To come and hear Him.

When our Lord brings us to Himself,

We're often embarrassed to tell others

About our change of life and direction –

To be His witnesses –

Levi wasn't:

He wanted his friends to hear Jesus

That they might also receive His mercy and forgiveness.

Here again, we see our Lord's grace:

Even though this reception

Brought together the less desirables –

Tax-collectors, sinners –

He still came.

He came that He might bring them the Gospel,

And that they might have life.

We are to do the same,

As we see in the next point:

D. Fourth, we see His grace

In answering His enemies' questions:

The scribes and Pharisees (vv. 30-35).

The first thing they wanted to know

Was why *He* was there –

A Rabbi eating and drinking

With these kinds of people –

Present company excluded, of course –

Jesus didn't just ignore them –

Though He might justly have done so,

Since they were only trying to trap Him –

But graciously answered –

Even a reply

That's meant to be a mild rebuke

Can be gracious,

If the intention behind it is to do them good:

He said, "*It is* not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (vv. 31-32).

The Pharisees spent their time with each other –

Those they considered to be righteous –

But pulled their skirts in

When they passed by someone

Who was unclean.

Jesus was saying

That as God's children

We're not to avoid sinners,

But take to them the medicine

They need to be made well –

As the church,

We're not called simply

To fellowship with each other –

Those who are well through the Gospel –

We are to go to those who are sick:

We are to be gracious as our Lord is gracious.

E. Fifth, we see the Lord's grace

In His granting His disciples

A time of blessing, before making them face

The trials that were coming (vv. 33-35).

It's not clear which group asked this next question:

“And they said to Him, ‘The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the *disciples* of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink’” (v. 33).

It seems to exclude

Both the disciples of John,
 And the Pharisees,
 Since they're both included in the implied question.

It may have come from the tax-collectors
 Or the other "sinners" that were there:
 Perhaps the Spirit was beginning to work in their hearts
 Because of Jesus' ministry –

That doesn't matter,

As much as Jesus' response: "You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? But *the* days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days" (vv. 35-36).

John had taught his disciples to fast;
 The Pharisees and their disciples also fasted –

The one who went up to the Temple
 At the same time as the tax-collector
 Boasted that he fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12) –

John's disciples fasted for the coming of God's kingdom
 And the strength to serve the Lord faithfully;
 The Pharisees so they could put on a show
 And tell themselves how righteous they were (Matt. 6:16).

But Jesus had not yet made fasting part of His discipleship:
 Why?

First, because He was still with them.

These were days of rejoicing –
When He/the Bridegroom
Was with them/the bride –
How could they humble themselves
And fast and seek the Lord
While He was there?

The days were coming
When the Bridegroom would be taken away –
When He would be crucified, die and be buried;
When He would be raised again,
And ascend forty days later,
To leave them to face the world
And its hostility against them –
Then they would fast,
To find the strength they needed
To do His work.

Jesus illustrates this in three parables (vv. 36-39).
The parable of new cloth on an old garment (v. 36);
Of new wine into old wineskins (vv. 37-38);
And of preferring old wine to new (v. 39).

In the same way
That no one would put new cloth on an old garment,
Or new wine in old wineskins,
So pressing these new converts

Into the rigors of a more advanced Christianity

Would injure them

And those they sought to serve with.

And in the same way

That those who are used to old wine

Don't want to drink new

Because the old is good enough,

So the disciples weren't yet ready

For this more serious road,

But would be brought there

Little by little by Jesus.

When the Lord first saves us,

He gives us a bit of a honeymoon period,

When He gently brings us along

And allows us to grow;

Before He takes us out of His greenhouse,

Places us in the world,

And lays on us the greater responsibilities

Of service in His kingdom.

He is patient with us –

Because He's gracious –

And so we need to learn

To be patient with ourselves,

And with each other,

As the Lord brings us along

And causes us to grow

Little by little into His image.

May He give us the grace

To be gracious as He is gracious. Amen.

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