

OpenTheo

Luke 5:12 - 5:39



Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

Transcript

Last time we got into Luke 5, but we didn't get out of it. We got 11 verses in, and that was the story of Jesus calling the four fishermen. And so we now know of four disciples that Jesus had, but actually there were quite a few more than that.

John's Gospel tells us that these were not the first four. In John chapter 1, Philip and Nathanael had already been called to follow Jesus, so he had at least six at this time. We're only going to read about the call of one other one, and that's Matthew, and that comes later on here in chapter 5. So we have record of seven of the disciples called individually, but we know that he eventually had a lot of disciples, and twelve that he called apostles, as we shall see in chapter 6. In chapter 6, he calls twelve to be apostles out of a larger group.

Five of those twelve, we don't know anything about the time of their joining Jesus, and therefore some of them might have by this time, since we don't have any record of when they did, he might have a rather large number at this point. We are only told the specific stories of the call of certain ones, whose circumstances of their call are apparently considered to be worth mentioning. These four that were called certainly became the most important of the twelve in later stories.

Three of them, Peter, James, and John, are what we would call the inner circle of the disciples. When Jesus did some things with a few disciples, and not all of them, it was Peter, James, and John. When he went up on the Mount of Transfiguration, it was Peter, James, and John that went up with him.

When he went into the house of Jairus to raise the dead daughter, he took Peter, James, and John in with him. When he was in the Garden of Gethsemane, he left eight of the disciples outside the Garden. He took Peter, James, and John in to pray with him.

These three, Peter, James, and John, are definitely given a closer walk with Jesus than many others, as it were. In later time, Peter, James, and John apparently had also great significance in the church and the book of Acts. Peter, a spokesman for the twelve,

James was the first apostle to be martyred, and John was the only apostle not to be martyred and to live longer and to give us, of course, the book of Revelation and all of that.

Now, Andrew was also in this group before. He, for some reason, wasn't quite in that little circle, but there is one time when Peter, James, and John, and Andrew were the only four in a conference with Jesus, and that was at the Olivet Discourse. When Jesus gave the Olivet Discourse, which is found in Luke 21, Mark's version of it, and Mark 13 tells us that this was a private conversation with Peter, James, and John and Andrew.

So, these four fishermen, three of them, were very close to Jesus. Andrew got in on that group at least once, and most of the other apostles were apparently one step removed in terms of their privilege or intimacy or whatever, but it's obvious why the call of these four fishermen then would be recorded when the call of most others was not, because they were obviously unusually significant, both in the time of Jesus and afterward. Now we're at verse 12.

It says, It happened when he was in a certain city, that, behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus, and he fell on his face and implored him, saying, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. Then he put out his hand, touched him, saying, I am willing, be cleansed. And immediately the leprosy left him.

And he charged him to tell no one, but to go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded. Then the report went around concerning him all the more, and great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by him for their, of their infirmities. So he himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

All right. This pericope of Jesus healing this leper is found also in Matthew and Mark. So we don't need to dwell on it too much because it's been encountered twice previously in the gospels.

I would mention a few things. One of them is that it says in verse 12 that this man was full of leprosy. And in the Greek, this is a specific medical diagnosis to say that someone is full of leprosy.

The Greek term that is used was known to be a Greek medical term. And he wasn't just a leper. Lepers existed in different degrees of severity.

We know from this, the teaching in Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 about lepers, they were unclean. And a person would be declared a leper, even if he had a white patch on his skin that was seemingly not getting better. After a couple of weeks of examination, he'd be declared a leper.

The man would not be full of leprosy. He'd simply have leprosy. But there were stages of

leprosy as it advanced.

And this man's leprosy was at the apparently final stage. The man was full of leprosy. And Luke as a physician is the only gospel writer recording this story who actually gives this specific diagnostic label to the man's condition.

And the man saw Jesus and fell on his face and implored him, if you're willing, you can make me clean. It's notable this is the only case we know of in the Bible where somebody seeking a healing implied that Jesus might or might not be willing. Where the man said, if you are willing, you can heal me.

Now there are those in the church today who teach that God is always wanting to heal. In fact, the Word of Faith people who teach this actually think that this is a case of a man being rebuked by Jesus because the man said, if you're willing, and Jesus said, I am willing. In fact, some have rendered it of course I'm willing.

Like, how could you imagine that I wouldn't be willing? And yet Jesus doesn't really say it quite like that. But it is interesting that in Mark's version of this story, some manuscripts read, Jesus moved with compassion, said, I am willing. But some manuscripts of Mark actually say Jesus moved with anger, said, I am willing, and touched him.

Now, our Bible goes with the compassion rather than with the anger and no doubt it's because it doesn't make an awful lot of sense to say that Jesus was moved by anger. What in the world made him angry here? Some might say, well, he's angry that there would even be a suggestion that he might not be willing to heal. Of course he's willing to heal and that this would make Jesus somewhat angry.

But I don't think Jesus' temperament was such that he'd be so easily angered as this. He did get angry at times. We read also in Gospel of Mark that he got angry at the Pharisees in the synagogue once when he was about to heal the man with the withered hand, of which we'll read a little later.

But Jesus could be angry, but for a man to ask him to heal him and to be humble enough and say, you know, if it's your will, is not something that would make him angry. I don't think that Jesus is rebuking the man. After all, it is not stated in Scripture that it's always God's will to heal.

And even if the New Testament did teach such a thing, this leper who had never had a chance to read the New Testament, which was not yet written, could hardly have been expected to know that. This case is unique in that sense. And some people say Jesus' response to the man makes it very clear that we should never doubt that God is willing to heal.

And I realize that almost every time we read of sickness in the Bible, healing follows, at least in the New Testament. Jesus and the apostles all healed people, but not everyone

was healed, including some of the healers were not healed. Elisha in the Old Testament did great miracles, even raising the dead, but he wasn't healed.

He died sick. He got old, he got sick, he died. And Paul also, who healed many people and even raised the dead, seems to have been sick.

We know he was some of the time. There is dispute as to whether the thorn in the flesh, of which Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 12, was a sickness or something else. I think it was.

But in Galatians, Paul makes it very clear. Paul said to the Galatians, through physical infirmity, or because of physical infirmity, I came and preached to you originally. So he makes it very clear that he had physical infirmities, whether or not that was his thorn in the flesh, I think it was.

In the case of the thorn in the flesh, he prayed three times that God would remove it from him. And Jesus said, my grace is sufficient for you. In other words, I'm not going to remove it from you.

Here's a man, an apostle, seeking relief, seeking healing, and Jesus says, nah, I've got a better idea for you. I'm going to give you the grace for it. My strength is made perfect in your weakness, so you being weak is better.

And Paul said, that's good, because it keeps me from being exalted above measure. That's his assessment of the situation in 2 Corinthians 12. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4, I left Trophimus sick in Miletum, one of his companions.

He wasn't able to get him healed, apparently. Timothy was sick frequently, had oft infirmities and stomach problems, and Paul didn't say, you know, God will heal you. He said, take a little wine for that, and that could help.

So there are cases where apparently even the apostles felt it was not God's will to heal, but rather diseases had to be endured or treated. And so it's not irreverent for this leper to say, if it is your will, actually we should always be prepared to condition our requests on any subject with if it is your will, because we never know exactly if it's God's will to do a specific thing at a specific time. And therefore, this man saying, if you are willing, was not wrong.

It's like when Esther, showing respect to her husband, the king, continually is seen in the book of Esther saying, if it please the king, if it please the king, may you come to a feast. If it please the king, will you grant this request? It was simply a form of respect and submission to your king. And this was her husband in her case, but it is to her credit that she had this submissive attitude.

This is how she was different from Vashti, the king's previous wife, who didn't care to please the king. For a Christian to have the attitude when praying, if it please the king,

or if it is your will, this is my request. There's nothing that would make God angry.

Certainly it's not inappropriate. And Jesus did say, I am willing, and he cleansed him. And immediately the leprosy left him.

Now the immediately here is emphatic because obviously one might have pictured the story if not told otherwise, that this man started to get better, you know, after this point. And someone heard much later that he had recovered. And so they assumed Jesus had healed him.

You know, I mean, this is a condition that got better. Sometimes conditions that were diagnosed as leprosy actually did get better. We know this because Leviticus 13 and 14, those two chapters, talk about a case of a leper who has recovered and going back to show himself to the priest and have it confirmed that he was recovered.

So although Hansen's disease, what we personally, what we in modern times call leprosy, it doesn't usually have these spontaneous remissions. Yet there are many diseases that are skin diseases that would have been called leprosy because they didn't have the exact, you know, they couldn't examine, you know, what kind of a germ it was and things like that. They only had to go by symptoms.

Therefore, if a person had some kind of a spreading skin disease that didn't get better, they were called leprosy. It might not be what we call leprosy and it might be something of which they would later recover. The main thing is that people who were diagnosed with leprosy sometimes did get better.

And if this said, you know, this man from that day began to recover and someone saw him years later, he was totally clean. You know, I mean, they'd say, well, isn't that a wonderful, it's a miracle. Jesus is the one who cleansed him.

And that could be true, but a skeptic might think, well, how do we know it was Jesus? But when he says immediately the leprosy left him, the man's skin totally transformed before their eyes. Sort of like Naaman the leper in the story of Elisha, where Naaman was all leprosy and he dipped seven times the river Jordan. It says the seventh time when he came up, his skin was like the skin of a newborn baby.

His skin was instantly transformed from its gross, you know, decaying form to a fresh new skin. And that apparently is the immediate results of this case also. Now, by the way, notice that Jesus touched him.

Jews don't touch lepers. When somebody is in an unclean condition like leprosy or any other condition that the law described as unclean, you don't touch them. If you touch them, it makes you unclean.

That's the way it works in the Jewish law. If somebody has contracted uncleanness in any

way, whether it's a woman on her period or a person who's got leprosy or a person who's gone to a funeral and been near a dead body or any other thing that causes them to be unclean, anyone who touches that person is also unclean. Jesus, however, touched people with issues of blood.

He touched dead bodies. He touched lepers. And in no case did he become unclean.

It went the other direction. He touched the leper and the leper became clean. And this illustrates, I think it is intended to illustrate, because he could have healed without touching.

On some occasions he healed different kinds of people without touching and he could have done so. He deliberately touched the leper, something that a Jew is not allowed to do, something the law would make him unclean for doing. But Jesus' actions were always teaching lessons as well as accomplishing some practical result.

And I'm quite sure that in touching dead bodies when he didn't have to, touching lepers when he didn't have to, letting himself be touched by a woman with an issue of blood, all of which should have made him unclean under the terms of the law, the message that is getting across here is that the law did not have in it the power to overcome uncleanness. Rather, uncleanness had the greater power. So the person who is already unclean would infect anyone who contacted him because the person who is clean could not resist contamination by contact with the unclean.

That's why God, when he sent the Israelites into Canaan, had them wipe out all the Canaanites. He said, they'll contaminate you. We can't keep these unclean people around you because you'll be contaminated.

You don't have what it takes to remain pure around the influences of this contaminating world. So the law could describe uncleanness, but it couldn't overcome it. Those who are obedient to the law by touching unclean things would not overcome the uncleanness.

The uncleanness would overtake them. The power of sin and uncleanness in the world is very infectious and the law did not have the dynamic and the power in it to prevent it or to protect from it. But Jesus did.

Jesus' kingdom brings a new dynamic. The power of the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, the supernatural power of Christ's kingdom and of the new covenant actually overwhelms the power of sin. If we walk in the Spirit, we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

The power of the Spirit, it says in Romans 8, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. That is, the law of Christ's Spirit and power is more powerful than the law of sin and death. So Jesus, His mysteries characterized by a power that was not available under the law and that is a power that would allow Him to have contact with an unclean person and instead of it overcoming Him and making Him

unclean, His cleanness was transferred to them.

Now this is what is in us, the power of the new covenant, the power of the Spirit of God, of Christ and that is why we do not have to go out and kill all the unbelievers around us for fear that they will contaminate us. We are supposed to go out and make disciples out of them. We are supposed to contaminate them with the cleanness that we have received.

So this is a reversal of things between the old covenant and the new. Under the old covenant there was nothing to prevent sin from having the victory in every contest with righteousness. But in every confrontation between cleanness and uncleanness after Jesus came, cleanness wins.

The power of God is greater. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness could not comprehend or overcome it, it says in John chapter 1. The light is more powerful than the darkness and Jesus the light came and introduced life and immortality, brought it to light, it says in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 16 and this is, or not verse 16 but in another verse in 1 Timothy 6. Actually it is a different chapter. Nonetheless, he said it to Timothy.

We will go with that. The point here is that in touching a leper, Jesus and the leper becoming clean, Jesus illustrates this principle that He is not simply laboring under the conditions that the law brought. He is bringing a new life, a new dynamic, a new power that the law did not have and so that He can have contact with the unclean and make them clean.

We can have contact with unbelievers and not necessarily become infected. Now if we are not walking in the power of the Spirit then we will be infected because we are human too. We can be contaminated by contact with the world but not when we are walking in the Spirit.

We are supposed to be walking in the Spirit at all times so that we can reach out and touch the world and they will become cleansed by the contact with us rather than the opposite taking place. Now it says He told this leper after he was cleansed to go and show himself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded and you know generally speaking Jesus did not reaffirm the ceremonial requirements of the law. And we might say well wow Jesus even is seemingly supporting the ceremonial law then maybe we should be keeping the ceremonial law.

Well we can't, the temple is not there, there are no priests, we can't do that kind of thing now. But He didn't do this in order to support the continuing relevance of this law. He said He would do it as a testimony to them.

In other words He was not saying that God somehow requires you to keep these laws. I

want you to go do that to be a testimony to them. The priests are the ones who declared you unclean.

That's when a person got leprosy he had to present himself to the priest, the priest would declare him unclean. The priest was like the chief medical officer of the country and if he quarantined somebody for being unclean they couldn't come back to society unless they presented themselves to the priest and he could affirm that they were cured. And so it would be a testimony to the priests that Jesus had healed this man and that's the only reason Jesus says to go back and present yourself to the priest and do this ritual.

So remember it's like Paul said when I'm with those who are under the law I live as one under the law that I might win those who are under the law. When I'm with those without the law I live as one without the law that I might win those who are without the law. He said that in 1 Corinthians 9. And so Jesus as a testimony to the Jews, to the priests in this case, He wants them to see that this man who had previously been declared leprous was suddenly clean and it would be a testimony to the priests about that.

However He did tell the man generally speaking not to go and tell other people about it. I don't know if it says so right here but it does in the parallels. No it does say so here in verse 14.

He charged him that he tell no one. Well how do you tell no one and at the same time go show yourself to the priest? You got to tell the priest don't you? It's probable that what he meant was go directly to the priest don't stop and talk to people about this. I know you're tempted to go home and tell your friends and family about this but instead of doing that go directly to the priest and get yourself officially readmitted to society.

Perhaps with the implication that afterwards you can tell people about it if you want to but the instructions I'm giving you right now are don't go out and talk about this just go directly to the priest and do this. Now Jesus did very often tell people that He healed not to tell anyone about it but they did anyway. Virtually in every case it says when Jesus said don't tell anyone about this the next thing we read it.

But they went out and they spread it abroad and that certainly happened here. In verse 15 it says then the report went around concerning Him all the more and great multitudes came together to hear which is very possibly why Jesus told them not to tell. It's hard to suppress an exciting rumor about a miracle that's taken place and Jesus tried to keep the excitement level down.

I don't think Jesus was interested in getting people all excited about healings and miracles and things like that. He did them in public. He was not secretive about them but He didn't want His movement to be artificially generated by people's fascination with the sensational.

He wanted to preach the Kingdom of God and He illustrated that His preaching was true by His miracles. But if you want to go tell people about something tell them what I'm preaching. Don't go out and tell people about the miracles because that's going to just get all these shallow people who aren't interested in the Kingdom of God going to come and they're going to swamp me and I won't be able to move about.

But when they did come He did heal their infirmities. But it says in verse 16 He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed. Only Luke gives us that particular verse.

Although this story is found in all three synoptics Luke alone tells us that Jesus often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed. Verse 17. Now it happened on a certain day as He was teaching that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem.

Now from all over the country Pharisees were converging upon Jesus. He was a phenomenon by this time and they weren't sure who He was or what they thought of Him. But they came generally with a critical eye.

They may have been critical at this point because He did things like touch lepers which a good Jew shouldn't do. And they must have known about it because the news of this went out far and wide it says of Him curing this leper. So they probably were already skeptical about Him but even if they had known of nothing wrong that He had done they might still have a generally negative view of Him because He wasn't one of them.

He was drawing a lot of attention a lot of excitement and they were the leaders. They were the ones who had all the respect as the religious leaders and here Jesus is getting lots of respect a lot of attention and He's not even one of them and they could even be a bit jealous. But the fact that He did things like touch lepers would make Him even more controversial.

He seemed to be disregarding the law. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the law came from all over the place to hear Him and on this particular occasion we're told in Luke 5 17 the power of the Lord was present to heal them. Now this is a really weird line.

The power of the Lord was present to heal them. Well of course Jesus was there and He healed people so why would we have to be told that. And why does it say to heal them.

In the sentence the only antecedent to that pronoun them is the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. It's not the sentence does not speak of the crowds but rather of these particular persons who came to spy on Jesus and it says the power of the Lord was present to heal them. But we're not told they were sick.

One could take this in a way symbolically that they needed spiritual healing and they could have been healed if they had been more open minded. However we don't need to say it that way. The Alexandrian text reads the power of the Lord was with Him to heal.

So it reads a little differently in the Alexandrian text and if that's the original reading then we don't have to have to deal with what it means to heal them. But the power of the Lord was present with Him to heal. Even that seems strange to our ears because we would have figured when isn't it? When would the power of God not be with Jesus to heal? Doesn't He always have that? But we have to realize that Jesus didn't just walk around filled with power.

He was a man. He had emptied Himself. He depended on His Father and the Father sometimes wants to heal and sometimes He wants to do other things.

On this occasion God's power was upon Him to heal people. This is going to be a healing service. In other times maybe He wasn't doing so much healing but the power of God was present with Him to teach or to cast out demons or to do something else.

We might just think that Jesus had all this power to do whatever He wanted to do but He said I don't do anything in my own authority. I only do what the Father. I see the Father do.

He said the works are not mine. They're the Father's. The Father does the works in me.

He said on various occasions. So He was actually not always, possibly He was not always able to heal because that wasn't what the Father wanted Him to do and the power of the Lord might not have been present with Him to heal on some occasions but it was on this occasion. Then behold men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed.

Now this story of course is very familiar to anyone who's been to Sunday school and has seen flannel board presentations and so forth. This story is in Mark and Matthew as well. This paralyzed man was brought by men.

We're told elsewhere that it's four men and they sought to bring him in and lay him before Jesus. Jesus was in a house in Capernaum and so to try to get indoors was their first effort but when they could not find how they might bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. So they broke the roof up.

Every house or most houses at least had a flat roof and it was hot in those days and in the house it would be very hot when they're cooking. So at night or in the evening they'd go out on the roof where the day had cooled down, get out of the hot house and stay on the roof until they went to bed or whatever just to cool down. So there was an outdoor stairway up to the top of the roof on these houses and it was possible for people to do what these guys did, take their paralyzed friend up on the roof and then they had to break through the roof.

Whether they fixed the roof later, we don't know but at least Jesus was a carpenter. He might have done it or he could have just laid hands on it perhaps and made it heal up

but we don't read what happened to the roof after this but they made a pretty big hole. Big enough, I mean they didn't lower this guy vertically, you know, upright.

He's paralyzed on a pallet. They had to lower him. He had to be lying horizontally so it had to be a pretty big hole they stuck him through.

They really damaged the roof but that didn't seem to be a problem. There were greater priorities that Jesus had than problems with the construction of the house and repairs and things. So they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling in the midst before Jesus and when they saw, when he saw their faith, he said to him, and he saw their faith and he said to him, the guy, the paralyzed man, man, your sins are forgiven you.

And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason saying, who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered and said to them, why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier to say, your sins are forgiven you or to say, rise up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. He said to the man who was paralyzed, I say to you arise, take up your bed and go to your house. Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on and departed to his own house glorifying God.

And they were all amazed and they glorified God and were filled with fear saying, we have seen strange things today. Now, this is at one level the story of remarkable healing. At another level it's explanatory of the reason Jesus did healings and of showing who he is.

The man was paralyzed. When Jesus said, take up your bed and walk, the man was immediately healed. Again, he didn't have a slow recovery which was later attributed to a miracle.

Right before everyone's eyes, the man got up and carried his bed away and walked. So it's just like the leper in verse 13, immediately the leprosy left him. Here in verse 25, immediately this man got up.

There's no delays here. It wasn't a slow recovery or anything like that. Now, the issue here is of course that when Jesus saw the situation where these men lowered their friend through the roof, he didn't address the man's physical condition initially.

He said, your sins are forgiven you. Now, some have thought that the man may have needed to be forgiven of his sins before he could be healed. There are some conditions and no one could list all the possibilities, but there are some physical conditions that can be brought on by sin.

Some of them is the direct result of certain kinds of sinning. Like if this guy had been in a

motorcycle accident speeding at a hundred miles an hour, which is probably not how he came into this condition, but he could have been injured in some way doing what he shouldn't be doing. And he's living with the guilt of it.

Here I am, I've ruined my whole life by doing that thing. And I was goofing around and I fell off the cliff and broke my neck or something. Who knows what happened to this guy? But there are things, there are conditions that come upon you strictly because you did the wrong thing and you live with the guilt of it and the condition too.

Remember when Jesus came to the man at the pool of Bethesda in John chapter five, and when the man was healed, Jesus later said to him, go and don't sin anymore, lest some worse thing happen to you, implying that this man's condition, his original condition was because of something he had done wrong and he should stop doing that or else it's going to get worse next time. In that case, it sounds like the man's condition had been caused by some sin on his part. But lest we should conclude that all sickness is a result of a person's sin, we have another story where Jesus directly says it's not so.

In John chapter nine, where the man who was born blind was encountered by Jesus and the disciples and they said, Lord, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind? Jesus said, neither. Neither this man nor his parents sinned that he was born blind. He was born blind so that the works of God could be seen in him.

So there are cases apparently where sin may be the cause of one's condition and there are certainly cases where there is no sin that is the cause of it. They can't be blamed for their sickness. I think it's a huge error to blame people for their sickness.

Once again, the Word of Faith teaching more or less does blame people for their sickness because it teaches if they're not healed, it's because they lack faith. So it puts the onus on them to get themselves healed or bear the burden of guilt that they weren't able to do so by being so faithless. And it's a very cruel thing to make a person feel guilty about their sickness, especially if they're innocent of any wrongdoing.

And it's not always because of lack of faith that people are sick. Johnny Erickson-Todd has been paralyzed for more than 40 years and she is not a woman lacking in faith. Many people who are sick and never receive any recovery are not at all lacking in faith.

They may be among the most eminent in faith among us. So it's not always the case that a sickness is the fault of the person who's sick. In this case, it may be that it was.

Of course, Jesus could have just knowing that everybody needs their sins forgiven, including this man, may have said, your sins are forgiven you without any intention of linking sin to this man's condition, but rather in order to teach the lesson that he ended up teaching here, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He knew that by saying, your sins be forgiven you, he either was clearing the deck for the man to

be healed if the sin had been the cause of this sickness, or if that isn't to be assumed, then by saying, your sins be forgiven you, at least it would make these Pharisees upset because men don't forgive other people's sins. They can't.

You can forgive the sins of someone who sins against you, of course, and you must. The Bible says if your brother sins against you, forgive him. But you can't forgive your neighbor of all of his sins, including the ones that aren't against you, because only God can do that.

All sins are against God. Only some sins are against another individual. A sin against another individual must be forgiven by that individual and by God.

Forgiveness is needed from both. But some sins have injured no individual and only injure God, and all sin is an injury to God, and therefore God alone can forgive all sins. He's the injured party in every case.

And the Pharisees understood this, and Jesus did too, of course. And the Pharisees said, who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? Now this question, who is this, comes up in some other contexts in Luke that are interesting, because it's a good question. Luke, through these stories, raises this.

The reader's supposed to be asking, really, who is Jesus? Who is the one who forgives sins? Who could he possibly be claiming himself to be? And in Luke 7, 49, similarly, Luke 7, 49, when they say the same thing at the end, they begin to say to themselves, who is this who even forgives sins? You know, that's a good question. Who is it that forgives sins? Who is it Jesus is presenting himself to be by claiming the right to forgive sins? Over in Mark chapter 9, no, no, I'm sorry, in Luke 9, in verse 9, when Herod heard about the things Jesus was doing, it says, John, I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things? He was hearing about the miracles of Jesus. Who is this who's doing these miracles? These questions are pregnant and, you know, are there to suggest that we need to be thinking about that and try to find out.

It was also the case elsewhere that when the disciples saw Jesus still the strong, they said, who is this? What kind of man is this that even the wind and the waves obey him? These questions obviously are not rhetorical, or maybe they were intended to be, but they actually do have an answer. You know, he is the one who does that. He is God.

He is the one who forgives sins. He is the one who stills the waves. Who does that but God? That is very suggestive.

His forgiving of sins is a tacit claim to deity or to divine authority anyway. And Jesus perceived their thoughts and he said to them in verse 23, which is easier to say your sins are forgiven you or to say rise up and walk? Now, as far as just saying those things, both are about equally easy to say, but what he means is which is easier to verify? Which is

easier to say with credibility? Which is easier to say and get away with not looking stupid? It's easier to say your sins are forgiven you because no one knows whether that's true or not. They might say, well, I think he's right or I think he's wrong, but no one really knows.

But if he says rise, take up your bed and walk, everyone knows if that worked or not. You can see that right before your face, which is easier to verify that I have the authority to forgive sins, which is invisible and non-verifiable, or that I have the power to raise up a man who's paralyzed. That is easily verifiable.

He says, so I'll do the harder thing. And he told the man to rise up and take up his bed. And he says, I'm saying this so that you may know, verse 24, that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins.

Now, no doubt all of the miracles Jesus did have some kind of a subtext like this, that his ability to heal the blind, his ability to raise the dead, his ability to cleanse the unclean, the lepers, and so forth, all of them have spiritual ramifications. By the way, this is the first time in Luke that we find the term Son of Man. Jesus very commonly referred to himself as the Son of Man.

In fact, more than he referred to himself by any other designation, the Son of Man. And there are 26 occurrences of this expression in Luke, this being the first of them. But Jesus in all, if you take all the gospels we have like, including parallels, I think there's like 70 or more cases where Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man.

He doesn't refer to himself by any other title label more than a handful of times. So this is his favorite reference to himself. Why is he the Son of Man? Well, at one level, quite simply, the word Son of Man means a human, but so were his listeners, sons of men in that respect.

But was he saying that he was merely a Son of Man? Was this a humble designation for himself? Obviously he was showing himself to be superior to all men, yet he was a real man. Nonetheless, he had humbled himself and taken on himself the form of a servant by real human weakness being brought upon him. Well, that doesn't seem to be the emphasis here.

He seems to be speaking of his authority. And many scholars believe that Son of Man in this sense is a reference to a messianic title. There was a Son of Man figure that many of the intertestamental writers spoke of who some scholars think Jesus was identifying with here.

Daniel had used the term Son of Man in Daniel 7, I think it's verse 13, where he said, I saw one like a Son of Man. But one like a Son of Man is not quite the same thing as the title the Son of Man, because a Son of Man in the Old Testament refers essentially to a

human, a mere man. But in Daniel 7 in particular, the one like a Son of Man that he sees is Christ or is at least his kingdom.

In contrast to kingdoms that are like a lion and like a bear and like a leopard, which are mentioned earlier in the chapter, a series of kingdoms, human kingdoms and the godly kingdom, the kingdom of God, are seen. The human kingdoms are like wild beasts. The kingdom of God is like a man.

And that man, of course, is Jesus. But there's some dispute as to whether Son of Man is a humble title or almost an exalted title. And it could be either one depending on who was hearing it from him.

In any case, he liked that title and he used it a lot. So the man was healed and people marveled and Jesus proved that he has authority on earth to forgive sins. Now, technically, he did not say that this proved he is God, but rather that he has authority or power on earth to forgive sins, that could be a delegated power.

God could have delegated to him the ability to forgive sins. The President of the United States has authority to release prisoners from jail just on a whim, but that power is given to him by the Constitution and by the voters who put him in office. It's a derived power the President has, but he has it anyway.

And one could argue, and Jesus doesn't refute this if they do, that rather than saying that he is God, he is at least saying that God has authorized him to forgive sins. And it's possible that when Jesus spoke of himself as a son of man, and I did a study on this once many years ago, and it seemed to me that all the cases where he called himself the son of man, you could understand it to mean the ideal man, the ideal human being made in God's image, what God made man to be. And Jesus is, of course, the ideal man.

He's the second Adam. God made Adam as the ideal man. Jesus is the second ideal man, son of Adam.

He's the model man that all his disciples should see him as the model to imitate and to do what he does. And in saying the son of man can forgive sins, he could be saying, in general, man can forgive sins, at least sins against himself. Now, Jesus has a broader authority to forgive any sins, but the point here is he may be, or maybe another subtext here, that as a son of man, he's modeling what men ought to be, and men ought to forgive.

God does authorize us to forgive those who offend us and so forth, and tells us to do so. Lots of the things Jesus says about the son of man, meaning himself, could be applied in a secondary sense to good men in general. The ideal human is supposed to be forgiving, and he is the son of man who's been authorized to model that and to forgive men's sins.

God, he is God in the flesh, no question about that, but he doesn't say the son of God. He

says the son of man has authority, and it's not entirely clear how many nuances we're supposed to take from that statement in addition to simply his statement that he can forgive sins, which is, of course, its primary meaning. Now, we have the calling of another disciple.

In verse 27, after these things, he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, follow me, and he left all, rose up, and followed him. Then Levi gave him a great feast in his own house, and there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them, but their scribes and their Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners? And Jesus answered and said to them, those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Now, this man Levi, of course, is the same man who's called Matthew elsewhere, and he eventually was chosen to be among the 12, and therefore his call here is significant because he later was one of the 12 as well. Now, he was a tax collector before, and there are a number of cases where Matthew is mentioned in the Gospels where it actually refers to him as the tax collector even after he'd left that job. It was his, being a tax collector was about as respectable as being a prostitute.

It was, in fact, they were kind of prostituting themselves to the Romans, not sexually, but they were selling out. They were doing what their countrymen thought was immoral, and they're doing it for money. Namely, they were taking taxes from their Jewish countrymen and giving them to their Roman oppressors.

The Jews did not like the Romans. They felt it was almost sacrilegious to give taxes to the Romans. The zealots said it was unlawful to do so because to give a tribute to Rome was to suggest that Rome is their king, and in fact, God alone is Israel's king, and the zealots believed it was unlawful and sacrilegious to pay tribute to Caesar, and yet there were some Jews at the other end of the spectrum, and by the way, one of Jesus' disciples was a zealot of that party who thought that way, but another was a tax collector who was at the other end of the political spectrum who actually was a collaborator with the Romans.

Not only did he think it was lawful for the Jews to pay taxes, he was willing to go and extract them or even extort them from his fellow Jews. Such people were considered to be the lowest scum of Jewish society, and on another occasion, later in Luke, Jesus calls another, or he doesn't call, but he forgives another tax collector, another publican, and that's Zacchaeus, and on that occasion, it says all the people murmured that Jesus went into the house of a publican. Jesus associated with people that were outcast from society, but not just because they were outcast, but obviously they had to have something in their heart toward God.

It's clear Jesus didn't just go to rebellious people and say, come on, I need a few rebels. He went to the meek. He went to the humble.

He went to those who were seeking God, and this shows that sometimes the people who least appeared to be seeking God, at least outward appearances, really in their heart, there was something that Jesus knew was there. Now, it means it's hard to judge by outward appearances when you see someone who, let's say, is a prostitute. Jesus had some prostitutes that followed him, too, or someone who's in some kind of a really scandalous occupation.

We might just say, well, that person wants nothing to do with God, obviously, but maybe they do. Maybe they're looking for God in all the wrong places. Only God knows their heart, and the Pharisees who didn't know the heart were always critical of the kind of company Jesus kept, but Jesus said, I'm coming to sinners to call them to repentance, like a doctor.

See, Jesus was not an enemy of sinners. God is not an enemy of sinners. It's God who so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son.

What? To whom? To sinners, to rebels, to people who didn't necessarily deserve anything but hell from him. He loved them anyway. The Father did.

God's not the enemy of sinners. Sinners are the enemy of God, but some sinners have a change of heart, and they want to be friends with God, and God says, I'm all for that. When Jesus was among sinners, he wasn't there as their critic and as their judge.

He was there as the doctor to the sick. A doctor who goes to sick people isn't their enemy. He's there to help them, and that's what Jesus was there to do.

In this respect, he was entirely different in his manner and in his approach to sinners than the religious leaders of the time, and unfortunately than the religious leaders of our time who claimed to be Christians in many cases. So, Matthew throws a feast for his friends, and it's interesting. I heard a statistic that most people after they get converted try to lead or do lead people to the Lord in the first two years after their conversion, but after that, they don't do much evangelism anymore, and one of the reasons for that seems to be that when you first get converted, most of your friends are non-Christians.

After being a Christian for a couple of years, most of your friends are Christians. You're not naturally in the position to evangelize as much because your relationships are mostly with people already saved after you've been saved a couple of years, but in the early stages after conversion, all your friends are still unbelievers like you were, and we see Levi, the tax collector, he still has a lot of tax collector friends. Of course, he's a new convert right now, and so he invites tax collectors and other kinds of sinners over to his house.

They're the only friends he ever had, fellow outcasts like himself, and Jesus apparently quite comfortably eating among them. You just can hardly imagine how scandalous this was in a religious society for somebody who is speaking for God like a prophet or a rabbi or a messiah figure to be associating without embarrassment with this kind of rabble, and so, of course, there was murmuring against him by the Pharisees. They would never associate with such people, and Jesus said, well, then such people will never get well at your hand.

If you're a doctor who stays away from sick people, you're not going to be much good. It's sick people who need a physician, and I've come to these people because they are sick. I've come to call sinners, but to repentance.

He didn't just come to hang out with sinners just because he likes sinful company. He came to call them to repentance, but think about this. It's often very awkward to confront a sinner and tell them they need to repent, but somehow Jesus managed to do it in a way that they felt reasonably comfortable around him.

He was regularly invited to eat with tax collectors and sinners who were prostitutes and such around. He was there calling them to repentance, and yet his manner must have been such that they didn't feel judged and condemned by him, or else they wouldn't keep inviting him to the party. He'd rain on their parade too much, but these were people who apparently were open to repentance, and his manner was such that though he called them to repentance, he must have done so in a way that they didn't feel too condemned and despised as many would in the way that churches sometimes require people to repent today.

People do need to repent, and we need to let them know it, but somehow they've got to see that as a doctor giving a prescription rather than a sanctimonious judge handing down condemnation. Verse 33, Then they said to him, now who are they? According to Mark 2.18, it was the disciples of John and the Pharisees. Matthew 9.14 just says the disciples of John, but it says, Then they said to him, why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink? Now the really religious people, including John's disciples, had regular regimens of fasting and public prayers and things like that.

They had a lot of religious activity in their lives, and Jesus' disciples seemed to be partying all the time with the tax collectors and Jesus and stuff. It didn't look like a religious movement, and he said to them, Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? Meaning himself. What's interesting about this is, although it's not recorded in the synoptics, John's gospel records in John chapter 3 that the disciples of John came to John and said, Do you know that that one that you baptized before, meaning Jesus, he's over there baptizing, everybody's going to him to be baptized now.

And John said, A man can receive nothing but what is given to him by God. He says, He's the bridegroom. He said, I'm the bridegroom's friend.

It's the bridegroom who gets the bride. The bridegroom's friend rejoices to see the bride and the bridegroom join. He's saying the people are the bride.

Jesus is the bridegroom. John's the matchmaker, and he referred to Jesus as the bridegroom and the people coming to Jesus as the bride. Now that was addressed by John to his own disciples.

Now John's in prison, but John's disciples come to question Jesus. How come you people are not fasting and so forth? He says, Don't you remember I'm a bridegroom? Alluding to what John himself had told his disciples, but they apparently had not put it together. This is a feast.

This is not a fast. This is a party. It's a celebration.

It's a marriage. The bridegroom's here in the dance hall, and we're not going to be fasting here. That's just not the way we roll at our weddings.

And so you expect the friends of the bridegroom to fast while the bridegroom is with them, but the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them. Then they will fast in those days. Then he spoke a parable to them.

No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one. Otherwise the new makes a tear. And also the piece that was taken out of the new one does not match the old.

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one having drunk old wine immediately desires the new, for he says the old is better.

Now while this story is found in other synoptics, that last line is only found in Luke about no one who drinks the old wine really desires the new. Now what is all that about? They've criticized Jesus' disciples because they're not being very religious, like the Pharisees and the disciples of John were not doing austere, self-torturing things to show how religious they are. Instead they're acting like it's a party.

And Jesus said, well you don't take an old garment that has a hole in it and find a new garment and put a patch from it on the old. First of all the new garment's worth more than the old anyway, so you're ruining a new garment to create a new one. Besides, the the unshrunk cloth from the new garment is likely to shrink when it's washed and pull away at the weakened cloth of the old garment, just make the tear worse.

Likewise, you don't take new wine just brought from the wine vat and pour it into a used

wineskin. You probably know that a wineskin was a goat skin sewn into a bag and it was used to ferment the wine. They put the grape juice in a new leather bag, seal it up so no air could get out, and the wine fermented and wine gives off gases and so forth while it's fermenting, so it expands.

And since it's a leather bag, leather can stretch, so the wineskin would stretch to accommodate the growth of the wine itself. But Jesus said you don't take an old wineskin, that is one that's already been stretched out by a previous batch of wine, and put new wine in. The problem is it's already stretched, it's brittle, it's not going to stretch anymore, it can't accommodate the change.

You can put old wine in an old skin because nothing's going to change, but if you got new wine, that new wine is dynamic, that's going to be changing, that's not going to be staying one way. You don't put it in a structure that can't accommodate change. You don't put it into an old wineskin that's just going to break the skin, you're going to lose the wine.

So in both cases, the patch and the wine and the wineskin, he's giving examples of something that is new and dynamic, like cloth that has not yet shrunk, or wine that has not yet expanded, and saying you don't bind those things or try to confine those things to something that has already done all the changing it's going to do. And it's brittle and inflexible and it's not capable of accommodating change. Now the point he's making here is that his movement is new, dynamic, and it's going to require some changes in their thinking.

They're going to have to have some new attitudes, they're going to have to have some new rules, they're going to have to do it a different way. But they are bound up in an old religious system that is inflexible. It had life in it one time, back in the days of Moses, it was a living word given from God, but in the hands of the rabbis, it had just become a legalistic rigid set of laws that if anyone broke any of them, they got in trouble because there's no flexibility here.

And he says, it sounds like you're trying to get me to put my movement into your structures. Your structures would never do well with my movement in them because my movement is going to break the boundaries. My movement is live, it's changing, it's growing, it's going to be scandalous to you.

Don't expect that your rules and your regulations that are part of your religious system are in any way going to be that I'm going to confine what I'm doing to those structures. You need new wine skins for new wine. Now Jesus wasn't actually saying that there's going to be no rules, there's going to be no limits or no borders on what he was doing, but it wasn't going to be the ones defined by that old system.

That old system of religion, like any system of religion, is not capable of flexing, of

growing, of expanding, of changing as the spirit of God moves people forward into new dimensions of fellowship with God and obedience and so forth. I mean, after all, Jesus eating with tax collectors and so forth was something that the old system just couldn't accommodate, but his system could. But if, you know, it was breaking the boundaries of what the Pharisees could countenance to see him hanging out with that kind of crowd.

The love of God is a dynamic thing and it was breaking over the boundaries into groups that the Pharisees, the boundaries of their wine skin wouldn't let them reach over those walls. And Jesus is saying, you're not going to put my movement into your wine skins, thank you. You can fast all you want, you can pray all you want, you can do all the things that your religion has you do.

I'm doing something new. So in verse 39 he says, no one having drunk old wine immediately desires new, for he says the old is better. And this verse in this story is the one verse that's unique to Luke and for some reason the scholars don't put it in here.

But Jesus has likened his movement to new wine, which is not to be put into old wine skins. And having now introduced his movement in those terms using that metaphor, he makes another reference to it as wine. Wine, in addition to being something that expands when it ferments, also has an effect on the mind of people who consume it.

And people who've drunk enough old wine have numbed their senses enough that they don't have the capacity to recognize the superiority of better wine later on. When Jesus turned water into wine in John chapter 2, the master of ceremonies who tasted the wine that Jesus had made, which was better, said most people bring out the best wine first, and when people have drunk enough that they can't tell the difference, they bring out the cheap wine. Acknowledging that there were different grades of wine, there were wines that were considered to be better than others, and at a certain point during the party, people have drunk enough of whatever wine's available, they can't make the difference between the quality of the wine anymore.

And he's taking it sort of the other way, that the new wine is brought out last, but because people have been drinking the old wine, they can't tell the difference. They can't tell that it's actually better wine. And so they don't want it.

He's saying people who are drunk with their own religious system and satisfied with it, they're not going to be able to appreciate their need or the superiority of what Jesus is doing. He will, in other words, receive resistance from people who prefer their old traditional ways to the new thing he's doing. Whenever there has been any kind of improvement in the church's perception of things, let's say the Reformation, there have been some people who went with Luther and who went with the Reformers and said, this is an improvement.

This is better than the old traditional ways. But the majority of people didn't go that way.

They thought the old traditional ways are better.

We're familiar with those. We're comfortable with those. We spent our whole life adjusting to those, readjusting, adjusting to something new.

That's unnecessary. What's wrong with the old? The old is better. It's more mellow.

It's been seasoned. It's been thought through for centuries. My parents did this.

My grandparents did this. This is better. This is a better way.

These newfangled notions don't belong. Now, that's how the Jews were, many of them, the Pharisees at least, with reference to Jesus' movement. He was doing something better than what they were doing.

But they were quite satisfied with what they were doing. And so they felt the old wine was better.