

Luke 5 • Different Responses to Christ

Introduction

Luke 5 contains 4 examples of Christ's mission as Savior and various responses to Him. Let's look at each, paying attention to Christ's interaction with people at various stages of acceptance/rejection of Him and their response.

¹Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; ²and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. ³And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. ⁴When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

⁵Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." ⁶When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; ⁷so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

⁸But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" ⁹For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

¹¹When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

[Read 5:1-11]

Q: Was this the first time that Jesus met Peter?

A: According to John 1, Peter had been following Jesus' activities for quite some time. It would still be quite awhile before he would be set apart as an Apostle. In the last chapter, Jesus was at Peter's house where He healed Peter's mother-in-law. So this is **not** their first meeting.

Q: According to v.5, what was the first step on Peter's part?

A: "I will do as you say." His initial step was a step of faith.

Q: Peter had heard Jesus teach many times, had seen many miracles – even witnessed his own mother-in-law healed – yet in v.8 what did it take for Peter's breakthrough?

A: Realization of who Peter is in relation to the Savior: "I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Q: Did Jesus' work end with getting Peter to recognize the need for a Savior?

A: Not just called to repentance but called to the Kingdom of God – "from now on you will be catching men."

Q: What was the final result of Peter's personal encounter with Christ?

A: "They left everything and followed Him."

Point: Taking the Savior at His word they left their former life to be discipled into a greater life in the kingdom of God to eventually preach the gospel. They were familiar with Christ (they "went to church", so to speak), but their heart and life was never changed until they took a step of faith, realized the need for a Savior, and left the former life never to return to it.

¹²While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

¹³And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴And He ordered him to tell no one, “But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

¹⁷One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. ¹⁸And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. ¹⁹But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. ²⁰Seeing their faith, He said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.”

²¹The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”

²²But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? ²³Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ²⁴But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”—He said to the paralytic—“I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.”

²⁵Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on,

[Read 12-14]

Q: What was the first step on the leper’s part?

A: Coming to Jesus in faith – “if You are willing”

Q: What is the significance of going to a priest to show oneself to be clean?

A: Christ was adhering to the OT law that (A) such a miracle needed to be confirmed by a priest, and (B) such confirmation also denoted that God had absolved that person’s sin. The healing was an external sign of the internal work of forgiveness. It would be as much a testimony about the forgiveness of sin as the working of a miracle.

Point: Remember the OT examples (such as Miriam and Aaron) where God struck people with leprosy as a sign of their uncleanness or unholiness. Leprosy is a symbol of sin.

Q: Why didn’t Jesus ask the leper to immediately follow Him ?

A: This work of salvation was immediately visible as a testimony to others.

Point: The work of salvation in the leper’s life produced an immediate change that empowered him to instantly begin spreading the gospel.

[Read 17-26]

Q: According to v.17 what power was present at that time?

A: “To perform healing.”

Q: So why didn’t Jesus immediately heal the man if the power of healing was present?

A: Forgiveness of sin is **eternal** healing; physical healing is only temporary for the life span of the individual. The greater work was forgiveness and, in reality, the greater “sign” to those present than healing the body.

Q: Who did the scribes and Pharisees recognize as the only authority who could forgive sins?

A: God. The implication being that “anyone” could perform a miracle (remember Pharaoh’s magicians?) but only God could forgive sins. Forgiveness, therefore, is a much greater “sign” of heavenly power and authority than a visible miracle. (Note in 1 Corinthians 12:28 that the gift of teaching is **GREATER** than **EITHER** the gifts of miracles or healings.)

Q: So what is Jesus’ stated purpose in v.24 for healing the paralytic?

A: “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....”

Q: To whom, therefore, did Jesus clearly prove His authority and authenticity as the Messiah?

A: Everyone present: The scribes and Pharisees, the paralytic and his friends, His disciples, and all the people present. This was a plain way of stating to the authorities present, “Yes, I AM the Messiah.”

Q: Why didn’t everyone present accept Christ as their personal Savior?

A: Unlike Peter, some refused to recognize themselves as sinners in the shadow of the Savior. Unlike the leper, some did not present themselves

and went home glorifying God. ²⁶They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

²⁷After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me.” ²⁸And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.

²⁹And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. ³⁰The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” ³¹And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

³⁶And He was also telling them a parable: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. ³⁸But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’”

to the Savior as someone unclean needing to be cleansed. They saw and heard but everyone did not obey or submit. It's the difference between “admiring” Christ and “accepting” Christ.

[Read 27-28]

Q: What sign did Jesus perform for Levi?

A: None. He took Jesus as His word.

Q: Was the end result different for Levi (Matthew) than in the previous examples?

A: No. All had to take a step of faith, all had to recognize themselves as a sinner in the presence of the Savior, all had to make a decision whether or not to follow Him.

Point: Christ uses various means for different individuals to achieve the same results of salvation. (This is Paul's *declaration* “I’ve become all things to all men that I might win them” in action in the example of Jesus’ life.)

[Read 29-32]

Q: What is Christ’s purpose?

A: “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (v.32)

Q: Did Jesus instill this work in others or was it just His unique message alone?

A: It was the work of John the Baptist, conveyed to everyone Jesus called, and the message that soon the Apostles and disciples would personally preach when they were sent out in pairs.

Q: Consider the work of your personal spiritual life and that of your local church as a whole. Are you/we focusing more on the sinner or the righteous? Why/why not?

A: [Obviously a group discussion.]

[Read 36-39]

Q: There are many applications of this parable – the contrast of the old covenant with the new, the contrast of the Pharisees with Jesus’ followers, etc. – but what are some applications for us personally and our local church as a whole?

A: Among others, that to change our focus away from the righteous to the call of the sinner will require new ways that may not be 100% compatible with our old ways. [Group leader should sit closest to the door in case they need to make a run for it. ;-)]

NOTE: What do you make of the fact that NONE of these encounters took place in a synagogue, i.e., a “church” setting?