

Christ the Sovereign Rescuer

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Date: 26 October 2014

Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 0 0] But we're going to turn now to our Bibles and to our reading this morning in Luke's Gospel, Chapter 5, which, if you have one of our church visitors' Bibles, will be page 860, I think.

And we're going to read together the whole of Luke, Chapter 5, but just leading in from the last couple of verses in Chapter 4, which form a bridge between what goes before and what happens now.

Jesus says, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose. And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

And it came to pass, on one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, that's Galilee. And he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he finished speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

[1 : 1 4] And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. But at your word, I will let down the nets. And when they'd done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.

They signaled to other partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they'd taken. And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid.

From now on, you will be catching men. And when they brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. And it came to pass, while he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy.

And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean.

[2 : 2 3] And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one, but go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them. But now even more, the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities.

But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray. And it came to pass on one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem.

And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed. And they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus.

But finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said to the man, Your sins are forgiven you.

And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, Why do you question in your hearts?

[3 : 40] Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Rise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

He said to the man who was paralyzed, I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed and go home. And immediately he rose up before them, picked up what he'd been lying on, and went home, glorifying God.

And amazement seized them all. And they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, We have seen extraordinary things today. After this, he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax booth.

And he said to him, Follow me. Leaving everything, he rose and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house. And there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with him.

And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners? And Jesus answered them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

[4 : 54] I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And they said to him, The disciples of John fast and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.

And Jesus said to them, Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.

He also told them a parable. No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he'll tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.

No one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, and it'll be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put in fresh wineskins.

But no one, after drinking old wine, desires new. For he says, The old is good. Amen.

[5 : 57] Amen. May God bless to us. This is his word. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Luke's Gospel, chapter 5, page 860, in the Church Bibles.

And let me ask you a question. I wonder how you would begin to explain to a friend what Christians mean, and more importantly, what the Bible means by salvation.

Maybe I should ask some of you to come up at random and give us your answer. How about that? I won't do that. Not today. Who knows what might happen in the future?

But it's an important question, isn't it? And one that we really do need to be able to answer. And thankfully, Luke has written for us a whole book about our certain salvation.

As we've seen, he writes as a historian, as an apologist, and as an evangelist, in order to document and defend and declare the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

[7 : 02] And he tells us in his opening paragraphs that he has written a carefully ordered account. So that that helps us to both grasp the message and be able to pass that message on.

And we've seen in chapters 1 and 2, he tells us about the arrival of the Savior, Jesus, into the world. And in chapters 3 and 4, he tells us about the announcement of the Savior.

First of all, John's message prepares the way for people to see in Jesus God's great salvation. And then Jesus' own ministry begins. And he himself proclaims the good news of the kingdom.

And people hear the Savior himself. Well, now in chapters 5 and 6, Luke's careful ordering brings us to a focus here on the unique authority of Christ's way of salvation.

The section is clearly marked out. We have that summary verse we began with at the end of chapter 4 about Jesus proclaiming the gospel all around Judea.

[8 : 05] And the section clearly goes right on to the very beginning of chapter 7. If you look at chapter 7, verse 1, you'll see another of Luke's little summary statements after he had finished all these sayings.

And then it goes on with something new. So, chapters 6 and 7 are clearly a very careful unit. And indeed, there are certain themes that clearly dominate this unit.

The chapters are full of references to sin and sinners and to Jesus' words about sin and to matters of right and wrong.

What is good and evil and what is lawful and lawless and so on. And if you look carefully, you will see that Luke has structured these chapters very carefully indeed. Chapter 5 and chapter 6 have exactly the same pattern.

You might have noticed when I was reading that I made a point. If you have one of the old King James versions, the authorized version of the Bible, you can feel very superior today because it's much clearer in your version.

[9 : 05] Look at chapter 5. You'll see that as I read, there are three episodes each beginning with the same words and it came to pass. Verse 1, verse 12, and verse 17.

It's not there in our ESV but it is there in the original languages. And then, verse 27 to the end of the chapter, there's a section where the focus is on Jesus' words.

And it ends with a parable in three parts. He also told them a parable, verse 36, about the old and the new. Old and new clothes, old and new wineskins, old and new wine.

Now just look quickly at chapter 6 and you will find that we have three episodes, verses 1, verse 6, and verse 12, each beginning the same way and it came to pass.

And then we have a long section from verse 20 to the end of the chapter with, you guessed it, Jesus teaching and finally a parable in three parts. Verse 39, he also told them a parable, this time about the good and the bad.

[10 : 06] Good and bad sight, good and bad fruit, and good and bad building. Now is that structure accidental? Of course it's not. It's Luke's version of what we today would do with bold types and big headings and all sorts of things.

It's telling us how to read his message so as to understand what he's trying to teach us. And his big concern all the way through both of these chapters is the authority and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The key verse in chapter 5 is verse 24. The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. This man acts with unique power and authority, Luke's telling us.

And then in chapter 6, the key verse is verse 5. The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. This man speaks and this man interprets God's law with unique power and authority.

So what is Luke telling us? Well, in chapter 5 he is saying that to understand Jesus' salvation we need to understand that Jesus Christ is the unique sovereign rescuer.

[11 : 24] That in him God's ultimate rescue is revealed. That Jesus as Savior has unique power and authority to redeem sinners completely and to usher in a new age of rejoicing.

That's why the chapter ends with the feasting at the bridegroom's table. Then in chapter 6 he is saying that to understand Jesus' salvation we also need to understand that Jesus is the unique sovereign ruler.

That in him God's ultimate rule on earth is revealed. That Jesus is Lord and that he has unique power and authority to rule his sons, his children.

To rule them completely. And so his coming ushers in a whole new age of responsibility. That's why chapter 6 ends with the commands that all who are true sons of God will hear Jesus' words and do them.

So what he's saying is that the people who know true salvation in Jesus are a people of great rejoicing because in him we have redemption, we have the forgiveness of sins and we're a people with great responsibilities because in him we have renewal as true sons of our heavenly father.

[12 : 42] Well, that's our bird's eye view of these two chapters. We'll look at chapter 6 next time. What it means is that Jesus is the unique and sovereign ruler but today we're going to focus on chapter 5 on Jesus the sovereign rescuer from sin.

As I've said it comes in two halves. Verses 1 to 26 we have the glorious events in these three stories and then from verse 27 to the end we have words of gospel explanation.

So let's look first at the three stories in verses 1 to 26 the glorious events. glorious works that demonstrate the message of forgiveness.

Lucas selected these episodes very carefully. Not just because a miracle is performed each time but because of something each of these stories also pictures about sin and forgiveness.

forgiveness. It's all explained very clearly later on as we'll see in verse 32. Jesus says his whole mission is about calling sinners to repentance. But the question is what does that really mean?

[13 : 51] Well let Jesus' works illustrate his words. The first story of Peter and the boat shows us redemption pictured as renewal.

rescue from the emptiness of sin to a life of fruitfulness under the direction of Jesus Christ. From the futility from the poverty of sins cursed to the purpose of God's kingdom and indeed to the pleasure of God himself in what we do.

Look how the story begins. Verses 1 to 3 tell us that the crowds were so eager to hear the word of God that is the good news of the kingdom that Jesus was proclaiming everywhere that they almost pushed Jesus into the lake.

And so he saw Peter's boat and he thought he'd use it as a pulpit. Not sure I'd fancy that myself but I guess he was sitting down not standing in the boat but at any rate Jesus gets into the boat and Peter seems happy to oblige.

And afterwards it perhaps seemed natural to go out and do some fishing. But while Jesus might have been the one to decide about preaching matters in matters of fishing it was clearly Peter who was the expert.

[15 : 05] Jesus wasn't. He was a carpenter. And verse 5 tells us that Peter knows that the fish simply were not about at that time. And to go out would be absolutely futile.

They'd already spent all night catching nothing. But suddenly Peter seems to grasp that he should obey the word of this extraordinary man.

And so they do in faith in Jesus' words they let down their net. And the result is absolutely astonishing. It was both success and also near disaster at the same time because not one but two boats were so full that they began to sink.

But the climax of this story is there in verse 8 in Peter's words. Do you see? Depart from me for I am a sinful man O Lord.

See the awesome power and authority of God right up close has a devastating effect on human beings. It exposes our smallness. It exposes the awesomeness of the power of God.

[16 : 11] And it exposes our sinfulness before the holiness of God. And that's what Peter suddenly felt here. Just like all the encounters of that that you read in the Bible.

Do you remember the story of the Israelites back at Sinai when God spoke to them from heaven? What happened? They fell on their faces too and they begged Moses to intercede. They were so afraid. And God said by the way that's the right reaction.

He says to Moses I wish my people always took me as seriously as that. But look at Jesus' response to Peter. It's quite astonishing. He doesn't say as we might have expected him to say fear not Peter.

I forgive your sins. He certainly doesn't say oh don't worry Peter your sins aren't a bother to me at all. Absolutely not. But what does he say in verse 10?

What he says is fear not Peter I can use even sinful people like you. And I will use even you.

[17 : 19] From now on you will be a catcher of men. Now how on earth can that be? Well we'll come to that in a minute. But for now just notice that awareness of your sin and your utter unworthiness doesn't disqualify you from service in the kingdom of Christ.

In fact it seems to be a prerequisite for all fruitful service. You can't serve fruitfully in Christ's mission of catching men rescuing men from sin unless you know that by rights you yourself have no place other than to need that rescue yourself.

That's what Peter understood. That you harbor no pride no boasting because you too are a sinful man dependent totally on the Savior's grace.

And you have to know that that Jesus power is at work not at your beck and call not to boost your personal ministry. Peter learned that very vividly that day didn't he?

Jesus power brought that miraculous catch but it almost sank Peter's boat in his whole business. It wasn't to be about Peter's fishing ambitions being used by God it was to be about God's fishing ambitions using Peter yes but using him in God's way.

[18 : 45] And that's a very humbling thing to learn but it's a vital lesson and Peter was clearly humbled he was shown to be absolutely out of his depth and Christ's business was absolutely beyond his control and his power.

It's a humbling thing and yet it's a wonderfully exalting thing. These men left everything and followed Jesus they were sinners self-confessed and yet they were transformed into servants of the Son of God.

It is a glorious picture is it not? Of the renewal of humanity through the call of the Savior. God made man as Lord of creation but here are men and for all their toil all night says verse 5 they couldn't even catch a single fish but suddenly under Jesus direction and control they're not just catching multitudes of fish but they're going to be catching men there's going to be a harvest of humanity for God through them.

Sinful men and think of all Peter's faults we know them very well from the scriptures don't we? Just as we know our own and yet they're transformed from futile toil into fruitful purpose for Jesus.

I don't think it's any accident that Luke makes a point here of telling us in verse 5 they had been toiling all night in futility. What was God's curse upon man's sin right back in Genesis 3 at the beginning?

[20 : 24] In pain you shall work the earth all the days of your life. By the sweat of your face you will eat until to dust you return. The whole creation was subject to futility and toil because of man's sin.

And we know that don't we? We toil through life. Yes even though our work and our careers and so on can give us great satisfaction as human beings because God's common grace has not deserted us.

He does bless even in a sinful world. And yet ultimately we know that without him it's all just in bondage to futility and fruitlessness it all ends in the grave.

But God's promise from the beginning was for a reversal of this. At last the great jubilee year would come the year of the Lord's favor when there would be no toil the very thing that Jesus had said had begun with his coming.

We saw that in chapter 4 and if you read on in the book of Isaiah from that bit that Jesus quotes in Luke chapter 4 you'll come to Isaiah chapter 65 where he promises that in the new heavens and the earth that God is bringing he says my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands they shall not toil in vain same words as used here.

[21 : 53] See the world and human beings renewed from the emptiness and toil under sin to the fruitfulness that there is in the kingdom of our God.

That's what Paul says in Romans chapter 8 creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and it will enjoy the freedom of the glory of the renewed children of God men and women renewed to serve their true destiny and that has begun now in the new age of the kingdom of Christ that's why Paul can write to the church in Corinth and say you need to know that none of your labors in the Lord are in vain.

And that is just what Luke is showing us right here by including this story in his gospel that nobody else does. When Peter and the others began to do even their ordinary daily work at Jesus direction and under Jesus control it was transformed into a work of abundant fruitfulness he makes his blessings flow far as the curse is found.

You see the redemption in Jesus means a renewal of our whole purpose in life from the emptiness of toil under sin to the fruitfulness of living our life under the direction of Christ from sin's futility and poverty to salvation's fruitfulness and its purpose and indeed in God's pleasure in our work whether we're fishermen or firemen or photographers or freshers at university or whatever we are now will that not transform your thoughts about going to work on Monday morning if we think about living our life that way that none of our labor in the Lord can ever now be just toil and futile in vain it's under his glorious direction here is a picture of man as he was created to be and is redeemed to be in Christ he's ruling over nature he's subduing the earth and he's filling it even ordinary people like these fishermen are called to be catchers of men that is to fill the earth with others who are being redeemed and renewed in Christ of course eventually

Peter and some of these others left everything they left the fishing to have particular tasks as apostles in the church none of us are going to have that unique role and very few are going to be set apart for particular roles in the church as paid workers of the church but every single believer in Christ is called to leave the futility and the emptiness of their toil under sin and to become fruitful laborers for Christ in his service he came to call sinners into his glorious service that's what salvation means but how can a sinful man become a fruitful servant of God well the second story tells us Jesus cleansing of the leper shows us redemption pictured as restoration rescue from the estrangement and the exclusion of sin into a life of fellowship with God in Jesus

[25 : 24] Christ Peter knew that God's holiness demands a distance from sin that's why he said what he said he must depart because he's unclean and contagious and the leper in Israel was a living demonstration of that awful truth he lived in total exclusion totally apart from human society Leviticus 13 tells us that wherever he went he had to shout unclean unclean so people would keep away and not be contaminated by him it's just like somebody with the Ebola virus today and all that is put around them to keep them apart from everybody else dreadful isolation and this man sees Jesus no doubt from a distance and he cries out if you will you can make me clean he did not doubt Jesus power notice but he did seem to doubt his own worth could even a loving God could even a gracious Savior care for someone so unclean as me the rest of society I'm sure would have said well very likely not no but Jesus answered do you see

I will and though his word cleansed him instantly notice he touched him deliberately assuring him of his compassion as well as his power that Jesus wouldn't be contaminated by his uncleanness but instead he would be cleansed by Jesus holiness and purity and notice Jesus did not mean by touching this man that he was saying he didn't need cleansing and that people must just accept him as he is absolutely not he does need cleansing he knows it and Jesus knows it but the man's problem was that because his uncleanness was so undeniable that he felt unworthy and he doubted whether there could be a place possibly for someone like him among Jesus and his followers and you know I find that's true still today for many many people maybe they come to church maybe they know that they need the help of Jesus

Christ but the thing is they look around and it seems to them as though everybody else's life looks very clean and very sorted not like theirs which is so obviously a complete mess and maybe their past haunts them and they feel dirty and unclean maybe it's a messy sexual history maybe it's disastrous relational breakdown maybe it's a very obvious mess of drink or drugs it could be a whole heap of things that taint your life and you know it and others know it and you're weighed down by hopelessness and although you see the power and the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ you're like this leper you think to yourself well could he could he want to help the likes of me would he even want to know a dirty creature like me I find sometimes even people who have been Christians for a very long time in their lives feel like that often when they've messed things up badly again or where you think you have and you think there's been some calamity that would make the

Lord distance himself from you again or make the Lord's people want to distance himself from you when Satan tempts you to despair and tells you of the guilt within friends look at verse 13 and let that verse be burned into your heart and your mind forever I will make you clean be clean I really don't like tattoos I can't understand why they're so back in fashion today and I can't understand why women in particular seem to be having them and I hate to think what they'll think in 10 or 20 or 30 years time when they will no doubt deeply regret it but I'm almost tempted almost tempted to have those words there in that verse tattooed onto my forearm to look at every time Satan tempts me to despair which let me tell you is very very often in the uncleanness of my heart and I doubt the willingness of

God to accept me once again to be able to look and see I will be clean I'm not going to but I certainly need them to be tattooed in my mind and in my heart and friends so do you how can a sinful man or woman like Peter like you and me become renewed servants of God fulfilling our destiny as God's image in this world bringing the glory of his kingdom throughout creation only because he brings cleansing from the filth of even our worst sin to the purity of the savior redeems us from the estrangement and the exclusion and restores us into intimate fellowship with God our father through the touch of his son Jesus Christ I will do it and he does do it and that's what Luke is telling us so very vividly right here and Jesus makes the man go to the priest says verse 14 for a proof for a testimony to them because surely they will grasp what this means they were experts in the diagnosis of uncleanness they could confirm when somebody was clean but even they could never make a leper clean but here is someone who can and as

[31 : 29] Jesus says later on in chapter 7 to John's disciples the blind see the lame walk lepers are cleansed the dead are raised don't you see what this means it means a new day is dawning at last in this world and what the priests of the law could never do on their own the fulfillment of the law in Christ the promised great high priest he can do and he will do and he does do even to the most hopeless sinner the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death is how Paul puts it in Romans chapter 8 what you priests are seeing is the actual cleansing of sin that the whole law has looked for and longed for from the very beginning that's Jesus message to them and the next picture shows that fulfillment again so clearly because God himself who yes alone can forgive sin has come now to earth to forgive sins on earth and to show that the year of the

Lord's favor the great jubilee year of release that at last has come just as God promised it would you see the healing of the paralytic shows redemption pictured as release release from the enslavement of sin and into the freedom of our Lord Jesus Christ what a wonderful picture we have here what a wonderful picture right away in verse 18 a friend taking a dear friend determinedly to where Jesus can be found nothing would stop them even if they had to hack a hole in the roof because verse 17 they knew as well that the power of the Lord was with him to heal and Jesus responded wonderfully to their faith but notice not to the man's faith Jesus word indeed created saving faith in his heart as he pronounced forgiveness on him but here it's the faith of the bringers that Jesus honors and bless I wonder if we really believe that our faith in bringing needy friends to where Jesus can be found that that faith will be rewarded maybe that's why we don't do it very often but Jesus does rejoice to reward such faith and I know that some of you are here this morning just because friends of yours brought you here to meet the

Lord Jesus Christ he loves it when people bring their helpless friends to find him just as he loves it when we bring our helpless infants to him to the font where we seek his blessing for them and in our ongoing prayers where we commit them constantly to his care it was in that faith that these people brought the paralytic seeking his power no doubt for their bodily healing but Jesus' priority was not his paralysis but his sin it's quite hard for us to grasp that I think it's hard for us sometimes to stomach this because we think God should be much much more interested in things like our bodily health and well-being that tends to be the focus of our prayers as well isn't it but you see so often when we seek help from Jesus the help that he says we need is far deeper and quite different to our own particular diagnosis

Jesus is much much more concerned with matters of eternal significance and so he meets this man's ultimate need verse 20 your sins are forgiven you and immediately of course that causes a stir no doubt for all sorts of reasons but Luke focuses on the reaction of the scribes and Pharisees that he's been careful to tell us were there from all over the country even from Jerusalem now they're experts in theology they know all about sin and forgiveness they know that only God can possibly forgive sins and so indeed it would be a blasphemy to claim that power for anyone who wasn't divine and so just as Jesus had sent a proof to the priests he now gives a proof to the scribes and the lawyers which is easier to say he says your sins are forgiven or rise and walk well of course it's far easier to say your sins are forgiven but it's very hard to prove it or disprove it but there's no disproving the power that makes a paralytic get up and walk and so

Jesus gives them an unequivocal proof of his power and authority and at the same time gives them a wonderful picture of a far greater reality that he has just granted to this man liberation from the bondage of his sins something that is real and tangible and joyful now the Jews of course they knew all about God's forgiveness and indeed they experienced God's forgiveness that was the great joy of the Old Testament faith oh the blessedness of the man who knows his sins are covered but no one had ever ever known the complete release from the enslavement and the paralysis of sin release from a body of sin and death they knew that that could only happen at the last day the great day of the Lord Lord and as someone says the righteous will stand in the judgment but the wicked will perish but here

[37 : 21] Jesus makes an absolutely unique claim he is personally releasing now this man from his sins and he is demonstrating what that means for everyone to see it is a release from the enslavement of sin into the glory and liberty of life the son of man he says in verse 24 has authority to forgive sins on earth now before the last judgment it's the promise of the year of the Lord's favor being fulfilled now right in front of you see in the gospel of the kingdom Jesus is proclaiming that the judgment of the last day is being brought right into the present day here on earth that it can begin now because the new age of God's kingdom is beginning on this earth who can forgive sins but God alone quite right none can but here is God on earth as man as the son of man he's enigmatically using that phrase that

Daniel used the man Daniel saw in his vision in Daniel chapter 7 ascending to the throne of God a true human being and yet having somehow all the power and authority of God you see there can be no mistake something utterly new utterly unique is happening in the world now that Jesus has come something that brings transformation of human life even now before the final judgment of God releasing people from bondage and slavery to sin through the forgiveness of their sins forgiveness in a forgiveness that is real and permanent and eternal that's why Paul says in Colossians in him we have redemption release in the forgiveness of our sins and that is what Jesus here in these stories is demonstrating and what Luke is highlighting this is what forgiveness really means this is what it really does for human beings it means redemption everlasting rescue by God's sovereign rescuer release from the enslavement of sin and death into freedom in Christ restoration from the estrangement of sin and death into fellowship with God in Christ and renewal from the emptiness of sin into fruitfulness for God in Christ and Luke you see drives this message home as he turns from the events to give

Jesus own further explanation of these events and that's what verses 27 to 39 give us the Lord's own gospel explanation after the glorious works that demonstrate the message of forgiveness we have his gospel words that declare the meaning of forgiveness and if we have any doubt whatsoever about what this is all about Jesus dispels it here verses 27 and 28 they show another instance of the greatest miracle of all Jesus power to forgive and to rescue from sin and the resultant total transformation of life that takes place we have Levi this tax collector despised fat cat collaborator sinner but he does exactly what Peter and the others did he leaves all and follows Jesus into a completely new life altogether he's transformed just like the leper just like the paralytic his old life has absolutely gone a completely new life has begun here is new creation and Jesus explains it in verse 32 it's all about calling sinners to repentance that's what this is all about and it involves a radical rescue from the old life and a radical renewal into a new life altogether and Jesus is quite explicit he leaves us in no doubt at all that we're quite right to understand his healing miracles as signs of this rescue look at verse 31

I am the doctor he says who has come to cure the sickness of human sin that's what this is all about people need that essential and radical cure God's forgiveness alone rescues us from that state of sin but when it does he says it brings an essential and radical change in life and that is what we see also in Levi and what goes on in his house see the evidence of Levi's radical change is seen in his immediate desire to use everything that he has all his wealth his home to use it for Christ and his kingdom as often that's the joy isn't it of the new believer they want to share what they find with their friends and one of the clearest evidences of a genuine spiritual work in somebody's life is when their wallets are opened their substance their time their talents their money are prioritized for the work of Christ's kingdom well here's

Jesus now in Levi's house enjoying his hospitality among so many of his friends hospitality by the way played a massive part didn't it in the ministry of Jesus and in the expansion of the early church and has done ever since such a natural thing isn't it that when Jesus is at the very heart of your home life well all of those who come within your home and share your life will sense that and what a picture of transformation of radical change we have here here was a man who was up until that day a getter a getter from people for himself now we see he's a giver of himself for people and for Jesus sake see and God uses our backgrounds doesn't he when he changes us through repentance Levi's associates the other tax collectors the sinners which usually means prostitutes well in fact these were the only kind of people he knew because other decent people would have kept away from him and God uses him to reach them and God uses his wealth which is now put to work for him and God uses his education of course

[43 : 54] Levi's other name was Matthew who wrote Matthew's gospel and so his education has turned from creative accounting for himself out of love for himself to creative writing for Jesus and for others see this is a wonderful thing that God has done in his life and Jesus says it is the reason that he came to bring that essential cure through forgiveness of sins to bring that essential radical change to lives that are transformed forever as he grants repentance into new life every sin sick person leaving the old life behind and following him into a life of marvelous joy and it is isn't it a picture of joy and rejoicing the great feast in Levi's house and Jesus says in verse 34 it's quite fitting because not only is he the physician who cures and brings radical rescue from sin he's the bridegroom who brings the change of radical renewal into the joy of a new age of consummation

God's plan and purpose for the world is being consummated here in the bridegroom's house and that's what Jesus is saying in these last verses verses 33 to 39 in response to the grumbles of the Pharisees and these men of religion you see they don't like Jesus mixing with sinners it erodes their sense of moral superiority and they don't like him and his lack of sobriety and fasting it disturbs their sense of religious security so easy isn't it for the human heart to be like that whether we're religious or whether we've actually got no religion at all it's so easy isn't it for us to think well at least I'm better than him I'm not nearly so bad as her see they think that Jesus is not taking sin and religion nearly as seriously as they did but in fact

Jesus is saying it's far far more serious than you have ever ever understood it to be it's a matter of life and death eternal life and eternal death sin is a sickness says Jesus with a hundred percent eternal mortality and my medicine has saved these men from that fate how can they not rejoice and be glad with me they knew that they were in dire danger just like those poor wretches overcome by Ebola almost all the cases are fatal aren't they that's why it's world news when somebody recovers and Jesus said I came not just to offer a patch up job to these sinners lives not just to give a few add-ons to your old ways of religion however good and God given they were in their day and of course the Old Testament faith was God's own way for the era of promise it was the only way of true faith but even

God's holy law could never bring about a new world could never end the curse could never bring the restoration of the glory of God's kingdom why because of course only God's presence personally on earth can forgive sins and do that but here is God now doing what the law weakened by sinful flesh could not do actually achieving lasting forgiveness and therefore bringing in a whole new world the day of the bridegroom the day of consummation it's here says Jesus now behold I'm making all things new in your presence all the old order has to pass away that's the point of Jesus' parable isn't it when your old garment wears out you don't buy a new one and then cut up the new one to patch up the old thing so you can keep wearing the old thing it's ridiculous when you make new wine in those days you don't put it into old wine skins that are already hard and brittle and cracked they'll burst it'll all be lost of course not you put new wine in new wine skins everything's new in other words when the whole new age of

God's kingdom comes into the world or into someone's life everything becomes new for the religious establishment of Israel that meant seeing all the old ways superseded their law their priests their temple giving way to the fulfillment that all of these things had always pointed to in the first place in the Messiah true Israelites saw that and rejoiced John the Baptist Zechariah and Elizabeth Simeon and Anna longing for that day and embracing it for every individual it meant then as it means today giving up the old life and embracing the new and heeding Jesus' call to repent coming to Jesus the great sin doctor for his essential radical cure and being led by him into an essential radical change of life because Jesus forces upon everyone an essential and radical challenge it must be all new or nothing at all is new you can't have any of the new in Jesus and still cling on to the old it just can't be try it it won't work it's like patching an old garment it's like putting wine in an old wine skin it just cannot be medicine that leads you to health and life can only do that by killing off the disease of death and so the Jesus who offers a radical cure and a radical change demands a radical choice new or old the challenge is absolute you see it is essential and the tragedy is that some will not have the new life that he offers because they are unwilling to give up the old that's the last verse verse 39 after drinking the old wine they don't want the new because they say well the old is quite good enough for me thank you very much maybe cherish religious ways like the

[50 : 36] Jewish leaders they'd rather have the temple of God without God than the God whose temple it was well there's plenty of religious people today who would rather have historic church buildings than the gospel that those buildings were built for in the first place it may be a cherished way of life or culture or behavior or relationship or whatever it is that you want to cling on to you're happy to have a sprinkling of Christian ways but you don't want and you don't think you need too radical a change to your life because the old wine is rather mellow and congenial and very familiar but friends you need to understand here that according to Jesus to prefer to to remain deadly sick with no hope of cure no hope of change no hope of radical renewal that you need if you are to escape the disaster that is your human sin and inherit instead the joy the release the restoration the renewal of life in the everlasting kingdom of

God the old is good how utterly wrong that is did the leper think the old was good did the paralytic think the old was good they knew how sick they were and that is the paradox isn't it of Jesus challenge I've not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners those who think they're fine and well beware it's you says Jesus who are in real danger you're so much sicker than you know how foolish how tragic to ignore the doctor who can heal you and give you life but for those who know they're sick who like Peter say I'm a sinful man who fall down in shame and think Jesus will run from you Jesus says to you rejoice the power of the Lord is with him to heal the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins he can make you clean and as the leper discovered that day he will

I don't know maybe the Lord Jesus is calling to someone this very morning as he did to Levi and saying come follow me let me say don't be afraid to follow the great physician you'll find when you do that the bitter medicine that you are dreading and fearing that in fact it will turn out to be the finest of wine in his gracious hand that's the joy of Jesus Christ our sovereign rescuer let's pray heavenly father how we thank you that you sent your son to seek and to save the lost to heal the sickness of sin deep in our hearts that would keep us from you that would make our lives futile and fruitless help us we pray to grasp with both hands and a full heart the offer of your grace and so walk with you in newness of life until the great day of your coming for Jesus sake amen