

SERMON NOTES
Luke 5:1-39
“People Jesus Touches and Uses”

Intro:

- One of the most puzzling twists of the story of the last week of Jesus’ life is the way the Jerusalem crowd did a 180-degree turn from the shouts of “Hosanna” on Palm Sunday to the shouts of “Crucify him” 5 days later on Good Friday
- *Of course, the Palm Sunday crowd and the Good Friday crowd were not identical – but there undoubtedly would have been much overlap*
- No U.S. President has ever experienced such a sudden, precipitous plunge in approval ratings as did Jesus during that Holy Week
- *Why the sudden and dramatic change in popular sentiment?*
- One major contributing factor would have been unmet expectations
- *Turns out – Jesus was not who the Palm Sunday crowd thought he was – Jesus was not the kind of Messiah they expected him to be*
- *The Palm Sunday crowd was looking forward to Jesus’ coronation as Davidic King who would overthrow the Romans and lead Israel to unprecedented heights of glory and power*
- No one in the Palm Sunday crowd would have expected – or understood– a Jewish Messiah being rejected by their own religious leaders and then flogged, crowned with thorns and crucified by the Romans
- *Turns out – Jesus of Nazareth was not who they thought he was*
- They loved the Jesus of their own imagination – but hated the real Jesus
- Some things never change – same problem exists today
- *Everybody has their own idea of who Jesus is – and they love that Jesus – and claim allegiance to that Jesus – but is the real Jesus who they imagine him to be? And what if the real Jesus turns out to be different from their idea of Jesus?*
- *Currently, a heated debate is taking place between Glenn Beck and some of his conservative followers and Jim Wallis and some of his progressive followers as to whether or not Jesus included social justice in his teachings – and as to what social justice really means*
- The Jesus of the Left and the Jesus of the Right are radically different
- ***Neither Jesus resembles the Jesus of the NT very closely***

- Some people want to make Jesus into a Socialist while others want to make Jesus into a Tea Party Conservative
- *They believe in a Jesus of their own making – who conveniently agrees with all their thinking and opinions, and never challenges any of their liberal or conservative ideology*
- But what if it turns out that the real Jesus is not the same as the Jesus of their imagination and ideology – *would they still want to follow Him?*
- ***The real Jesus is neither a Socialist nor a Liberal Democrat nor a Conservative Republican***
- **Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth– and he simply does not fit into the box of any political ideology or party**
- What is Jesus like? What is his mission? What does it mean to follow him and serve him as Lord?
- *We won't find out by listening to talk shows or reading newspapers or blogs*
- There is only one authoritative source for finding out what the real Jesus of Nazareth is like – namely, the NT Gospels
- *Today: Luke 5*

I. PEOPLE JESUS TOUCHES

- On what kinds of people did Jesus focus his ministry?

Luke 4:18 (NIV) ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,

- *The poor and needy, the broken-hearted, the oppressed and downtrodden, the physically and spiritually blind, captives of sin and Satan,*
- **People our vision statement identifies as vulnerable**
- *The unhealthy, the unwanted, the unloved were the focus of Jesus' mission and are the focus of God's vision assignment for us*

(1) Lepers and Outcasts

Luke 5:12 - 13 (NIV) ¹²While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.” ¹³Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. **“I am willing,”** he said. **“Be clean!”** And immediately the leprosy left him.

- ***Pastor Mark preached an excellent sermon from this story in the Gospel of Mark a few weeks ago, so a few brief reminders here will suffice:***

Father Damien (ministry to lepers on Molokai): *“believed that human beings, no matter what their affliction, should never be cast aside. It was up to the church to care for the sick, the unwanted, the unloved.”*

- ***During his earthly ministry, Jesus touched the untouchable and the unclean and those who had been shunned and rejected by the respectable religious people of society***
- ***His heart of compassion has not changed***
- ***But he no longer walks the earth in the flesh***
- ***We are now his body – his hands – to touch the untouchable / the unclean / the unwanted / the unloved***
- ***Who are the untouchables and the unclean and the unwanted in our society?***
- ***People we don't get too close to // people we avoid // people we're afraid of // people from whom we avert our eyes – or else stare at – as if some alien species // people who make us feel uncomfortable***
- ***The homeless // the severely disabled // the unkempt // those who have an odor of alcohol or uncleanness about them // sex offenders // flagrant gays or lesbians // young black men or Muslims // AIDS victims – especially gays with AIDS***
- ***People who would feel unwanted even in many conservative churches***
- ***Imagine if you had a stroke and temporarily lost the use of your hands and arms and legs***
- ***Your mind is still sharp – and your heart still feels strong passions – but your feet won't take you where you want to go, and your hands won't do what you want them to do***
- ***I wonder if Jesus sometimes feels as frustrated as a stroke victim***
- ***Sometimes his feet won't take him where his compassionate heart wants to go // Sometimes his hands won't touch the people his heart of compassion wants to touch***
- ***And as a result – the very people who were the focus of his ministry often feel unwelcome in the houses of worship where his body gathers in his name***
- ***How the Spirit of Jesus must grieve at times***

- **But how pleased His Spirit must be when local churches intentionally seek to reach out and make a significant impact in the lives of the kinds of vulnerable and unwanted people on whom Jesus focused his ministry**
(2) Paralytics and Helpless

Luke 5:17-26 ¹⁷One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.) And the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus.

¹⁸Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to push through the crowd to Jesus, ¹⁹but they couldn't reach him. So they went up to the roof, took off some tiles, and lowered the sick man down into the crowd, still on his mat, right in front of Jesus. ²⁰Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, **"Son, your sins are forgiven."**

²¹"Who does this man think he is?" the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to each other. "This is blasphemy! Who but God can forgive sins?"

²²Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, **"Why do you think this is blasphemy? ²³Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Get up and walk'? ²⁴I will prove that I, the Son of Man, have the authority on earth to forgive sins."** Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, **"Stand up, take your mat, and go on home, because you are healed!"**

²⁵And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped to his feet, picked up his mat and went home praising God! ²⁶Everyone present was gripped with awe and fear. And they praised God, remarking over and over again, "We have seen strange things today."

- *Practical needs or spiritual needs – which are more important? Which did Jesus focus on? Which should be our priority?*
- **Since some churches focus mainly on physical needs and social justice issues– should we neglect those and focus only on preaching the Gospel and meeting spiritual needs?**
- *If we want to be true to Jesus – we will minister to the whole person and seek to meet as many different needs as possible – physical, spiritual, emotional, relational, financial or whatever*
- **Jesus was teaching in a home in Capernaum – news of his healing power had spread, and a crowd gathered inside and outside the house**
- **Suddenly Jesus' teaching was interrupted by a loud pounding on the roof – followed by debris falling into the room as a hole in the roof was opened**
- **Down through the hole in the roof was lowered a carpetlike mat – with a man lying on the mat!**

- *The man couldn't move – and before his friends could explain to Jesus what they were doing, Jesus said to the man on the mat: **Friend, your sins are forgiven***
- *The Pharisees were outraged – and the man's friends were perplexed*
- *The Pharisees were outraged because only God can forgive sins – and it was blasphemous for Jesus to claim this divine prerogative*
- *And the friends were perplexed because they had brought the paralyzed man to Jesus to be healed, not forgiven*

- *Of course, Jesus knew that – so why did he first forgive the man who needed healing?*

- *The religious leaders believed that sickness was caused by sin, and healing could not take place until sins were forgiven*
- *First the sick person must get right with God through repentance – and then he could pray for healing*

- *Though it is not true that every sickness is caused by a specific sin – it is true that sickness and death came into the world through the sin of Adam & Eve // and that sinful thoughts and attitudes and lifestyles are contributing factors in many health problems // and the practice of confessing sins before praying for healing is taught in James 5*

- *Jesus uses the religious leaders' understanding of sin and sickness to prove that He is the Son of God*
- *Rather than simply healing the man, he first declares the man's sins to be forgiven – knowing full well that this authority can come only from God*
- *Knowing what the religious leaders were thinking, he then puts them on the horns of a dilemma:*
- *“Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?”*
- *Of course, it is easier to say that his sins are forgiven – because no one can see that – there is no way to verify or falsify that claim*
- *It is harder to say “Get up and walk” because that can be easily verified or falsified – either the man gets up and walks or he doesn't*

- *But in reality, the claim to forgive sins is the greater claim – because only God can do that*
- *Furthermore, according to the religious leaders' own beliefs – God does not heal sinners – there must be forgiveness first in order for healing to take place*

- So Jesus says: *“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...”* He said to the paralyzed man: *Get up, take your mat, and go home”*
- **If God gives Jesus the power to heal the paralyzed man – that proves that God gave Jesus the authority to forgive sins**
- *The man then gets up and walks – proving that his sins were in fact forgiven – proving that God had given to Jesus both the power to heal and the authority to forgive sins – proving that Jesus is the Son of God*
- **Jesus still has power to heal and authority to forgive today**
- *The message of the Cross declares that by his wounds we are healed and by his blood we are forgiven*
- **The message of forgiveness of sins through Jesus’ sacrificial death is the core of the Gospel and must always be emphasized by the church**
- *But meeting practical needs is also integral to the body of Christ continuing the ministry of Christ in the world today*
- **It is not either spiritual or physical // It is both-and**

(3) Tax Collectors and Sinners

Luke 5:27-32 ²⁷Later, as Jesus left the town, he saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at his tax-collection booth. **“Come, be my disciple!”** Jesus said to him. ²⁸So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.

²⁹Soon Levi held a banquet in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor. Many of Levi’s fellow tax collectors and other guests were there. ³⁰But the Pharisees and their teachers of religious law complained bitterly to Jesus’ disciples, *“Why do you eat and drink with such scum?”*

³¹Jesus answered them, **“Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. ³²I have come to call sinners to turn from their sins, not to spend my time with those who think they are already good enough.”**

- *It’s hard for us to imagine the absolute contempt with which Jews regarded fellow-Jews who collected taxes for the occupying Romans – and then lined their own pockets with the excess they extracted from their fellow citizens*
- **Take the contempt you feel for CEOs of companies receiving bail-out money and then giving themselves bonuses – and multiply that outrage by 100, and you have something approaching Jewish attitudes toward tax collectors**
- *And it was to such a tax collector – named Levi or Matthew – that Jesus issued a call to join his band of disciples, which also included a Zealot, who opposed the payment of any taxes to Rome – sometimes violently*

- Think of joining together on the same Deacon board a leader of the Tea Party movement and a leading champion of the health care reform bill
- ***Reaching out to a tax collector and including him in the band of disciples was even more scandalous than Jesus including prostitutes and other immoral sinners among his followers***
- ***No wonder the Pharisees were absolutely scandalized and outraged and could not possibly believe that such a man could be a Messiah or prophet***
- Surely the Messiah would surround himself with disciples just like the Pharisees – *morally respectable and religiously conservative // learned in the Scriptures // scrupulous law-keepers // highly respected among religious and political leaders // and properly distanced from the riff-raff of society*
- To the contrary – Jesus often hangs out and eats and drinks with tax collectors and other notorious sinners
- *He didn't come to congratulate the righteous for their piety and morality*
- He came to heal the sick and save sinners
- Churches that are growing in Christ-likeness will be safe and inviting places for the riff-raff of society

II. PEOPLE JESUS USES

- ***God is calling us to become a spiritually dynamic body making a significant impact in vulnerable families through our neighborhood schools***
- **What kind of people does God use to reach vulnerable people?**

Clearly it is not a matter of the “invulnerable” ministering to the vulnerable.

--*We must be careful not to think in terms of Us vs. Them.*

--Haven't we all been vulnerable at one time or another? And sometimes still are?

--*Even Jesus was vulnerable in the Garden of Gethsemane.*

--I think of *SonShine Community Ministries* as a good example of the vulnerable ministering to the vulnerable – or perhaps better put: *Christ ministering through the vulnerable to the vulnerable.*

It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

--*Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

--And now he calls sinners to himself through other sinners-made-righteous-by-grace – *we are all works-in-progress who never outgrow our need of Jesus’ healing touch somewhere in our lives.*

If we ever lose touch with our own vulnerability, we will lose touch with the very people we are trying to reach in Jesus’ name.

Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted.

--He heals the broken through the broken-becoming-whole-but-not-there-yet.

- What kind of people does Jesus work through to accomplish his mission?

(1) Ordinary Fishermen and Unworthy Sinners

- The professional fishermen had returned from a long, hard night of work without catching any fish
- *Jesus – the carpenter’s son and itinerant preacher – when he finished teaching the crowd gathered along the lakeshore – told Simon Peter the professional fisherman to go back out –and try again*
- Peter was undoubtedly somewhat skeptical, but out of respect for Jesus, did as he was told
- ***Astonishingly, they soon caught two boatloads of fish***

Luke 5:8 - 10 (NIV) ⁸When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” ⁹For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, **“Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.”**

- ***This ordinary fisherman and unworthy sinner became the rock on which Jesus built his church***
- Peter did not feel worthy of becoming a Christ-follower
- ***He apparently believed that God works with and uses only the pious and the exceptionally religious and talented***
- He was wrong
- Peter was exactly the kind of man God uses: ***humble enough to admit his neediness and unworthiness // humble enough to understand his dependence upon God’s grace and power // humble enough to do what he is told rather than thinking that he knows better***

- It is not humility that causes a Christian to say: *God cannot use me. I am too ordinary. I have nothing to offer.*
- That is not humility – that is pride and unbelief and rebellion– *the pride of thinking you know better than God // the unbelief of not taking God at His Word // the rebellion of not doing what you're told*
- **God uses ordinary people to reach ordinary people and then turns them into extraordinary servants of Christ by His grace and power**

(2) Caring Friends with Faith

- *All around us are people who are emotionally, physically, and mentally paralyzed*
- You may not be a physician or a counselor or a social worker or a pastor
- *What can you do to help them with their needs?*
- **You can do what the friends of the paralyzed man did: *Bring people to Jesus***
- *If you care for people in need – and if you have faith to believe that Jesus can help them – then bring them to Jesus*
- *But their needs are great and their problems are serious – and I am so ordinary and unskilled in these matters – what can I do to help them?*
- Wrong question – and wrong attitude
- The issue is not: *What can you do to solve their problems?*
- Most likely: *Very little*
- The question is: *Who can help them?*
- And the answer is: **JESUS**
- Your responsibility is to care enough and have faith enough to bring them to Jesus
- *You can bring them to Jesus by praying for them*
- You can bring them to Jesus by bringing them to church
- *You can bring them to Jesus by bringing them to our Easter Services next Sunday*
- You can bring them to Jesus by sharing your testimony with them
- *You can bring them to Jesus by extending Christ's love to them and meeting their practical needs in Jesus' name*
- You can bring them to Jesus by sharing with them how to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior

(3) Tax Collectors and Despised Sinners

- *What is the first thing that Levi or Matthew did when he accepted Jesus' call to follow him?*
- He threw a dinner party for all of his friends and co-workers to meet Jesus
- *Who were his friends and co-workers?*
- Other tax collectors and despised sinners
- *The scum of the earth in the eyes of the morally respectable religious people of the day*

- **People that matter to God**
- *The very kinds of people that Jesus came to seek and to save*
- People that Levi was uniquely well-equipped to reach
- **It takes one to know one and to reach one**

- *Perhaps more than any other issue, this is what separates religious Pharisees from Jesus and his true followers – both then and now*
- Pharisees – both then and now – seek to separate and isolate themselves from sinners in order to avoid being defiled by their sinful ways
- *Jesus – and his true disciples – both then and now – take the initiative to seek out sinners in order to extend God's saving grace to them*

- *Because of his background, Levi could reach people who would have been unreachable by a Peter or Paul or the other apostles*
- Every one of you has a unique circle of influence due to your occupation or background or relationships or neighborhood
- *You know people and can reach people that I could never reach*

- You may think that you are not a good enough Christian to reach these people for Christ
- *The example of Levi teaches otherwise*
- **If you are following Jesus – however imperfectly – and if you care about the souls of your friends and co-workers and relatives – then you can introduce them to Jesus**
- *In some cases, you may be the only Christian they know who can tell them about Jesus*
- By all means – take steps to grow in holiness and spiritual maturity and knowledge of the Word of God
- *But God can use you right now – just as you are – to bring people to Jesus*
- You can start by inviting some people to our Easter services next Sunday

(4) New Wineskins

Luke 5:37 - 39 (NIV) ³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. The new wine would burst the old skins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. ³⁸ New wine must be put into new wineskins. ³⁹ But no one who drinks the old wine seems to want the fresh and the new. ‘The old is better,’ they say.’

- *New wine expands as it completes the fermentation process*
- *New wineskins are soft and flexible and are capable of expanding as the wine ferments*
- *As wineskins age, they get hard, brittle, rigid, inflexible*
- *When new wine is put into old wineskins, as the wine ferments and expands, the old wineskins are not able to stretch to accommodate the new wine – and the old wineskin will burst and the new wine will be spilled and lost*

- **Jesus here is likening himself and his life and his ways and his teachings and his kingdom to new wine**
- *And he is likening people to wineskins*
- *Some people are like new wineskins – flexible, capable of being stretched, open to change, open to new ideas and new ways and new movements of God’s Spirit*
- *Other people are like old wineskins – rigid, inflexible, fearing change, opposing new ideas and new ways, skeptical of new movements of God’s Spirit*

- **Wherever the life and power of Jesus are present in fullness and freedom – there will be change // there will be renewal // the old will be replaced with the new**
- *The Spirit of Jesus is constantly at work bringing renewal – in individuals and in churches – and renewal always means change*

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 ¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

- *Sanctification is a process of change after change after change into the glory and likeness of Christ*
- **Individuals are always in need of spiritual renewal – and renewal means change**

- *Churches are always in need of the new wine of Jesus' life being poured out into them – and that new wine can only be contained by new wineskins that are flexible and capable of being stretched*
- *Core biblical truths never change – but there is always room for growth and improvement in how we put those truths into practice*
- *But there are always those in every church who say – as in Jesus' parable – **The old is better***
- *They prefer the old and are unwilling to try the new*
- *Churches that are dominated by that mentality resist the renewing work of the Holy Spirit and end up stagnating and eventually declining*
- *I am now 57, and my body is not as flexible as it used to be even though I do some stretching exercises and some jogging*
- *But I am resolved to keep my heart and mind and soul as flexible as possible as I grow older so that Jesus can continue to pour his new wine into my soul*
- **God is calling Cornerstone to become a spiritually dynamic body making a significant impact in vulnerable families through our neighborhood schools**
- *To become a spiritually dynamic body, we need to be flexible new wineskins capable of stretching, and we need to be open to a fresh moving of the Holy Spirit in our midst*

Conclusion:

- *Everybody likes Jesus, right?*
- *Well, everybody may like the Jesus of their own imagination – the one who thinks just like they think about everything – but the real Jesus ended up being nailed to a Cross – with religious people and irreligious people of every stripe and ideology giving their consent*
- *Here in this chapter alone Jesus made a lot of people mad*
- **He claimed divine authority to forgive sins and then backed it up with his healing power**
- *He calls a tax collector to be one of his disciples and then attends a dinner party with a whole houseful of tax collectors and other sinners*
- *He tells the righteous people who are offended by his association with sinners: “I didn't come for you righteous rule-followers who think you are already good enough to please God – I came to seek and to save sinners like tax collectors and prostitutes”*

- He disappointed some religious people because he was not a tee-totaler and his disciples enjoyed life too much with their eating and drinking
- *He offended some religious people who held fast to their religious traditions and who tried to use the Scriptures to oppose the new work of God taking place in Jesus' ministry – calling these traditionalists a bunch of “old bags” – (old wineskins, actually)*
- Then in chapter 6 we see Jesus making more religious people mad with his liberal views on the Sabbath – even claiming to be Lord of the Sabbath
- *The real Jesus makes all kinds of people mad – angry enough to want to kill him, in fact*
- **That is the Jesus we follow – that is the Jesus we call “Lord”**
- **The real Jesus challenges our thinking and renews our mind by changing our mind about many things**
- *If you haven't changed your mind about anything recently – then that is probably an indication of becoming a rigid old wineskin*
- ***The real Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath – Lord over every religious tradition – Lord over every interpretation of Scripture – Lord over every church and denomination and creed***
- **His Kingdom is not of this world – *His Kingdom is not just the GOP on steroids* – His Kingdom is radically different from anything this world has ever seen**
- ***And He boldly calls us to give Him an allegiance that transcends and surpasses all other allegiances – whether to our nation or to a political party or to any other cause or ideology or religious tradition***
- **Jesus Christ is Lord of all – and fullness of life is found in bowing the knee to Him and Him alone**

Prayer

“Majesty”