

Why Aren't You Like Us?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 May 2025

Preacher: Pastor Dave Thompson

[0 : 00] You can be turning to Luke chapter 5. Luke chapter 5. Read that in just a moment.

As we're turning there, we're in the midst of some interesting situations where Luke has put together some of the events, mainly in chronological order, but not entirely.

To prove some points, points that would be encouraging to Gentiles, and in several different ways, and we'll see some of those as we go through this, and proving a point.

And I've just been amazed at how Luke thought about this. He didn't just start writing one day and say, oh, I think I'll mention this, and I think I'll mention that, and I think I'll mention the other thing.

He really put a lot of work into preparing the gospel. Think of him preparing a sermon. It's as though he sat down, okay, what do I want to do?

[1 : 08] And he's saying, I want these Gentiles to realize that they're included too. And even though the world may look at them and say, oh, they're Gentiles, they're no Jews.

Luke is saying, no, that's not what God is saying. And they're not outside of God's plan. And so Luke is writing this, and he's ordering the events in such a way as to point to these Gentiles.

Remember, it was written to a man called Theophilus, who was a Greek, a Gentile. And the book would be delivered to him, but it would be shared with Gentiles.

And if they had listened to the Jews, the Jews would have said all along, that book's not for you. And what God's doing is not for you.

And so Luke, having heard the gospel, having heard Jesus, or heard of Jesus, and the things that he said, he wanted to share and say, yes, the gospel, the work of Christ, the work of God, is for all people.

[2 : 20] And so he's ordered this and arranged this so as to help them to understand that. I'm going to be reading from Luke chapter 5, starting in verse 27. And we'll read to the end of the chapter.

And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at him.

And the Pharisees and their scribes, 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.

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

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.

[3 : 52] 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 will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.

And no one puts new wine in old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed.

But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, The old is good.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you for your great wisdom and kindness to raise up these people who've put it together.

Thank you that you gave the people who wrote goals in their writing, and that they recorded faithfully the things that happened, the things that were true, and have done it in such a way that helps us to come to good and right conclusions, conclusions that you want us to come to.

[5 : 11] I pray that you would be with us as we look together today at this passage. I pray that we would be moved and made more like Christ, those of us who know you.

I pray that our reactions would be Levi-like. And Father, that you would cause us to be enamored with our Savior. I pray that if there are those here who don't know Christ, that today would be the day they see Christ and follow him.

I pray that you would bless your word in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, so the next thing that Luke does is he brings before us this picture of Levi.

Now, Levi, that's the name that was probably given to him. We know him by another name, and we will hear that name soon, and that's Matthew.

In all the lists, except for possibly one, of the disciples, Matthew is the term that's used. And this guy that we're talking about right here is the man who wrote another gospel by that name, Matthew.

[6 : 26] And so we're seeing here the calling of Matthew to follow the Lord. And God uses this incident. Now, his salvation is not an incident, but the incident that arose after that to teach some of the Jews things that they needed to see, things that were tripping them up.

So we're going to look first at this encounter with Levi. And first, I think that's going to be most beneficial is to let you know what you need to know about tax collectors.

Now, you heard me read that he sat at a booth. And that tells us a lot about Levi. One little word tells us a lot. But he was that kind of tax collector.

He was a tax collector that sat in a booth. And he would sit in this booth or sit in front of this booth and collect taxes. There were two kinds of tax collectors.

There was those tax collectors that would go from house to house and say, Okay, so-and-so authority says you pay two bits on every person who lives in this house. And he would collect all those things and he would bring them to Rome or to whatever authority.

[7 : 42] And he would be paid for doing that. Levi is not that kind of tax collector. Levi is the kind of tax collector who would sit at a booth and collect tolls as people went by.

He was probably on a main trade route. There is a main trade route that goes right close. This is probably right around Capernaum where Jesus has been working in that general facility.

It wasn't far from the Lake of Galilee, the Sea of Galilee. But it was close to this trade route, probably right on this trade route. And what would happen was the Roman government would have these toll booths or spots set up in different places.

Places where they felt it was a good spot to collect taxes. I think a lot of times because of the natural geography. Just like we are now seeing this huge increase in businesses being built in Hazleton.

Because we're not far from 80. We're very close to 81. And we have other things. You know, we can get to route 15 pretty quick. And go that way down south to 76.

[8 : 56] It's just convenient. And the Romans would do the same kinds of things. They would put toll booths where they would be convenient to collect taxes. And so they would put a toll booth there.

And they'd say, basically, they'd farm out tax collecting. They'd say, okay, we've put a toll booth here. Who wants to be the tax collector? And whoever was interested in, probably there would be several that would be interested, at least initially.

And those people were given the opportunity to say, I think I can make \$300 at that toll booth this year. And another person say, I think I can make \$315.

And, you know, they would bid how much money they could make. Now, they were real careful to say how high they would go. Because profit was an issue here.

When Rome got the price they wanted, they'd say, okay, you're the tax collector. And that man then would have the opportunity to go sit at that booth. And he would probably have some reinforcements, usually what we would term thugs, who would enforce his right to collect taxes.

[10 : 12] And so, coming down this highway would be a group of travelers with some goods to sell, maybe down in Jerusalem. And Levi would be able to say, hold up there, man.

And he would be able to go through their goods. And he would say, I think that you need to pay me \$8 for this load to pass this toll booth.

Now, maybe in his pledge, what would average out or would divide out properly would be only \$1. But that didn't matter.

He had the right as a tax collector to charge what he wanted. And people had to sell their goods so they would have to pay and be able to go on.

And so that's how he made his money. He charged whatever he wanted. He had the thugs to reinforce that. And because of that, tax collectors were often very, very rich.

[11 : 13] But that's not the only thing they were. They were traitors to the Jews. The Jews looked at them and said, because the people in the land of Israel who were tax collectors were most often Jews.

And the Jewish people would look at them and say, traitor, sinner. They would call them names. Because they knew that these people were greedy.

And that they would do whatever it took to get as much as they could get. And so the Jews considered them to be traitors. They were also considered to be unclean.

Because the people traveling these trade routes weren't just Jews. They would be people from other countries. And so they would be Gentiles. And you're thinking about the book of Luke.

I can picture, as someone may would be explaining some of this, the Gentiles would start to pick up. Because, oh, you've mentioned my people. And Levi having contact with Gentiles would be unclean.

[12 : 23] He wouldn't be able to go to the temple and offer sacrifice. He would have to abstain for a certain amount of time. And because people just kept coming, he was basically considered an unclean person.

To the Jews, tax collectors were some of the worst kinds of sinners in Jerusalem. And they would be lumped with the harlots.

And so that sets the stage. I hope you have gotten an ugly picture of Levi.

Because that's really what's going on here. This isn't Jesus walking up to some well-mannered, well-esteemed person. And casting his come-follow-me kind of thing.

Now, he was a very clean man in the sense. He wore, I'm sure, great clothes. And I'm sure he had a great house. But everybody called him sinner, traitor, unclean.

- [13 : 36] And so, Scripture speaks about how after Jesus had healed this previous man, it may have been right after, it may have been a time after. We don't know. But he goes out.
- Jesus goes out. And he sees this man at the tax booth. We're not sure how much exposure Levi had had with Jesus.
- Jesus had been in that area for some time. And Jesus had preached out in the open. And, in fact, remember just a little bit ago, there was such a crowd in that area at one point.
- Now, the tax collector would also collect taxes from ships coming off from the Sea of Galilee. So, he may have had associations with Peter. His booth may have been very close to where Peter's boat would dock.
- Who knows? But when Jesus preached in Peter's boat, Levi could have heard him. We don't know. But in the course of time, however it came out, whatever background was there as far as how much Levi had known, Jesus walks up to Levi and he says, follow me.
- [14 : 55] Now, this was not just a call for Levi to pay attention to Jesus. It wasn't a call for Levi just to take note of the things that Jesus had said and obey them.
- Jesus is telling this man, leave your work, become my disciple. Now, we won't dwell much on this, but this had to cost him.
- He was a rich man. And so, Jesus walks up and calls him to follow him. He's calling Levi not only to follow him, but he's calling him to trust him.
- To take on Jesus' thinking. To trust in Jesus. He's calling Levi to be his disciple. And, you know, we can imagine all kinds of responses that he could give.
- No, my day's not done. No, I've got a contract. No, I'm making money today. No, I'm making money here in my life. I'm not leaving. But that's not what Levi did.
- [16 : 10] He obeyed. And scripture says he left everything. Whether he left it totally unattended or handed it off to somebody else, we don't know.
- But he left everything and he followed Jesus. And that meant that he did literally follow Jesus. He was among the disciples who would travel with Jesus, learning from Jesus.
- Now, this had a tremendous effect on Levi. He was, I believe, and I'm convinced the scripture is pointing to this.
- He, at that point, had come to trust in Christ as his Savior. And he was so overwhelmed with thankfulness and a couple of other things that we'll talk about.
- That he decided to make a feast for Jesus. It seems he wanted to honor Jesus. But more than just wanting to honor Jesus, he wanted his friends to meet Jesus.
- [17 : 10] So he makes this feast. And the house was filled with the kind of people that would associate with Levi. Lots of them.
- Most of them tax collectors. Most of them considered unclean. Most of them considered traitors. Most of them people that no one else would want to have anything to do with.
- So he has this feast. And lo and behold, Jesus comes. And Jesus sits down. He doesn't grab a cracker and stand by the door.
- And think if I wait ten minutes, take a bite, I can jump out this door and maybe no one will see me. But rather, the banquet is for Jesus.
- And Jesus joins right in. This was a long meal. And people weren't standing. They had beds. I don't think our bed.
- [18 : 17] Think of a mat. They didn't eat at a table with tables and chairs. They ate at a low table. And they laid on a mat.

At one point in my life, I illustrated this. I'm too old to illustrate it right now. But they would lay on a mat on their side. If they were right-handed, they would lay on their left side, just leaning over.

And they would just grab their food and they would talk. It was a very slow meal. It was a very comfortable meal. It was the kind of thing where you got to know the people around you.

So these people, including Jesus, were relaxed, reclining to eat, and I think relatively enjoying each other's company for newfound friends.

Now, this is not just Jesus and Levi. It's not that Levi set up a table, and him and, however, there are four others following Jesus at this time.

[19 : 26] It's not Jesus, the four disciples, and Levi at a table, and tables away, apart. He was just a table.

And however many this great group of tax collectors and sinners were, they were all sitting down, and they were all enjoying each other's company.

Is this the kind of situation you would picture Jesus in? Would you picture him sitting in a room for hours, enjoying the company of people who were not his disciples?

That's the very kind of person he was. He was not the kind of person who said, if I'm going to be holy, I need to stay away from this group of people, or that group of people.

That's not the kind of God, or a Messiah, that Jesus was. He was the kind of God-man who enjoyed a long, relaxing meal with the people, the kind of people that most people despised.

[20 : 49] Now, he wasn't there to learn their ways. He was there to learn about them. He was there to learn about what they needed.

But more importantly, to let them know they needed him. And so, Jesus was not afraid of being contaminated by tax collectors.

I was brought up in a mentality that would have said, I shouldn't be in the kind of place that Jesus was in. And I think Jesus is painting a different picture.

Now, we need to be careful about being in places and situations where we're endeavoring to learn to be like these people. But we ought to be the kind of people who are around people that need the gospel.

We need to be comfortable with them. And I'm not talking about comfortable, and we don't have to accept sins that they're committing boldly. We have to accept them in the sense that we're willing to be with them and share the gospel.

[22 : 03] But Jesus wasn't afraid of being contaminated. He was willing to enter into that kind of fellowship. He loved them, and he wanted to meet their need. It's the kind of Savior that Jesus is.

It's the kind of Savior who loves to meet your need. We have to be those kinds of people, too, who love to meet people's needs.

And sometimes that may take being with people that other people may say, you're wasting your time, or you're ruining your life.

Well, the situation is such that during this time, there are scribes and Pharisees. There are Pharisees and their scribes.

The Sadducees had their scribes. The Pharisees have their scribes. This is the Pharisees with their scribes. And they're outside looking in the windows because we can't eat with those people.

[23 : 07] They'll defile us. And they're standing outside making judgment and they apparently when the banquet is done and Jesus exits, I don't believe they went in, they ask, why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners? Their thinking was, you're not following our rules. You're going to become unclean.

they also were probably thinking, these sinners do not deserve God's grace. Let them clean up their act and then we can talk about their relationship with God.

Would you eat with tax collectors and sinners? Are there people you don't feel are worthy of spending time with them?

are there people you would be embarrassed to be seen with if you were endeavoring to share the gospel with them? Jesus' answer was, oh, I didn't write down the reference.

[24 : 27] Jesus said, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

You don't fault a doctor for being in the hospital. That's where he belongs. That's where he ministers to the people that need what he has.

Jesus mentions that he ministers to those who need him. He says, I have not come to call the righteous. This is the first of a couple of ironic statements.

Statements that Jesus says that are supposed to catch in the people's minds, and they're supposed to wonder, is he talking about me? This is the first one.

He says, I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He's speaking about the scribes, or the Pharisees and their scribes. He's saying, they think they're righteous.

[25 : 31] Now, they weren't righteous. They were anything but righteous. They were just as sinful in God's eyes as these tax collectors were, but they thought they were righteous.

And so Jesus is telling them, I'm not out eating with you because you don't think you need me. I'm in here with these people because they do need me, and they know they're sinners, and I can preach the gospel to these people.

I minister to the ones who need me. You think you're righteous, and you don't need help. These people do need help and know it. Now, as we get into verse 33, through the rest of this chapter, this event may not have taken place right after Levi's calling and trusting Christ and following him, but it doesn't matter.

Luke takes some situations that came up often in Jesus' life and puts them here so as to prove a point, to get across.

Now, keep in mind, we've been talking about Levi, a man who would have been considered unclean, and outside, even though he could have been a Jew, he was a Jew, he was considered outside of the nation of Israel.

[27 : 02] He was unclean. And so, Luke puts these other two questions by the Pharisees to Jesus along with this so that he can prove a point.

He goes on to ask this second question. If you think like, oh, he's asked this first question, he's asked this second question, Luke is putting them together so that we're thinking about where the topic that he's pointing us to.

Why do your disciples not fast? So, these Pharisees, they come up to Jesus, and they ask the disciples first, but then they ask, and Jesus hears and answers, he says, why don't your disciples fast?

Now, fasting. Fasting is where we abstain from food, food, it's the idea of showing remorse for our sin, it is not for twisting God's arm, it is for us to concentrate on prayer seeking our need met.

In the Old Testament, fasting was only required on the Day of Atonement, and it was there to show remorse for their sin. The religious leaders that had met up with Jesus here, the whole group of the religious leaders of Israel had greatly changed this.

[28 : 29] They said that a person had to fast twice every week, and it became not a way to mourn for sin or to petition God, to concentrate on petitioning God for something, it became a work.

Remember the publican and the Pharisee? Publican is another word for tax collector that Jesus talked about in the temple. He watched the Pharisee go in and pray, God, I thank you that I am this and that and I'm not this and I'm not that and not like that publican, that dirty rotten scoundrel lowdown publican tax collector.

And the tax collector hits his chest and says, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. They had made these rules.

One of the things, this is where I was going with that, one of the things he said was, I fast twice a week. It was his good deeds. And these people had made up these fasts for people to observe just so they could pronounce themselves good by doing good deeds.

fast. Now, we see here mentioned John's disciples. The Pharisees are using John's disciples here. John's disciples did fast.

[29 : 46] John the Baptist was an ascetic. He grew out in the wilderness. And he was a man who ate, well, locusts and wild honey.

Honey's good, but locusts, yeah. He was an ascetic. He was, it was part of their thinking. They were intently, on purpose, fasting for the Messiah and all his ministry to come.

And so they fasted a lot and John's disciples fasted a lot. But the Pharisees are using that. They're not really trying to associate themselves with John's disciples. They're saying, hey, you know, not only us, but these people who are supposed to be for you are fasting all the time.

Why aren't you fasting? John, Jesus and his disciples weren't following the practices of the Pharisees. And Jesus answers in verse 34 that it's not the right time to fast.

You don't fast at a wedding. Everybody gets together and the bride marches down the aisle, says, I do, and the bride and groom are married and they go out, and there's nothing.

[31 : 04] What kind of a wedding is that? Everybody would be talking about that for a long time. At a wedding you feast. Why? Because you're joyous. You're glad that the bride and groom are together.

You're rejoicing in what they're doing and what they have done. It's a good time. We had one of those just recently and it was a good time. And Jesus says, you don't fast at a wedding.

You rejoice and you eat and you enjoy eating. It's not right for disciples to fast while Jesus is here.

They're saying, why don't you fast? They're trying to get him to do the works they're doing. But he's saying it's not right right now. The bridegroom is here.

Christ is here. It's not the right time to fast. Now the day's coming, verse 35, he says, where it will be the time to fast. And we believe that he's pointing here and what he's saying to the fact that he will die and be buried.

[32 : 09] And they're going to mourn then. And that would have been a great time and it probably was a time where many of the disciples fasted. But he rose from the grave. And they enjoyed meals with him until he ascended to heaven.

And now we as Christians are free to fast in appropriate ways. But there's coming a day when Jesus calls all his people home and we'll sit down to the wedding, the banquet or the feast, the wedding feast, and we'll sit down with Christ.

And I don't think fasting will be a word that's mentioned ever again in heaven because it's always going to be a time of joy and rejoicing. So Jesus is saying this is not the right time to fast.

Then he goes on. He tells two parables. Let me read them quickly. Verses 36 to 38. He told them a parable. No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it in an old garment.

If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. No one puts new wine into old wine skins.

[33 : 28] If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wine skins. So the old and new garments.

These two garments are incompatible. You have a brand new garment, and you have an old garment that has holes in it. How stupid is it to take a brand new garment, grab it by the edge, rip it open, and rip a square that would be just big enough to go over the hole on the old garment.

And you put the patch on, and you know it's your favorite color of very faded orange, and very favorite black, and very faded brown. And now it has this bright red patch.

That looks stupid. It doesn't fit. And besides, that brand new garment you just bought, you just ripped a hole in that. That was stupid.

You've ruined the good new garment. What you should do is throw the old garment away, and use the new garment. That's what he's getting at.

[34 : 45] And he talks about the wine skins. Now, just real briefly, they didn't have bottles like we do for wine. They would take a goat skin after the goat had been butchered, and they'd sew it back up, and sew the legs up, and they would turn it wrong side out after the hair was shaved off.

They want to shave the hair off first. And they would put their new wine in that bottle, and they would tie it up. Because if you put wine in a closed container, or any container, or I should say grape juice, if you stomp out grape juice, and put it in a container, the natural yeast in the wine will begin to ferment.

And if you've tied that wine skin up, the new wine skin, as you put the wine in, it's still pliable, and so as the wine lets off the gases, and as it ferments, the wine skin bloats up, gets bigger.

water. But if you do that, if you take grapes that you've crushed, and put it in a goat skin that you already made wine in, well, that's an old goat skin, and it's already been stretched to its limit.

It can't serve that purpose anymore. When you put that new wine in, it'll start stretching, but it won't stretch. It'll boom. And all the wine's just on the floor.

[36 : 10] And you can't use that wine skin for even water anymore. It's just shot. So you could say, Jesus is saying, it's stupid.

I'm sorry, maybe I shouldn't put these words in our Lord's mouth. They're in my mouth. It's stupid to put new wine in old skins. New wine belongs in new skins.

And Jesus is making a point. He's, in essence, made it the same point in the calling of Levi in the banquet. And then with these two questions, yes, why aren't you like us, and why don't you fast?

He gives these two parables to point out that you're not thinking right. The new ways of the gospel cannot be contained in the old ways of Judaism.

What Jesus is bringing about, Judaism can't hold. Judaism was good. God set it up.

[37 : 20] It had its purpose to keep a nation together until the Messiah could come. To point to what that Messiah would do.

do. But it wasn't what the Messiah did. It didn't save. It pointed to what the Messiah would do. And to try to take some of what Jesus does and patch Judaism up, well, that's just going to make a stupid garment.

Nothing works. things like And you've messed up what Jesus did because you're thinking in the lines of works. What has to happen, Jesus is telling these people, is that what I am doing has to stand on its own.

thankful for Judaism, but not trying to mix the two. Judaism had fulfilled its purpose and needed to be set aside in view of what Jesus is doing.

And then he gives another ironic statement in verse 39. He says, And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says the old is good.

[38 : 37] Now this just sounds like nobody wants to drink grape juice, everybody likes to drink wine. That's not what's going on here. The way this is set up, what he's pointing out is that these people were so set in their ways that they're not seeing what's really going on and don't want to have any part of what's going on.

He's not undoing what he just taught in the parables. He's using the irony to catch their attention. Jesus is saying this to those who insist on staying in their pharisaical ways.

He's rebuking them for not accepting what Jesus, who has proven himself to be God, is saying.

they were saying, well, the old way of doing things is just fine. We don't need you coming around here with any of those new ideas.

And Jesus is saying, no, I've come to bring something new. Now, Jesus was still seeking to reach those of the Jews, but I want you to think as a Gentile for just a moment, because this book was written to Gentiles.

[40 : 03] And think about the fact, first of all, that such an unacceptable person as Levi was called to be Jesus' disciple.

And then think as a Gentile that this same Jesus was pleased to sit down with unacceptable people like Gentiles.

And then think how you should be rejoicing in what Jesus is doing, not mourning and fasting right now. And think about how Jesus is just said, it's stupid to try to patch up the old and ruin the new.

You need to trust Christ. That what Jesus is doing just won't fit back into Judaism. He's doing something for the people of the world.

If you were a Gentile, you'd say, wow, he's thinking about me. I could sit in that room with Levi and all those people, but especially with Jesus.

[41 : 21] And he would be glad to sit down with me and he would be glad to get to know me and he would be glad to meet my need. That's the kind of savior that Jesus is.

do you need that kind of savior? Yes, you do. If you've never trusted Christ as your savior, you need that kind of savior to save you.

But I don't know about you, but I haven't quite, quite stopped sinning. That's an ironic statement or a statement said in jest.

I still need a savior who's willing to be with sinners. Praise God that Jesus is that kind of savior.

And he's willing to stand up to those who say you're not doing it the way you're supposed to. You're not doing it our way. Jesus says I'm doing what God is wanting me to do.

[42 : 29] you need to come to him. And so I would encourage you if you're here and don't know Christ, trust Christ.

If you're here and do know Christ, trust Christ. But also just bask in the blessing of a savior who is willing to come to people like us and give his life for us.

Let's pray. thank you father. For the wonder of who your son is and what he has done. Father as this gospel has been written to Gentiles, we relish the fact that he's pointed out that even though we weren't born of this special family, we are just as accepted.

And thank you that Christ has died for the sins of his people. Pray that you would be with us and draw us to yourself. In Jesus' name, amen. Let's take our hymnals and turn to 176.

I picked this hymn because it talks about a despised Jesus. He was despised because of who he would associate with. And we're thankful that he was willing to do that for our sakes.

[43 : 50] 176. Let's stand as we sing, Hail thou once despised.