

How Jesus Heals Us

Luke 5:27-31

Pastor Guy Gray

Jesus Meets Us Right Where We Are— No Matter How Messed Up

Jesus said: *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* (Luke 5:31) With these words, Jesus tells us His intention for our lives. Jesus wants to "heal" us. Jesus is the great physician of our lives. As we read the story, we find that the healing He's talking about goes way beyond a physical healing of a physical condition. Jesus has come to bring healing and wholeness to us at the deepest part of who we are. This is the best kind of "good news" we could ever hear. The story of the calling of Levi is an amazing picture—a dramatic illustration of how Jesus heals us. The two stories that precede it in Luke 5 are both stories of physical healing. In each there is an added dimension though. The leper had a physical illness, but his illness had also brought him the pain of lonely isolation from others. The man who was paralyzed had his physical problem, but beyond that was his deeper need to find the forgiveness of God. Each of these preceding stories sheds light on the story of the calling of Levi and what it means that Jesus is the great physician of our hearts and lives. Lesson number 1 is that Jesus meets us right where we are—no matter how messed up! Levi is a Jewish man collecting taxes for the Roman occupying force. That's all we need to know to get the picture of a man who is completely messed up, isolated, guilty and hurting to the depth of his soul. Jesus makes a straight line for the tax booth. Jesus meets him right there at the epicenter of his sin and hurt. Jesus has come to heal his life at the deepest level.

Jesus Calls us into Relationship, Granting the Gifts of Forgiveness and Acceptance

To this hurting, guilty man, Jesus spoke amazing words of grace, He simply said, "follow me." (Luke 5:27). These words were the starting place of healing and wholeness for Levi, for with these words Levi was called into a life of relationship with Jesus Christ. This is a life changing moment. Hidden in these words is all the power and meaning of the two miracle stories that preceded it in Luke 5. With these words come the gracious gifts of forgiveness and acceptance by God through Jesus. The starting place of our healing is always the amazing grace of God in Jesus Christ. Levi got up and followed. He stepped into the love, forgiveness and acceptance of Jesus right then and there. That's where the healing begins, but it's not a done deal. The healing is a process. Christ has called Levi into an ongoing relationship and that relationship causes a process of transformation in Levi's life. To walk with Jesus day by day is the key to becoming healed and whole in life.

Jesus Walks With Us in Our Journey of Healing

Jesus goes to Levi's house to hang out (Luke 5:29-30.) Levi's house is not exactly the center of Godliness and spirituality. Levi's house is the place where all the worst sinners hang out. Jesus goes into Levi's world—He has a plan for the transformation of Levi. Jesus is going to walk with Levi and show him how his life can become whole once again. If Levi will love Jesus, learn from Jesus and walk with Jesus—he is going to become a different man. He is going to be healed and whole even at the deepest places of his heart and mind.

Repentance and Joy—Sure Signs that your Healing Has Begun

The final words of the story show the inner workings of the healing that Jesus wants to do in our lives. He has come to call sinners to repentance. Repentance is key. Repentance means a change of heart, mind and direction. Did you notice that Levi left his tax booth and followed (5:28)? This is repentance. Not everything had changed in his life at this point. He made a choice at heart level and he took concrete action to express that choice. He determined to turn away from the old life and publicly follow Jesus. This is repentance! Did you notice the note of joy! He calls his friends and throws a party. This is not some reluctant and bitter concession to God. This is the joy of new life. This is the joy of seeing the love and goodness of Jesus and wanting more of Him. This is the joy of a person who has tasted the sweetness of real forgiveness. This is the story that becomes the pattern for our own lives. Repentance and joy are the sure signs that your healing has begun. He who has begun a good work in you will not leave you. He will complete the good work he has started (Philippians 1.6.) Will you answer Christ's call today? May the Lord help us each to take hold of Jesus' hand and receive His gift of

forgiveness and acceptance! May you walk with a repentant, yet joyous heart into your journey of healing and wholeness with Jesus!

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

This week spend some time reflecting on the call of Levi in Luke 5:27-31. Put it in context by also reviewing the stories of healing just before it (5:12-26). How is the Lord speaking to you through these stories? Ask yourself: "in my life right now, what would be the equivalent of Levi's tax booth?" Where are the dark, hurting or sinful places of your life right now? Jesus will meet you even there with His grace and forgiveness! Identify some practical steps you can take in your life to actively walk with Jesus. Is there something you need to say no to, to leave behind? Is there something you can say yes to—get involved with—to draw closer in relationship with Jesus? Pray and ask the Lord for wisdom and guidance.

Coming Up:

SUNDAY 12/16

EL SALVADOR MISSION TRIP PRESENTATION

7:15 @ RWLG Come and hear what is happening in this meaningful ministry. A team of volunteers have just returned from El Salvador and would love to share their experiences, photos & ways for you to get involved. For more information contact Julie Messenger at 699-2226 or Julie@riverwest.org.

WOMAN'S RETREAT

SUNDAY 12/16

Sign up today in the Fellowship Hall

MONDAY 12/24

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES, 6:00pm, 7:30pm & 9:00pm

Come and join us for a special night of worship, prayer and fellowship as we celebrate the birth of Christ. There will childcare available for birth-3rd grade at the 6pm and 7:30pm services only

END OF YEAR DONATIONS

This is the time of year when many people consider giving year-end donations. If you are considering giving a year-end donation, please note that all donations must be received at the church or office or postmarked by December 31st to be included in your 2007 giving statement. If you are considering giving a gift of stock, please contact Julie Messenger at 503-699-2226 or by e-mail at Julie@riverwest.org for more details.

FORGIVEN & SET FREE

Bible study to start soon. Have you had an abortion? Are you living with shame and guilt? Has it been difficult to accept the promises and the grace and the unconditional love of God in your life? Please call Sheri Harkavy 503 887-7080 or Raffa Scanlon 503 449-1316 to get more information about this completely confidential study.