Eternity's Table

11.8.26

Message 3

Luke 5:27–32 (CSB)

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me." **28** So, leaving everything behind, he got up and began to follow him.

29 Then Levi hosted a grand banquet for him at his house. Now there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were reclining at the table with them. **30** But the Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

31 Jesus replied to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. **32** I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

What did you do right after you first met Jesus?

A. A few years ago, I started leaving Google reviews for places I've enjoyed.

1. And apparently, I like to eat, because most of my reviews are for restaurants.

2. I've noticed that if I don't post a photo, nobody cares.

3. If I post a photo of a building or scenery, a few views accumulate.

4. But if I post a photo of food, and particularly a dessert, then a lot of people view it.

5. I have one photo on Google with 436,393 views.

6. I never post bad reviews, and if I have a bad experience, I don't post anything (with maybe a couple of exceptions).

B I love to share Good News.

1. I want others to find Good News.

2. I want to support local businesses.

3. I want to remember good food and where I had it.

4. In a world full of negativity, some good news is almost always welcome.

C. Levi, also known as Matthew, couldn't wait to invite his friends to share a meal with Jesus.

1. To share a meal is an expression of trust and relationship.

2. Not a business meal, not an interview, just a meal.

3. A meal among friends, introducing them to the Greatest Friend, Jesus.

An Unlikely Disciple

A. Jesus' picks for disciples were not who we would normally pick.

1. There were better qualified people.

2. Disciples were the people you picked to follow you, to model you, to continue your legacy and teaching.

3. There were men who, since they were very young, were training to be Rabbis and followers.

B. The people Jesus chose were not these people.

1. Jesus is the one who chose them.

2. He initiated, He found, He called.

3. They said yes.

C. Jesus' group had all sorts of backgrounds.

1. From fishermen to political zealots.

2. Jesus' group of followers came from various walks of life.

3. That was fine; they could get along.

4. Then, one day, Jesus invites the enemy.

There was no need for a tax collector.

A. This is worse than an IRS agent.

1. I wanted to paint a picture of how scandalous and wrong Jesus' decision would have seemed to the other disciples and to those who were watching.

2. Let me tell you a story we can relate to.

You raised him. Maybe he was born on your place. Maybe you bought him as a calf. You fed him all winter. You broke ice on the tank at six in the morning. You called the vet when he went off his feed.

Then you hauled him to the processor. You waited for your date. You filled out the cut sheet. Steaks this thick. A few roasts. The rest in hamburger.

He went on the trailer at twelve hundred pounds.

You expect to lose some. Everybody does. Forty percent, maybe. You know that going in.

You picked him up. White paper, black marker, boxes in the back of the truck. You looked at the weight on the ticket.

This was less.

You didn't say anything. What would you say? You can't prove it. And the next open date is a year out.

So, you drove home and stacked him in the freezer. It didn't take long.

In February you lift the lid, and you can see the bottom. It's a long way to spring.

(pause)

Peter, James, John, and Andrew knew that feeling. Only for them, it was fish.

They'd come in off the lake before sunrise, nets heavy, and haul their catch up the shore. And on the road out of Capernaum there was a booth. The man in that booth took his cut, whatever he said it was. And Rome's soldiers stood behind him to make sure they paid.

Everybody in town knew what he was doing. Everybody knew whose fish paid for his house.

His name was Levi.

Peter and John are now following Jesus.

And one day, Jesus walks to Levi's booth.

The thief. The traitor. The tax-collector.

Jesus gives Levi the same invitation: Follow me.

Levi takes the offer.

B. Here's the scandal.

1. Levi invites Jesus and the disciples to his house.

    a. For dinner.

    b. A grand banquet, paid for by the Peters and Johns and the hardworking people that Levi had legally stolen from.

    c. This isn't a private dinner; it's public. And there are a lot of tax collectors and others who were invited and who actually came.

2. Everyone knew who was in the house.

    a. In today's terms, it would be like if you saw I was having dinner at my home and you were driving by to see who came.

    b. There's so-so's Red Ram, and that guys Mustang, and that family's Escalade…

    c. Everybody knew who was at the house.

    d. And the Pharisees are standing in the driveway, telling the guests: Why does he eat with them?

D. Their message: "Good people don't sit at his table."

    a. But Jesus does.

    b. Jesus explains His visit and why He said yes to the invitation:

        1. I'm making a doctor's call because these people have called for a doctor.

        2. Surely Luke, who was a physician by trade, resonates with this.

Labels

29 Then Levi hosted a grand banquet for him at his house. Now there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were reclining at the table with them. **30** But the Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

A. Luke says tax-collectors and others.

    1. The Pharisees say, tax collectors and sinners.

    2. Notice the change.

B. Jesus has no problem with the phrase "sinner," but he does have a problem with leaving them there.

1. A good doctor doesn't deny that people are sick, but he doesn't leave them sick.

2. Jesus came for sinners so that they may be led to repentance and righteousness.

3. Too often, Christians are quick to label people sinners, and slow to offer forgiveness.

4. We know that everyone apart from Jesus is lost, a sinner.

5. We forget that everyone who calls on the name of Jesus is saved.

C. Levi invites Jesus to his house, honors him, and introduces his lost friends to Jesus.

1. Sometimes, church people will ask me why we don't go to bars where the sinners are and let our light shine there.

2. They say, Jesus ate and drank with sinners.

3. He did, and he still does.

D. But notice these things:

1. They were not at the local bar, strip club, or any other place dedicated to sin, but at a new believer's house.

2. They were not participating in, supporting, or encouraging sin, but the opposite.

3. Jesus says He was there to heal the sick and to bring about repentance.

C. Notice who labels these people.

1. It was the religious elite throwing the accusations toward these people.

2. True, these tax-collectors and non-Pharisees didn't know or serve God yet, but they were getting ready to.

3. They were at the house to hear the Gospel and to meet Jesus.

4. This was not Jesus dropping in on a frat party, trying to tell them about salvation with a beer in one hand and a funnel in the other.

D. A separation was beginning.

1. These undesirables were coming into the Kingdom, and the Pharisees didn't want to include them.

2. They figured if they could label the people harshly enough, then at least the disciples and the respectable people would turn around and leave Jesus.

3. The Pharisees thought they were gatekeeping the Kingdom.

4. What they didn't realize was they weren't in the Kingdom either.

Who will defend me?

A. The aim of the Pharisees was to heap shame.

1. In an honor/shame culture, this was the key.

a. This is how you broke people down.

b. This is how you convinced them to do or not do something.

c. This was the ultimate form of peer pressure.

2. While Levi was honoring Jesus by hosting a banquet, the Pharisees were shaming Jesus' followers and those interested in Jesus' message.

B. They couldn't shame Jesus into pulling away from the table.

1. But if they could pull the disciples away, then the battle would be won.

2. So, the disciples are questioned.

3. But notice who responds?

Luke 5:31–32 (CSB)

31 Jesus replied to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

C. The disciples don't have to defend themselves, because Jesus does it for them. Verse. 31-32

1. Jesus speaks up on their behalf.

2. Jesus speaks up from the head of the table.

3. Jesus speaks up, and explains the situation.

4. He isn't there to party; He's there to give life to the spiritually sick and dead.

5. He isn't afraid to be surrounded by these people, because those kinds of people are why He is here.

A table where I belong.

A. Here's the Good News I still can't wrap my head around.

1. Jesus makes room for people like me at His table.

2. He invites me to His table, in all my nastiness, my sin, my brokenness.

3. He invites me to come, and to change.

a. He doesn't leave me in my sin, but offers me forgiveness.

b. He doesn't leave me in my filth, but cleanses me by His righteousness.

c. He doesn't leave me in my brokenness, but mends and helps me.

B. Maybe you have never seen yourself as the kind of person Jesus loves. You are.

1. Maybe you thought that the roof would cave in the day you stepped into church. But it's still standing.

2. Maybe you thought the day you would be with Church people is the day hell would freeze over, but it hasn't.

C. The communities we live in are challenging and sometimes hostile.

1. Every time you go to church and gather with imperfect people who are trying to live for Jesus, people will question.

2. They will question how you can "eat," "worship," and share a pew or row with "that" person.

3. Can I say it like this: That isn't Jesus speaking. That is our religion, our flesh, and even Satan talking.

4. It is certainly true that we need to have boundaries.

a. Don't go where preachers are preaching lies.

b. Don't go where people are committing crime or living in blatant sin.

5. But go worship with:

a. That person you hated in high school who is now trying to live for Jesus.

b. That person who voted differently than you.

c. That person who makes more money than you.

d. That person who makes less money than you.

D. In life, sometimes…

1. You are the fisherman, getting robbed by the unfair Levi's and systems of the world.
2. Sometimes, we are all Levi, and we were the ones living an unrighteous life.
3. But never are we Jesus.
4. It is Jesus who is inviting us to the Table.

    a. To the Peters, and Johns, and those who feel weary, oppressed, and trodden: Come.

    b. To the Levis, who have lived a life that no one is proud of: Come.

    c. To the Pharisee, the ones good at judging and shaming, and seem to have it all together: Come.

E. Whoever you are, please hear my heart today: Jesus is inviting you to His table.

1. That might mean that, for you, it's time for you to surrender your life to Jesus.
2. That might mean that it's time for you to live for Jesus.
3. That might mean it's time you start inviting people to come to know Jesus.

Prayer