

LUKE – CHAPTER 5 AND 6

PRAY

Spend a few moments together in prayer asking that you would be open to God's voice speaking through his Word today.

READ

Take time to read through Luke chapter 5 and 6.

EXAMINE

In these chapters we begin to see the character of Jesus revealed. He is a teacher who people crowd around listening to the word of God (5:1; 6:20-49). The "Lord" whose divine miracle amazes Peter for he is a "sinful man" (5:8) yet he offers comfort in the calling – "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." (5:10). He heals the sick because "the power of the Lord was with Jesus" (5:17). He demonstrates his authority to forgive sins, much to the disdain of the religious elite looking on (5:20-26) and his Lordship over Sabbath – the domain of God alone (6:1-11). His methodologies are questioned – "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" (5:30). It's an accusation that will be responded to in more detail later in chapter 15. Finally, he is shown to be a worshiper for he "often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" (5:16), and "spent the night praying to God" (6:12) the night before choosing his twelve disciples. This strange mixture of true humanity and true divinity on display should continue cause a mixture of emotions in us – amazement, fear, wonder, delight, praise. In these chapters we join with the people who were "amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." (5:26)

1. Focus upon the calling of Peter, James and John (5:4-11). At first Peter addresses Jesus as "Master." Then, following the miraculous catch, he calls him "Lord." More specifically, the size of the catch causes Peter, the experienced fisherman, to recognize his own sinfulness – "I am a sinful man!" Why do you think Peter reacted this way in particular?
Without necessarily being able to put words to it Peter has instinctively recognized the divinity of Jesus in the miracle performed before him. Later in the gospel the words he needs to express this will be given to him – "God's Messiah" (9:20). For now, it is enough that he recognizes that his sinfulness puts him in danger from the holiness of God.
2. Jesus' words of comfort – "Don't be afraid" (5:10) - are accompanied by a calling "you will fish for people." What can we learn from this about what it means to be a disciple?
Whilst we, like Peter, are sinful people even so we don't have to fear the presence of Jesus. He comes not only to comfort our fears by the forgiveness of sins but also to commission us with a task in his kingdom mission – to "fish for people."

3. Jesus responds to the bizarre and frantic attempts of the friends who lower their friend through the roof of the house where he is meeting with words of forgiveness. This infuriates the Pharisees since it is God alone who can forgive sins. Jesus responds by asking them about which is easier to “say” – “Your sins are forgiven” or “Get up and walk.” In other words, Jesus could just say “your sins are forgiven” and no one would know if they were, in fact, forgiven. He could quite easily fake spiritual authority. To say “Get up and walk” demands a response from the paralyzed man; a response that can only be possible if Jesus has the power of God to heal (5:17). And it happens!

The Pharisees’ own insincere spiritual authority is exposed at the same time. Have you seen insincere spiritual authority on display (don’t forget your own here)? What has that been like? How should we live differently?

Encourage participants to move from the negative accounts of the past to the positive hopes to live differently in their responses.

4. Jesus is a bit of a party animal. He dines at a lavish banquet put on by a tax collector, Levi. Tax Collectors were Jewish people who collected taxes for the Romans. They were the middleman and the friend of no one. What does Jesus’ example of “eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners” (5:30) reveal about how he has “come to call... sinners to repentance” (5:32).
Note how the Pharisees in this setting complain “to his disciples.” In comparison, Jesus does not stand on the outside looking in condemning sinners, but sits with them, enjoying their company, dining with them, and most importantly calling them to repentance. The label of one who “welcomes sinners and eats with them” is one that will be unpacked later in these studies (Chapter 15)
5. Finally, consider the reality that Jesus was a worshiper. He “often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (5:16) and “spent the night pray to God” before selecting his twelve disciples (6:12). True humanity and true divinity are both on display in these actions. What can we learn from Jesus the worshiper; Jesus the pray-er?
Prayer is displayed as a necessary part of the life of Jesus. It is essential to who he is. He communes regularly with the Father, in the Spirit. This is not just a matter of his need, or because of his humanity, but a revelation of the nature of the eternal, divine nature of God. The three persons of the Trinity are in eternal communion, one with another. And so, when we pray, we join in that eternal communion of love.

REFLECT

1. Think of a time when you have been so conscious of your own sinfulness that you’ve sought to withdraw from God. What does Jesus’ “comforting call” tell us about how *he* responds to our sinfulness?
2. In what ways can you live out an authentic spiritual authority that comes from Jesus alone? Be specific in your examples

3. If prayer is joining in the eternal communion of love that exists in the Trinity, how does that change what prayer looks like for you?

IMAGINE

1. List three things that have really stood out from this passage.
2. Without worrying about any restrictions, what would the church look like if those things were always present? You might like to consider this from a global or local perspective (or both).

PERFORM

1. What action can you take today (taking account of real world restrictions) that is a step towards that dream becoming a reality?

PRAY

Spend time in prayer for each other, particularly for the actions you've committed to.

For next week....

1. Long Slow Read (LSR). Read chapters 7, slowly over the course of week. You can do this as many times as you like.
2. Tempo Read – Read and reread Chapter 7 several times. Take note of verses/phrases/characters that stand out – e.g. Jesus, Holy Spirit, poor, women.
3. Repeats – Choose one verse to memorise. Repeat it many times throughout the day and over the course of a week or so. Meditate on the verse and pray it in and out. Repeat the verse many times throughout your day.