

TO BE HAPPY IN JESUS

LUKE 5:27-39

We Can Only Be Happy In Jesus When We Come To Realize How Much We Need Jesus.

I. A Poor Rich Man (Vs 27-32)

Those Who Are Genuinely Seeking God Will Recognize Him Immediately When They See Him.

- A. An Invitation And Acceptance (27-28)
- B. Another Invitation And Acceptance (29)
- C. Sick ... But Not From Too Much Partying (30-32)

II. Wedding Crashers (Vs 33-35)

There Is A Time And Place To Mourn And Repent And There Is A Time And Place To Celebrate And Be Joyful.

- A. Nothing Wrong With Either Option (33)
- B. Timing Is Everything (34)

III. Letting Go Of The Past Is Often Painful (Vs 36-39)

Even Though Letting Go Of The Past Is Painful, It Is Absolutely Necessary If We Are To Enjoy The Present.

- A. The Old Will Contaminate The New (36)
- B. The Old Cannot Hold The New (37-38)
- C. The Old Is Much Too Comfortable (39)

To Be Happy In Jesus

Luke 5:27-39

So far, we have seen Jesus approach and call three, probably for Apostles. We know from the text that Jesus approached Peter, James and John at their place of business. They were fishermen and were partners in the business. James and John were brothers. Peter and Andrew were brothers. The text didn't name Andrew, but we know he was an Apostle. But it is noteworthy that Jesus' inner circle consisted only of Peter, James and John. The thing that sticks out most in my mind about the calling of these three Apostles is that they had just taken in a miraculous catch of fish. They had never caught so many fish in the period they were in business. In fact they had caught so many fish, the two boats almost sunk due to the weight of the fish. It is at the high point of their business that Jesus invited them to follow Him. It seems as if it was a no-brainer for them. They simply left the fish, the nets, and the boats behind, and followed Jesus. I'm not so sure the decision would have been that clear for me but it was for them.

When Jesus approaches us, it should be a no-brainer for us as well. We should be ready at a moment's notice to hear what He says, go where He sends, and do what He commands. Since it is the case that Jesus is God in the flesh, then we can see what He values in life. God values people who are ready to obey.

This morning, we are going to see Jesus approach and call another person. He is about as different from Peter, James, and John as you could get. In fact Matthew, who is called Levi in this text, would always be suspiciously looking at the three business men, trying to figure how they were trying to cheat on their taxes, and how to catch them. On the other hand, Peter, James, and John, because they were Jews and businessmen hated Matthew for two reasons. First of all, like all Jews, they would have hated Matthew for being a sell-out to the Romans and by making a living collecting taxes from the Jews. Secondly, they would have hated him because he would be there to collect a portion of their profits that they had worked hard to get and that the tax collectors did nothing to receive a portion of this.

Matthew was hated and despised by the Jewish community, especially by the Jewish religious community. However, Jesus could see something in Matthew that nobody could have ever predicted. His heart was ready to respond to Jesus. And the thing that he shared with Peter, John, and James was that when Jesus called him, he too left everything behind, got up, and followed Jesus immediately.

You know, that's the only way we will ever find happiness in life. Oh, we think all sorts of things will make us happy; a new job, a new car, a new house, a boyfriend or girlfriend, a husband or a wife. But these ideas are all worldly. The Bible is clear that the only way we can find true happiness is to leave everything behind to follow Jesus. Since I am a pastor, I do a lot of weddings. I hear people say and do the most absurd stuff. Let me give you an example. A mother and father were sitting with their two children at a wedding. I heard the little girl ask her mom, "Why is the bride dressed in white?"

The mother responded, “Because white represents happiness, and today is the happiest day of her life.”

The little boy asked his father, “Then why does the groom wear black?” ... That was great. I was looking to see how he would answer that. But he gave one of those blank stupid stares men give, and just looked straight ahead.

This morning we will see that following Jesus is the only thing that can bring true happiness to life. The main idea of this morning’s text is this. **M.I. WE CAN ONLY BE HAPPY IN JESUS WHEN WE COME TO REALIZE HOW MUCH WE NEED JESUS.** In other words, we spend an awful lot of time trying to find and chase things that we think will make us happy. But as we will see in today’s text, only recognizing Jesus, receiving Him into our lives, and following Him, is the only thing that brings real happiness.

I. A POOR RICH MAN

In verses 27-32 Jesus approaches a poor rich man. **THOSE WHO ARE GENUINELY SEEKING GOD WILL RECOGNIZE HIM IMMEDIATELY WHEN THEY SEE HIM.** Doesn’t that sound funny to say a poor rich man? It’s an oxymoron. But we must constantly remind ourselves how Luke and Jesus define what it means to be poor. If you remember from our earlier studies, I said that being poor meant that there was something in your life that prevented you from seeing Jesus for Who He is and receiving Him as Lord. We saw a leper, an invalid, demon possessed people, and people with all kinds of illnesses healed. Their poverty was obvious. They were social, economic, and religious outcasts. It’s kind of easy to recognize this type of poverty.

However, as we move through this passage and the rest of the Gospel, we will see many people who are poor that we would not recognize as poor. We wouldn’t recognize them as poor because according to the world’s standards, they are rich. There are a few good examples in this morning’s text.

An Invitation And Acceptance (27-28)

In verses 27-28 there is an invitation and acceptance of that invitation. Verse 27 starts out, “After this.” Jesus had just proved that He was the Son of God. He had the power and authority to heal all sorts of human problems like healing an invalid. But He also proved He had the power and authority to forgive people of their sins. Jesus and His newly appointed Disciples Peter, James, and John are out walking and they happen on a toll booth. The tax collector sitting behind the toll both collecting taxes was named Levi. Do you recognize that name? That’s a good Jewish name. Levi was the third son of Leah and Jacob. If you remember the story, Jacob didn’t love Leah. He loved Rachel, his second wife. Leah felt unloved and she thought bearing Jacob all these male children would cause him to take notice of her and cause him to love her. And she named the boy Levi. Levi means joined to. Leah said, “Now my husband will be attached to me.”

She was disappointed that Jacob never demonstrated real love or affection towards her. Out of Levi came the priestly family in Israel. They were known as the Levites. So it is clear that this tax collector is a Jew. He was most definitely rich with money. But he was poor in the sense that his own countrymen hated him and he was prohibited from attending synagogue worship services.

He would naturally feel alienated from God and even though he was rich, he found that money couldn't buy him happiness. Inside he was empty. He was searching for something that would bring him happiness in life. Here is a man, a rich man, a dishonest man, one who obtained wealth through abusing power, sitting behind his toll booth. Who could know how empty and poor he was inside? Jesus knew. Jesus approached Levi, looked him in the eye and said, "Follow me." Please pay attention to the wording here. Levi got up, left everything, and followed Jesus. Do you remember that Jesus told the crippled man to stand up, pick up his mat, and go home? The invalid got up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God.

And if you remember the response of Peter, James, and John when Jesus called them, they left all their business behind and followed Jesus. Here Levi left everything on the table; money, books, official licenses, and everything pertaining to the tax collecting business behind. What would cause this guy to respond to a simple "follow me" from Jesus? Levi recognized that he was poor. In eternity's economy, Levi was not only poor, he was destitute. His heart ached to be loved by God. And when God showed up in the flesh, Levi knew he wanted to be in a right relationship with God more than any other thing on earth. When Jesus offered and Levi accepted, he found happiness for the first time in his life.

I run into so many people who seem to be unhappy; weighed down by life, operating from crisis to crisis, never seeming to find what they are looking for, and always searching to find something or someone who can make them happy. These people are poor. They are letting their endless search keep them away from a passionate relationship with God. But it is clear that Levi had finally found what or rather Who he had been looking for. He recognized Jesus right away.

Another Invitation And Acceptance (29)

In verse 29 we see another invitation and acceptance of the invitation. Levi is so happy he invited a lot of his friends to a party. Levi had found what he had been missing all his life. And he also knew that money couldn't buy it. He left his money and livelihood back at the toll booth.

He was so excited, that he wanted to introduce his friends to Jesus. There were no religious people in this crowd because the hard core religious people would not have anything to do with the people at this party. It seems as if Jesus mixed and mingled well with the crowd. He ate and spoke with them. Now let me point this out. The New Testament refers to this type of meeting and eating as fellowship. This would no doubt have convinced religious people that Jesus could not be the Messiah since he fellowshiped with sinners.

Sick ... But Not From Too Much Partying (30-32)

In fact, in verses 30-32, the Pharisees find themselves sick ... but not from too much partying. Let me also be quick to point out that not all the Pharisees missed the boat. We know Nicodemus came to believe in Christ as well as the Apostle Paul. There is always a danger when we generalize about a group of people. But for the most part, the religious people of the day had a great deal of difficulty in accepting Jesus as the Promised Messiah. Here in verse 30 they questioned Jesus' disciples as to the fact they could sit down, eat, drink and schmooze with sinners. Let me throw this challenge out as we study through the Gospel of Luke. Try to see how we are like the Pharisees. For example, if Jesus were to go to the White House and sit down with the President, some senators, and some representatives, I could find myself easily criticizing Him for getting involved with these people. As much disdain I have for politicians, that's probably where Jesus would go. And so, as I read and studied this passage, I know that I have to be very careful about my attitudes.

Let me show you how dangerous it is to be Pharisaical. The Pharisees asked Jesus' disciples the question, but Jesus takes the personal initiative to personally answer them. Jesus said that He came to minister to those who were sick and needed a doctor. He said that he came to minister to sinners, not the righteous. Matthew, the other tax collectors, and the rest of the sinners at the party knew they were sick. They knew they were sinners and in need of a Savior. And so, they had room for Jesus in their lives. In fact, many left their old ways behind to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

Here is the danger. Since the Pharisees compared themselves to the tax collectors and other sinners, they had come to think of themselves as without sin they couldn't personally atone for and certainly thought of themselves as healthy and not in need of a Savior or a spiritual doctor.

The point is that if Jesus came to meet, greet, and eat with politicians; that would be a good thing. I should want Him to meet with them because they are sick and in need of a Savior. But also know that I am just as sick and sinful, and in need of the same Savior they are in need of, Jesus. If the only way we can get to heaven is by receiving Jesus and asking Him into our heart ... and if Jesus only comes to those who acknowledge they are sinful and sick, then we would all do well to acknowledge that there is no one more in need of a Savior than we are. We will see this truth play itself out over and over again throughout the book of Luke. And we would do well to remind ourselves that **THOSE WHO ARE GENUINELY SEEKING GOD WILL RECOGNIZE HIM IMMEDIATELY WHEN THEY SEE HIM.** That means for us that pride will keep us from recognizing God and His work in our lives.

II. WEDDING CRASHERS

In verses 33-35 the Pharisees become wedding crashers. Here we learn **THERE IS A TIME AND PLACE TO MOURN AND REPENT AND THERE IS A TIME AND PLACE TO CELEBRATE AND BE JOYFUL.** If you can, I'd like you to help me with this if you can. I have run into many Christians who never seem to reflect the joy of Christ in their lives. How can that be? I know that we will all run into rough patches in life from time to time. We will face health problems, loved ones will get sick and die, and people will do harmful things to us. And so, there will be a time of mourning. But I have known many Christians who are angry, unhappy, and miserable to be around all the time. My reasoning is this. If Jesus died for me and

makes me righteous, and if He is with me always, and if nothing in this life or the next can ever separate me from God's love in Christ Jesus, then shouldn't I be giddy happy most of the time?

Nothing Wrong With Either Option (33)

The Pharisees condemn Jesus and his disciples for not fasting and praying. It seemed to the Pharisees that Jesus and His disciples were always at parties eating and drinking. They presented this as an either or option. However, in verse 33 we see that there is clearly nothing wrong with either option. The Pharisees pointed out that proven spiritual people fast and pray. John and his disciples often fasted and prayed. In fact, John lived an ascetic life out in the wilderness. The Pharisees also fasted at least twice a week and prayed. So their assumption was that Jesus and His disciples didn't fast and pray. We know that Jesus often went away alone to pray. We know that before He embarked on His public ministry, He spent 40 days in the wilderness alone, fasting and praying. Just because the Pharisees never saw Jesus and His disciples, didn't mean they did not fast and pray. I have a couple of comments here. Those of us who are religious people tend to find faults in others that are really problems and weaknesses in our own lives. We often project our own weakness onto others. We are good at finding fault in others while overlooking the faults in our own lives. We need to very careful not to fall into these traps.

Timing Is Everything (34)

Even though we know Jesus fasted and prayed, He gives them a critical lesson in the religious life. In verse 34 He instructs them that timing is everything. Perhaps He even quoted to them or sung to them the sentiments of the author of Ecclesiastes:

*"1There is a time for everything,
a season for every activity under heaven.
2A time to be born and a time to die.
A time to plant and a time to harvest. ...
4A time to cry and a time to laugh.
A time to grieve and a time to dance. ...
7A time to tear and a time to mend.
A time to be quiet and a time to speak up. ..."*

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 / NLT).

I'd like to also teach us a couple of things about Jesus' answer. Jesus pointed out that since He was the Promised Messiah, it would be inappropriate for them to fast, since the very presence of the Messiah demanded joy and celebration. In ancient times, people were forbidden to be gloomy around the king. They were always to be upbeat and happy in the presence of the king.

Secondly, it seems as if Jesus is predicting His death here. He says there will come a time that He will be taken away from His disciples. It will be a sad time. This will truly be a time to mourn, a time to fast, and a time to pray.

That brings me to an observation about the spiritual disciplines. As Christians we practice prayer, bible reading, bible memorization, meditation, silence, fasting, solitude, giving, and other spiritual disciplines. However, if we start to use these religiously or as a way to judge one another's maturity, or even our own walk with God, then we have distorted the use of spiritual disciplines. It becomes more about us and our righteousness than it does for its intended purpose. Let me quickly say what I did not just say. I did not say the spiritual disciplines are unimportant, nor did I say Christians ought not to practice them. In fact, Christians' lives ought to be characterized by practicing the disciplines.

What I am saying is this. The reason we fast and pray, and practice the other disciplines is that we are physically separated from Christ. We should fast and pray because we long to be physically face to face with Him and in His presence. When we practice the disciplines, we are placing ourselves in the presence of God so that we can in some way experience what it will be like when we finally meet Him face to face. When we pray and meditate, the goal is not to simply ask for stuff; ... it is to remove ourselves one step away from the work-a-day world to place ourselves in a special way before God. As we practice the disciplines, they will become more and more natural. We will find ourselves practicing them constantly. Practicing the disciplines demonstrates our longing to be with God. Only death or the rapture will get us there fully, but these spiritual disciplines give us a taste of what it's going to be. **THERE IS A TIME AND PLACE TO MOURN AND REPENT AND THERE IS A TIME AND PLACE TO CELEBRATE AND BE JOYFUL.**

III. LETTING GO OF THE PAST IS OFTEN PAINFUL

There is one thing here that Christians and non Christians share alike. Verses 36-39 point out the fact that letting go of the past is often painful. But what we need to remember is this. **EVEN THOUGH LETTING GO OF THE PAST IS PAINFUL, IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY IF WE ARE TO ENJOY THE PRESENT.** In this section, we have to learn this important point. We cannot mix Christianity with anything else. We have seen that Peter, Andrew, James and John had to leave their fishing business behind to follow Jesus. Matthew left the tax-collecting business behind in order to follow Jesus. The Apostle Paul described our conversion this way:

"17So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (II Corinthians 5:17 / NRSV).

Jesus didn't just take us and fix us up. He created us new. Too often we try to hang on to our old lives. We try to mix Jesus with what our cultural believes, our old habits, our old behaviors, and our old way of thinking.

The Old Will Contaminate The New (36)

In verse 36 Jesus makes it clear that the old will contaminate the new. Please don't miss what Jesus is saying here. An old garment has torn and requires a patch. In Jesus' illustration, the person cuts a patch from the new garment. In other words, the person ruins a new garment in order to cut a patch from it to repair an old garment.

There is a further tragedy. When the person sewed the patch on the new garment, the patch shrunk and pulled apart. Therefore, the old garment remained unfixed, and the new garment was ruined in an attempt to patch up the old. Pride is the thing that contaminates our faith. The Bible is perfectly clear. When we come to Christ, we give everything up. Some people come to church because they are having some problems managing things in their life. And so they come to church and want God to patch them up. If this is the attitude of their conversion, it seems to me to say that are not authentically converted. Jesus did not die to patch us up. He died to make us new creations. Trying to mix Christianity with some other philosophy, culture, or religion contaminates it so it is no longer authentic Christianity. In my opinion, that is the danger of forming ethnic churches. It always runs the risk of distorting authentic Christianity.

The Old Cannot Hold The New (37-38)

But the problem of trying to mix Christianity with anything else is that nothing can hold Christ. Verses 37-38 illustrate the fact that the old cannot hold the new. Jesus here uses the illustration of taking new wine and putting it in old wineskins. When new wine is put in new wineskins, as the wine ferments and expands, the skin has enough elasticity to expand with the wine. However, if one were to take this skin that has already expanded, that has no more elasticity, and puts new wine in it, when the wine starts to ferment and expand, the wineskin will burst and the wine will spill out.

The Pharisees were trying to put Jesus into the old box of the Hebrew Law. The Law was never meant to contain Jesus. It was merely to point out how sinful and how in need we are of a Savior. Legalistic and prideful Christians try to put Jesus into their form of religion. But think about this. The Law said, "Do not murder." Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for them." The Law said, "Do not commit adultery." Jesus said that to even lust after men or women is a sin." If one tries to evaluate their righteousness and standing with God based on how they keep the law, if they are honest, they'll go into a deep depression because they will realize how sinful they are and how impossible it is to keep the laws and standards of Jesus. But if they are able to fool themselves into thinking they are pretty good people, then they will be eternally lost because their system of righteousness cannot hold Jesus.

The Old Is Much Too Comfortable (39)

I have read this passage many, many times before and I had never noticed this before. In verse 39, Jesus makes it clear that the old is much too comfortable for people to let go of. I have noticed this from experience, but I had never seen this so clearly spelled out in the Bible before. People do not like change. They do not like to look at things in a new way. And they especially

do not like to quit thinking and doing things the way they have always done them. But you know, that's exactly what keeps people from being bible-believing Christians. I'm sure all of you would say, "I believe in the Bible cover to cover," and I'm sure you would be sincere about that. But the problem with most of us is that we believe the bible to be true, but we don't want to obey the parts we disagree with. We want to hang on to our beliefs and claim to be good bible-believing Christians.

The Pharisees knew their Bibles better than anyone of us here this morning knows ours. They crossed every "t" and dotted every "i". James says the devil and his demons know the Bible as well. It is hard to let culture go. It is very hard for people to look at their ethnic standards and evaluate them according to the Bible. In fact when culture and theology clash in ethnic churches, culture wins almost every time. In our day it is difficult for us to overcome this and win against it. In school, on the news, on television, and on the radio, we are taught all about ethnic pride. I'm proud to be an Italian. I'm proud to be Chinese, Japanese, African-American, Hispanic, etc. We are told to be proud to be of a particular ethnicity. We are told to be proud we are American. We act in accordance with what our cultures value and try to mix Christianity with it. It will not work.

IV. SUMMARY

Oftentimes in counseling, even though people are miserable, they don't want to change. Even though they are miserable, they know that misery. If we cannot let go of the past, we can never enjoy what God has for us in the present or the future. I was born into an Italian family so ethnically I'm Italian. I was born in the United States so I'm an American. Those really in the end mean nothing. Here is what means everything to me. Jesus suffered and died for me. I am His. I am a Christian. Whatever is not consistent with belonging to Jesus is total garbage to me and I don't want to have anything to do with it. Whatever is consistent with belonging to Jesus I want to embrace totally so that it brings me closer to Him. In our church there is no black, white, yellow, or red. There is no male or female advantage. There is no dominant culture. We are simply known to one another as brother or sister. We belong to Jesus. But in order to realize that, we must let go of the past. How could anyone not want to fully embrace Jesus? If you're here this morning hanging on to the past, let it go. If you take pride from the past, let it go. If you are carrying hurts from the past, let them go. Jesus seems to say that people prefer to hang on to the past, but in order to be a disciple of Jesus, we must let go of the past and follow Jesus. **EVEN THOUGH LETTING GO OF THE PAST IS PAINFUL, IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY IF WE ARE TO ENJOY THE PRESENT.**

Here is what I'm saying this morning. Jesus came to minister to those who are sin-sick. If you're not sin-sick, then you have no reason to follow Jesus. Jesus did not come to save you. On the other hand, if you are sin-sick, then Jesus came to be your Savior. The Pharisees thought they were fine and thought they were pretty good people. In fact, they make most of us look pathetic. They read and studied their Bibles diligently. They prayed often during the day. They gave a tenth of all their money to the temple. They helped the poor and they stayed away from the sins of society. But what they didn't have, was an awareness of how sin-sick they really were and that they needed Jesus. I hope there is no one here this morning that thinks you are okay. I hope

there is no one here this morning that thinks they are pretty good. I hope there is no one here that doesn't think they deserve to go to hell because of all their sin-sickness. I hope that we can acknowledge how much we need Jesus to be our Savior at every moment. Because WE CAN ONLY BE HAPPY IN JESUS WHEN WE COME TO REALIZE HOW MUCH WE NEED JESUS.

There are people who appear to be holy and upright. They appear to have the answers for people and people look up to them. However, in the end, they prove to be like Grimaldi. In his book *How Bad Are Your Sins?* Lance Web writes this:

“The story is told of a young man who came to a renowned doctor in Paris complaining of depression. He asked what he could do to get well. The doctor thought of a well-known young man named Grimaldi, a leader of café society who cut a wide and lighthearted swath through Paris nightlife. The doctor told the young man, ‘Introduce yourself to Grimaldi. Let him show you how to enjoy yourself and you will get well.’ The downcast young patient looked up with a sardonic smile and said, ‘I am Grimaldi.’”

There are too many people living mixed up Christianity and yet never seem to realize the abundant life that comes from Christ. In order to enjoy the fullness of Christ, we need to leave everything behind to follow Him.

Let me leave you with a tidbit about the man Levi we talked about this morning. After his calling by Jesus, Levi is always referred to as Matthew in the New Testament and other early sources. Matthew means a gift of God. We know that Jesus loved to change people's name as did God the Father did in the Hebrew Scriptures. They changed Abram's name to Abraham, Sari to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, Simon to Peter, Saul to Paul, and here, Levi to Matthew. Since Levi was a name that reminded people of the Old Testament Law because the Levites were the priests, Jesus gave him a new name Matthew, a gift from Jehovah. Jesus changed Matthew's life and his eternal destiny ... He can change yours.

Please as we study through the Gospel of Luke, and you find yourself wanting Jesus to change your destiny and to save your soul, please contact me right after the service. I'd love to pray with you and watch Jesus change your life as well.