

Why Jesus Came

When Jesus began His ministry, He impressed and offended people.

Luke begins in chapter 4 with Jesus returning in the power of the Spirit after having been tempted by the Devil for forty days. His first sermon was at His home town of Nazareth.

It is first recorded that He impressed all the people.

“And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious word which were falling from His lips...” (v. 22).

However, then the bottom dropped out and He must have said something that offended them.

“And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.” (v. 28-29).

After this Jesus went to Capernaum, where He cast out a few demons and preached in the synagogue. Here Jesus impressed the people.

“And they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority.” (v.:32)

:36-37

After healing Simon’s Mother-in-law, Jesus kept on healing everyone who came to Him. His popularity was growing.

:40-44

Then Jesus was preaching by the lake of Gennesaret and after crowds pressed in around him He preached from Simon’s boat. Afterwards Jesus did a fishing miracle.

Luke 5:5-8

Jesus again impressed people. :9

This is when Jesus called Simon and some of his fishing partners to be His followers. :10

The next miracles also impressed and offended people.

Luke 5:12-15 - People were very impressed with Jesus.

Verses :18-26

Jesus offended people because of what He said and how He did things.

- Forgive sins and power to heal.

Then we look at the reason Jesus came, we understand that it wasn't about impressing or offending but about a mission of mercy to save lost people.

After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." And he left everything behind and got up and began to follow Him. And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:27-32).

Three things: The People, The Party, The Purpose

I. The People

By this time Jesus had earned quite a reputation as an authoritative teacher or prophet as well as a great healer. Groups of Pharisees were coming from everywhere to meet Jesus in person. But when they saw the company Jesus kept, they were very critical.

This text tells about Jesus having dinner at the house of Levi, a tax collector.

Mark Twain wrote,

"Having spent considerable time with good people, I can understand why Jesus like to be with tax-collectors and sinners."

Tax collectors were universally hated throughout the roman world because of inherent corruption. To become a telones {this particular kind of tax collector}, one had to purchase a franchise from a government official. This became a

profitable business simply because they used government authority to extort as much as was wanted. The tax money went to Rome; the surplus went into the tax collector's pocket.

The Life Application Commentary says,

“Tax collectors were expected to take a commission on the taxes they collected, but most of them overcharged and kept the profits. Thus, tax collectors were hated by most Jews because of their reputation for cheating and because of their support of Rome. A Jew who took such an office was excommunicated from the synagogue and shamed his family and friends. He was looked down upon for valuing money over reputation, respectability, purity before God, and concern for his own people, who had to pay extremely high taxes to the imperial power.”¹

Jews who got into the business often had to sell off land. From the point of view of fellow Jews, it meant selling off a portion of the Promised land and thereby giving up their identity. Jews considered this worse than treason.

Swindoll comments,

“Tax collectors had betrayed their people, rejected their heritage, despised their temple, and renounced their God. Tax collectors had sold themselves to foreigners, which put them on the same level as shameless harlots.”²

A Roman writer tells us that he once saw a monument to an honest tax-collector. An honest specimen of this renegade profession was so rare that when he occurred he received a monument. When Jesus chose Levi he through a party.

The Pharisees were a select group of legalists who were the righteous people of their day. Apparently quite a crowd of them had gathered to see Jesus.

Verse 17 describes this,

“But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses...One day He was teaching; and there were some

¹ James C. Galvin, Ed. D. and Ronald A. Beers, *Life Application Commentary: Mark*, (The Livingstone Corporation, 1994), p. 56.

² Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's New Testament Insights: Luke*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), p. 135.

Pharisees and teachers of the Law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem...”

(Luke 5:15, 17).

The Pharisees wouldn't have allowed their robes to even touch Matthew. They believed that a man was not being religious unless he was being uncomfortable. They had systematized their religious observances. They fasted on Mondays and Thursdays; and often they whitened their faces so that no one could fail to see that they were fasting.

II. The Party

This section begins with Jesus coming to Levi's tax booth – his place of employment; and offering Levi a place as one of His inner-circle students.

Jesus was becoming quite a celebrity among the people. The Pharisees were in shock because of Jesus' choice of a tax collector to be one of his followers. Levi's contemporaries must have marveled that He shut down his enterprise and began following Jesus.

Then Levi through a banquet in Jesus' honor and to celebrate his following Him. From Levi's perspective he was happy to follow Jesus. To Jesus such a choice brought severe consternation from the religious group of that day's society. To the Pharisees contact with tax collectors and sinners brought moral uncleanness. Jesus was enjoying the party- these were the folks He came for.

The complaint: The 'Party Poopers of Palestine'

Grumble – gongyzo – an attitude of discontented murmuring, disgusted anger.

“Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?”

“You can't be the Messiah because you associate with sinful people.”

Jesus Response:

“It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance”

III. The Purpose

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance.

When Jesus called Levi to follow Him, he did.

Two kinds of people made their appearance at Levi's party:
openly sinful and outwardly righteous.

The friends of the tax collector were riff-raff, or at least the lower end of society. They were the kind of people Jesus came to save: people honest enough to admit they are deathly ill with the disease of sin and want to be healed of it.

The Pharisees had a moral cast system and political territory to defend. Their goal was to obey the Laws of God so completely that God would owe them salvation at the end of their lives.

Commenting on these Pharisees, Brennan Manning notes,

“Paradoxically, what intrudes between God and human beings is our fastidious morality and pseudo-piety. It is not the prostitutes and tax collectors who find it most difficult to repent: it is the devout who feel they have no need to repent.”³

What would Jesus do if He were here today?

He would get involved with sinners.

He wouldn't participate in their sins
and would preach a message of repentance.

Would Jesus have a church with an open door policy to practicing sinners?

Both yes, and no.

All who would repent would be welcome.

The church is like a boat that was meant to be in the ocean.

But it's when the ocean gets into the boat that it gets in trouble.

In the first place Jesus was the Great Physician who went about healing all who were ill of their physical sicknesses. Jesus knew that all people were spiritually sick and in need of salvation. Just like he would never leave them sick physically or spiritually and just be with them, so He would bring a new way of life.

I have come to call sinners to repentance...

³ Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for intimate belonging*, (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 80.

The Pharisees wrapped their sin in respectability. They looked good on the outside by doing good works in front of people and pointing out the sins of others. They were proud, self-righteous, religious leaders that Jesus described as white-washed tombs that were filled with dead men's bones. Jesus didn't attend many of their parties or spend much time with them.

Who did Jesus seek after?

Those who were aware of their sin and realized that they were not good enough to come to God or make it into heaven.

Levi left everything to follow Jesus...

– his profession, his profits, and his personal identity.

- His tax table became a supper table.

The Pharisees would only receive recognition from men, never from God.

What is repentance all about?

The inward change produced by the conviction of the Holy Spirit
as the Word of God is proclaimed.

Moody said,

“Man is born with his back toward God. When he truly repents, he turns right around and faces God. Repentance is a change of mind, ...Repentance is the tear in the eye of faith.”

He that hath promised pardon on our repentance
has not promised life till we repent.

Francis Quarles