

Sermon on Luke 5:1-31 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Luke 5:1-31 (Pam Economides)

No one is left the same after encountering Jesus.

Many of us have personal stories of an experience or awakening that changed everything. Some news that broke through the gray clouds of life. An idea that became our life's direction and passion. A spark of love that has been proven by the year of faithful sacrifice and care. An epiphany that made everything fall into place.

A week ago our elementary school hosted a fun run as a fundraiser for the PTA. Great way to get the wiggles out and make some bank! As some of you know, Ewen has a lot of energy and is in constant motion. And I think he is a pretty great runner. So I had high hopes for this run and his success in it.

The kids have thirty minutes to run a half-track and carry electronic trackers to count their laps. As a volunteer I got to man the water table and cheer the kids on.

From the start Ewen was steady and strong. Where his friends had a few good laps in them before they slowed and walked, he kept his pace for the whole race. He was prepared and knew enough to be steady.

After the first ten minutes the host starts hyping the kids on the loudspeaker and reads off the names of the leaders... And I waited to hear "Ewen Shradar." But it never came.

"You've got this bud, keep going!" I shouted as he kept going at his persistent pace. He was giving it his all and you could see the flush in his face, he was digging deep and nothing was going to stop him.

Lap upon lap. Steady as she goes.

After a couple more loudspeaking listings of the top ten leaders, I mentioned to Stacy that something was wrong, Ewen was clearly ahead of so many of these kids. He had to be in the top ten. She, ever the peacemaker, assured me it wasn't

that big of a deal. Even so, as PTA president she could go look at the tracking computer and make sure Ewen wasn't just being left out because he had a hard name to pronounce. And his name was on the list, but far lower than top ten.

Then the last ten minutes of the race came and another announcement came with the leaderboard... and I decided to run alongside Ewen to encourage him.

"Isaiah" That's it dude, you just have to catch Isaiah. You can do it!

I just couldn't believe it though, Ewen was too strong, too consistent. There had to be something wrong. So in the last five minutes I again jogged alongside him and I asked him to show me his tracker badge, so I could see the number on it. Trust but verify! "338."

"Finish strong bud!" And the remaining laps flew by.

As the kids lined up after a cool down lap, I took my spot close to the front. The top ten runners were going to get prizes and I wanted to get a picture of Ewen's face when his name was called.

Starting from ten to two, the hype guy called out the names. Most of them you would recognize as kids making a real effort that morning. But Ewen's name was never called. Then the number one runner... "Maybe a future Olympian here at Miller Elementary... Isaiah!"

With a look of amazement, Isaiah lumbers up to the table and gets his prize with the cheers of the crowd.

No way. That kids wasn't even running!

After the classes left and I watched Ewen walk off with his class, shoulders and head down, dejected. I had a moment, what is the male version of a Karen? A Chad moment. I went up to Stacy and the race host and made it known that there was no way Ewen didn't come in among the top ten. The poor guy was like "sometimes they surprise us... and sometimes the kids have the wrong trackers."

But since they had turned them in we couldn't know if Ewen's number was right... except I knew the number! "338." Can you check his class and see who was supposed to have "338?"

“Isaiah.”

I was angry. He deserved to be rewarded for his effort, to know it paid off. To know he was actually a really great runner. How hard was it for the teacher to give the kids the tracker assigned to their name?!

During the next classes’ race Ewen came back to the track, shoulders still down, kicking the dirt. He was carrying the tracker assignment sheet from the teacher wondering if we needed it back. I bent down to him and told him that he actually won the race. Ensuring he wouldn’t say anything as to discourage the other students, there was relief on his face that he won. And he skipped back to the classroom!

That realization changed him, he was not left the same. And we celebrated that day. (But I am still angry!)

As we progress in our study of Luke’s Gospel we will continue to meet characters who have these types of experiences and epiphanies as they encounter Jesus. And none of them walk away unchanged.

In our text today we have two callings and two healings that give us insight into what happens to those encountering the way of Jesus.

They are comforted, cleansed, and called.

No one is left the same after encountering Jesus.

Comforted

Genesseret is Galilee, and through chapter nine we will witness Jesus ministry in this region. He has been preaching, as he says, “It is necessary for me to proclaim the good news about the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because I was sent for this purpose.” -- **Luke 4:43** (CSB)

And the crowds have been building. Here they crowded the shore so much so it makes more sense to be on a boat to preach. Jesus sees two boats, the fishermen on the shore washing their nets.

He gets into Simon's boat and asks him to put out a little from land so he could teach the crowds. This is his platform.

We've met Simon before, it was in his house that Jesus healed the fever Simon's mother-in-law had. And here he is doing his work and ministry interrupts him.

When he is done teaching, in what I think is a kindness to make up for using the boat, Jesus tells Simon to put out into the deep water and let down the nets for a catch.

I don't think we catch what he is asking here... because we don't fish for a living. Fishermen know where and when the fish can be caught. As was the routine, they had been out all night (when you could catch fish), and caught nothing. They had carried the heavy nets to shore to wash and dry them. And in their exhaustion this carpenter tells them to go back out.

Like me telling Bill (or Nathan) how to fish!

What obedience... "But if you say so, I'll let down the nets."

It's like they win the fish lottery. They caught a great number of fish. So many that their nets began to break and the boat had to come to help. Both boats almost sink under the weight of the catch.

What a miracle. This is going to be the story for the rest of their lives... "that was when I knew..." they will say.

Funny because Simon witnesses the healing of his mother-in-law, but if we are honest, a miracle for our M-I-L does not always register as a miracle for us!

But here Simon has his. All his "fishes" have come true.

And there is awe... not a party. Simon realizes who Jesus is and it humbles him.

"Faced with Christ's authority and power, his soul flooded with a sense of his own evil and hollowness, and with a trembling realization of the personal consequences of his sin."

“Go away from me, because I’m a sinful man, Lord!”

Stunned by the awakening of who Jesus is, Simon goes from calling his ‘master’ to ‘Lord’. And he is shook because he has no business being in the same boat as God.

Reminds me of the prophet Isaiah’s experience before the throne of God.

“...I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and the hem of his robe filled the temple. 2 Seraphim were standing above him; they each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 And one called to another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Armies; his glory fills the whole earth. 4 The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 Then I said: Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Armies.” -- **Isaiah 6:1-5** (CSB)

Before a holy, perfect God we are confronted with our sinfulness - our unworthiness. Where some declare you need a healthy self-esteem, standing in the presence of the Creator of the universe, esteem is placed where it appropriately belongs. “Woe” is the right response.

This is Simon (Peter) - we will get to know his personality more but he is brash, quick tempered, ready to mix it up - and here his awe has him trembling.

Both Isaiah and Simon recognized the holy nature of Jesus and their own sinfulness. For Simon and his boat mates the ultimate result was their following Jesus. Whatever way God chooses to work in our world to perform miracles, he seeks to lead us to confess our sin and follow him without reservations.

But it’s Jesus’ response that makes the difference.

“Don’t be afraid.”

The way of Jesus is not fear but trust. The comfort those aware of their sin need. He is the comforter.

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. He laid his right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid. I am the First and the Last, 18 and the Living One.” -- **Revelation 1:17-18** (CSB)

When we encounter the real Jesus there is very real awareness of sin - but also tangible comforting. He is the One who calls the weary to himself for rest.

This is the experience of his grace. Simon will never be the same.

Cleansed

Later in an upper room, Simon Peter will get this one, he will even ask Jesus to wash his whole body.

There are two healings, giving two angles but both are about being made clean.

A leper sees Jesus, falls facedown out of reverence and begs, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Unclean - excluded from religious and communal life. People would avoid this man at all costs so they would not be made unclean. He knows what he needs. To be restored to health. To be clean. And he has faith that if Jesus is willing he can cleanse him.

Then there is the paralyzed man. Not unclean in the same way, so he has friends that will carry him. He is on a stretcher, and can't walk. His friends have heard that Jesus heals so they creatively bring him - in the middle so the room.

Jesus is willing! He makes the man clean and he forgives (that’s actually what’s needed).

To the first he says “go to the priest” - make it official that you are clean.

Responding to the faith of the paralytic’s helpers, Jesus penetrated to his deepest problem, whether his paralysis was related to sin or not, and pronounced a verdict of forgiveness.

The Pharisees are caught off guard. They had come around to hear Jesus teach, catching the buzz that he is doing miracles and teaching with authority. But they didn't expect THIS authority. They would be okay if Jesus was just a miracle worker healing some people. But forgiveness is God's domain alone.

Spoiler: HE IS GOD!

In this cleansing and forgiving we get a glimpse at God's heart for us.

God cannot be happy unless we are flourishing.

“When the Lord saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and he was deeply grieved.” -- **Genesis 6:5-6** (CSB)

“In all their suffering, he suffered, and the angel of his presence saved them. He redeemed them because of his love and compassion...” -- **Isaiah 63:9** (CSB)

“he became weary of Israel's misery.” -- **Judges 10:16** (CSB) He could bear their misery no longer..

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I surrender you, Israel?... I have had a change of heart; my compassion is stirred!” -- **Hosea 11:8** (CSB)

God so identifies with us that he is not happy, has no good, unless you are flourishing.

“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.” -- **Psalms 103:13** (CSB)

Back to Ewen's run... I long for him to flourish. To be celebrated for his labor. To feel the rush of it all. And that he didn't make me unhappy. Not because God is like me, but because I am like him - as an image-bearer, as a father.

He identifies with our wellbeing. And Jesus comes to make us cleanse. To relieve our suffering. To undo the sadness of our sin. Forgiveness is our flourishing!

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” -- **John 3:16** (CSB)

He could have said “walk” but it is forgiveness this man needs. It is forgiveness we need and it is his forgiveness that makes us clean and righteous. Spotless before the Father whose heart is tied to ours.

This is why Jesus came. This is how he builds his kingdom. Cleansing.

No one is left the same. Even the Pharisees; in awe now but won’t stand for it eventually (keep challenging Jesus), but the man with the friends will stand for it because he was forgiven!

“Our reconciliation with God through Jesus is at the core of the gospel message (1:77). Yet it is also more than this, with the repeated emphasis on our restoration as people. The gospel has implications for the whole person, with the hope of our final restoration in the new creation (Rom. 8:18–25; 1 Cor. 15:50–57).

Comforted. Cleansed. But that’s not all.

Called

This is the key. This is the answer to the “what’s next?” question of these stories, and it is the purpose Jesus’ ministry and the Kingdom.

Simon is told he and the boys will now work to “catch humans!”

The healed men are to live clean and live forgiven.

And Levi, the tax collector, is invited to “follow me.”

In both callings, they “left everything,” nothing else had priority like Jesus did. And they have a feast to celebrate.

The Pharisees and scribes, the religious elite, don't like the ramifications of this good news Jesus is preaching... They don't like who receives grace. Who is comforted and cleansed.

“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.” -- **Luke 5:30-32** (CSB)

Jesus came for the sick - those that know it. Those that need rescue. The unclean, the tax collectors, and sinners. This answer is the epiphany/awakening that shapes the way of Jesus for us.

“As this gospel goes forth it encounters two responses from two types of people, contrasted in this story. On the one hand are those like the grumbling Pharisees. Although they may be theologically astute and correct (Luke 5:21), they fail to see Jesus correctly and fail to have compassion on those in need. The other possible response to Jesus is to have faith to pursue him (v. 18), to trust him enough to obey (v. 25), and to glorify God for the works of Jesus (v. 26).” GTB

Some will be called to make it our vocation, others, it will be our “boats” that are the platform Jesus speaks from. Some will live clean - all of us forgiven. Having encountered Jesus, not the same.

“This is the logic of the kingdom—and it applies to all of us who claim to be children of the King. Jesus calls his people to diverse vocations, but all are to devote their lives to catching men and women alive. This is to be our perpetual vocation”

All Creatures Great and Small - The unsettled playboy wanna be has to come to grips with who he wants to be and what he will do with his life. In caring for a woman whose dog died, he discovers his purpose “it's about the people too.” Tristan's epiphany changes his purpose.

Meeting Jesus on the shores of Galilee is meant to do the same thing for us.

No one is left the same after encountering Jesus.

Be *comforted* - Jesus is not surprised by your sin. He says to you “don’t be afraid.” Receive his grace.

Be *cleansed* - His life, death, and resurrection was for your forgiveness. In him you have been made clean. Rejoice and follow him.

Live *called* - Don’t let other “Christians” be the only sinners you know! Don’t fear - love and serve. If Jesus can’t be made unclean, neither can you or your kids!

“When Christ comes into contact with impurity, he is not defiled—he removes it. This is what the gospel is meant to do to the world. We are to go and seek the good of the most fallen and abandoned of men, and those who do so ought to have so much of the spirit of Jesus Christ... imparting spiritual health as opposed to receiving infection. May we be in such a state of health as Jesus was.”

Spurgeon

Trust him. The power of the Spirit that dwells in you. And be used to share his comfort and his cleansing. That they might say of us, “they are friends of sinners!”

There are more races to run - and we can run them with confidence knowing we are his - never the same because we have been comforted, cleansed, and called. The Father is watching and he is well pleased. Let’s go!