

Luke 5 Authority and Compassion

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Highlight: Luke chapter 5 shows us a series of transformative events that reveal Jesus' divine authority and compassion. In this chapter we see the calling of the first disciples (Luke 5:8-10, 27-28), the healing of a man with leprosy (Luke 5:13) and a paralyzed man (Luke 5:20), and are taught about fasting and the new covenant (Luke 5:33-35).

Explain: We begin with the story of the fishermen, Simon Peter, James and John, who have fished all night with no success. Jesus approaches them with instructions to try once more (Luke 5:4). When they do as instructed the result of their obedience is a haul so large that it breaks their net and begins to sink their boats (Luke 5:6-7). Recognizing Jesus, and more importantly, his own sinful nature, Peter falls at Jesus' feet and tells him to go away...only to be told, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." (Luke 5:8-10) Under His divine authority, Peter, James and John return their boats to land and go with Jesus, thus becoming the first of Jesus' disciples.

Shortly after, we are told the story of Jesus' healing of a man with leprosy, a condition symbolizing deep spiritual uncleanness, and an outcast in society. Jesus is moved by compassion for the man, touches him and heals him. (Luke 5: 12-13) This demonstrates His power to cleanse both physically and spiritually.

We then learn about the paralyzed man who is lowered through the roof by faithful friends so that he can hear Jesus. When Jesus forgives the man's sins (Luke 5:20) He stirs controversy among the Pharisees but gives further evidence of His divine authority and power on earth when he heals him physically (Luke 5:22-26), leaving those among him amazed.

Shortly thereafter, Jesus approaches Levi (Matthew), a tax collector, saying simply, "follow me." (Luke 5:27-28) This emphasizes Jesus' mission to call the lost and marginalized to repent. Again, obedient to Jesus' divine authority, Matthew walks away from his life as a tax collector and begins his journey with Jesus. When questioned about being in the company of reprehensible people, Jesus teaches us that "He has not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32)

Finally, the chapter concludes with Jesus' teaching on fasting using metaphors of new wine and new wineskins, illustrating that His new covenant can't be confined by old religious traditions (Luke 5:36-39).

Application: Recognizing Jesus' divine authority and compassion for all of us is the common thread in this chapter. He alone has the power to save us from our sinful selves if we, too, can put down our old ways and surrender to His call. Submitting to Him and being obedient to His will for my life will require sacrifice. It may not always be the plan I had, but I have to trust in the plan that He has laid before me and approach it with a faithful willingness to follow where He leads. Am I being prayerful enough in this endeavor? Am I listening intently to His guidance? Am I slowing down enough to hear His call? In our harried world, these are things that I constantly struggle to with, as I imagine many of us do. It is important to remind myself of this daily, lest I miss the call. It is also important to surround ourselves with faithful friends, as in the case of the paralyzed man, who will help us hear Jesus when He is speaking.

Respond: Dear Lord, Thank you for today. Thank you for the gift of Jesus and His compassion for us. Please help me to slow down and listen to your call. Prepare my heart and mind for what you have called me. I pray that I will always remember that your plan for my life is perfect, and that if I am obedient to your call, you will provide for me what I need to carry out Your will. Thank you for faithful friends and a church home that will always help me hear Jesus. I pray that I, too, will be that kind of friend to others. Use me to do Your will, today and everyday. Thank you for church leaders who challenge us to dig deeper and do more. Show us all how to take this message out into our homes and communities to share Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.