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## Luke 5:27-32

The Certain Gospel:  
Eat, Drink, Talk

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The first sermon I can remember on Jesus eating and drinking with sinners was at the first church-planter's conference I attended. In March 2013, I attended the **Nineveh Project**, which was the 4C's (our denomination's) church planting conference. It was in Revere Massachusetts and I went because Monica and I had taken a class on church planting the previous summer.

I met the **Conference Minister** Ron Hamilton there and he told me he heard Monica and I studied Westford in our church-planting class. He thought that was very interesting because he had been praying for a new ministry to take on **Westford Bible Church's** building to start a new church plant. This church-planting conference took place 3 months before I got hired at **Immanuel** and 9 months before Westford Bible Church approached Immanuel to take their building.

One of the speakers at this conference was a Pastor named **Matt Kruse**. Some of you may remember Pastor **Paul McPheeters** who lead us through the Quest Church-Plant Training before we launched Cornerstone. Matt Kruse planted a church called Seven Mile Road out of Paul's McPheeters church. When Matt got up to speak, he talked about Jesus' bold act of **eating** and **drinking** with tax collectors and sinners, and how as Jesus' disciples today we're to do the same. He shared how that's what they were doing as a church plant.

That sermon really convicted my heart, and got my excited about church planting. I walked away wanting to eat and drink with people who don't know Jesus. We got the chance to start **Cornerstone** in October 2015 and now as I look out on all of you I do sense it's our **desire** to eat and drink with people who don't know Jesus. I believe we have a desire to do this, but I don't know if we **are doing this**. Maybe this is because I don't see your daily lives and only know what you tell me, or maybe it's because we're not doing it.

So I hope today's sermon does **two things**. If you are spending time with non-Christians, I hope today's message acts as a **confirmation** that you're doing the right thing, and as an **encouragement** to keep going (Gal 6:9). But if you **can't remember** the last time you ate a meal with a non-Christian or went out to drinks with them, I hope this sermon will **convict** your heart, lead you to **repentance**, and **motivate** you to intentionally spend time with people that need Jesus. (let's **pray**)

Jesus has **begun** his ministry. He grew up in **Nazareth**, was baptized by John in the **Jordan** river, and successfully resisted the **temptations** of Satan in the wilderness. He returned to his hometown of Nazareth where he explained his ministry is to the **poor**, prisoners, blind, and oppressed, but his **hometown** doesn't like that he won't play favorites with them and tries to kill him. He escapes and goes to preach in other parts of Galilee as he casts out demons and performs miracles to prove that he is the Messiah.

In **Luke 9-19** we'll see Jesus make his way down to Jerusalem for his **crucifixion** and **resurrection**, but in **Luke 4-5** he is doing ministry near Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee. In fact, at the Sea of Galilee in **Luke 5** Jesus calls his first disciple **Peter** shortly before he calls another disciple named **Levi**. In these we learn...

### Jesus calls sinners to become disciples. (Luke 5:27-28)

**Luke 5:27-28** After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. (NIV®)

All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.

One of the first sinners Jesus came to rescue is a man **named** Levi. Levi has **two** names. If you read the parallel account in **Matthew** you find out Levi's name was also Matthew. Levi Matthew is the same tax collector who eventually **wrote** the **gospel** of Matthew.

Jesus is walking along the **sea of Galilee** and spots Levi sitting in his tax-collector's **booth**. If you read Mark's account, you learn the tax booth was by the lake (Mark 2:13-17). This is the **same lake** Jesus was just at when he called **Peter** to become his disciple in Luke 5:1-11. Peter and his partners were out fishing all night and didn't catch anything; but Jesus tells them to go back out and cast out their nets again. When they do, they catch so many fish they begin to **sink**. Peter recognizes who Jesus is.

**Luke 5:8** But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (NIV®)

Peter is a **sinner**. He recognizes that he is a selfish, prideful, sinful man. **Outwardly**, those around him might **accept him** and think highly of him, but when he **encounters** the **Lord** of the **universe**, he sees his own sin. Levi is also a sinner, but **everyone knows** it. At this time in history, at around **30 AD**, the Romans ruled the nation of Israel. So if you were a Jewish tax collector, you were actually an agent of a foreign government, a traitor. Imagine if the **British** won the **Revolutionary War** and were still imposing taxes on us. You would dislike the **IRS** even more. They hated them so much they were barred from the **synagogue** and **temple**.<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus sees Levi, he **doesn't care** what others think of him. He sees a **disciple**, and says, "**Follow me.**" Levi gets up, leaves everything behind, and follows him. He leaves his tax collector booth, leaves his **career**, leaves the good **graces** of the Roman government (he's never getting that **job back**); but he finds so much more. He finds Jesus, and he follows him. Here are **two applications** we can apply to our lives:

- 1) **You're not too sinful for Jesus.** Your sins don't make you so **gross** that Jesus can't love you. When kids play in the **mud** and get covered from head to toe in grime, their **parents** don't say, "I don't love you anymore!" Their parents say, "Here, let me clean you up." Do you want our Heavenly Father to clean you up? He has a hose called the gospel just waiting to spray you down.
- 2) **A disciple leaves everything to follow Jesus.** Both Peter and Levi left everything to follow Jesus. Jesus calls you to leave your old sinful life behind to pursue a life of **holiness** with Jesus. This doesn't mean you have to **quit** your **job** or become a **missionary** (Luke 3:13-14), you may have to, but you do have to leave behind the old way of doing that job, doing it for yourself, doing it to get ahead. Now you do that job as an **agent** of God's kingdom, as Christ's representative.

*Jesus calls sinners to become disciples.* But not everyone **accepts** this call.

## The "righteous" reject Jesus and his ministry. (Luke 5:29-30)

**Luke 5:29-30** Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" (NIV®)

Tax collectors and others join Jesus for dinner. The "others" were those despised by the religious elite, maybe even prostitutes (Luke 7:37). But the Pharisees and teachers of the law **refuse** to be a part of the meal. They believed eating a meal with someone was a sign of **acceptance** and **fellowship**. I think they're right. Even in **today's culture**, you eat a meal with someone to spend time with them and chat.

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<sup>1</sup> Info from the *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (Mark 2:14) and the *ESV Reformation Study Bible* (Luke 2:12).

But the Pharisees were too good for tax collectors. They **were** separatists. When they saw sinners, they **ran** away. They were pure and expected everyone to be pure. They actually wanted to take the level of **purity** required for the priests and the temple and extend that to all people. But they were actually pretty **powerless**. They only had **social power**, which they go through politicking, recruiting, and social maneuvering.<sup>2</sup>

The Pharisees actually remind me a little bit of the first **pilgrims**. The pilgrims **separated** from the Church of England so they could start their own church and government that honored God. They started a little movement called **Congregationalism**. So I think our **DNA** is a little similar to that of the Pharisees.

When Jesus shows up, he **challenges** their beliefs. He challenges their belief that **separation** can create purity. It can't. He challenges their belief that **sin** only **runs** through "bad people." It also runs through "good people" (Luke 18:9-14). He challenges their belief that obeying the OT **law** and its **values** makes them better than others. They're not. He challenges their belief that **power** will win the day, not the **powerless**.

The Pharisees **believe** themselves to be better than others. They **perceive** that they are **good** and the others are **bad**. They would never eat and drink with sinners like Jesus. Today, Pharisees aren't much different:

- You **may be** a Pharisee if you won't spend time with their **foul-mouthed coworkers** because you're afraid they might make you look bad.
- You may be a Pharisee if you have put yourself in the **category** of "good" and when you look at others you put them in the category of "bad."
- You may be a Pharisee if you try to get others to **obey** God's **commandments** before you share the message of Jesus Christ with them.
- You may be a Pharisee if you want to have power **over** others.

Pharisees don't need Jesus because they're good enough. *The "righteous" reject Jesus and his ministry.*

## Jesus rejects the "righteous." (Luke 5:31-32)

**Luke 5:31-32** Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (NIV®)

This illustration isn't original to me, but I want you to think about that for a second. Why do you go to the **doctor**? Because you have a **head-cold**, or a **fever**, or you **pulled** a **muscle** from doing too much **CrossFit**. Would you ever go to the doctor if there was nothing wrong with you? Your doctor would look at you and ask, "What hurts?" And you would say, "Nothing." Then he would ask, "Why are you here?" And you'd say, "Because I just wanted to see you." And then you'd have to find a **new doctor**.

Jesus hasn't come to save people who think they are **well**. Jesus hasn't come to save people who think **nothing** is **wrong** with them. Jesus has come to save people who **know something** is wrong with them, who will admit they're sick. Do you know you're sick? I know I'm sick with sin and will die in that sin unless Jesus saves me. If you won't **admit** you need saving, Jesus will **respect** your **decision** so much he won't save you. Jesus rejects those who think they're "righteous" without him.

## Jesus accepts repentant sinners as righteous. (Luke 5:32)

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<sup>2</sup> Garland, David E.; Clinton E. Arnold. Luke (*Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 3*) (Kindle Locations 6651-6653). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

**Luke 5:32** I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (NIV®)

**Repentance** means to **turn from sin** and **turn to God** (Acts 3:19). I asked my **CrossFit friend** what she thinks repentance is and she said, “Repentance is buying **flowers** for your wife when you haven’t done the dirty dishes for a week.” I like that idea. Let me add to it. Repentance is saying “I’m sorry for what I did wrong” (like buying flowers when you make a mistake); but then repentance is also doing the right thing (washing the dishes). Repentance is not just buying flowers but **not washing** the dishes; but neither is repentance trying to **be better** by washing the dishes without **confessing** your sin. Repentance is turning away from sin and to God.

The **gospel** is the good news that people who are born in sin and **classified** as **sinners**, through repentance and **faith** in Jesus Christ, are now classified as **righteous**. We’re all born sinners, but through the righteousness of Christ, we become righteous ourselves. In **this life**, I will **never** truly leave everything and follow Jesus entirely. That’s why **Jesus left everything** to come for us. He left heaven and came into this world to **share a table** with **broken sinners** and make them into **beautiful saints** (Phil 2:5-11). Jesus **took on** our sin so that we could take on his righteousness. He died so that we can live.

Now Jesus calls us saints to do the same thing. Leave the **heavens** we’ve created and enter into the mess. Like Jesus, I hope they call you “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matt 11:19). That’s what I call **messy discipleship**. Here are two **applications**:

- 1) **Let’s eat and drink with those who don’t know Jesus (yet)**. What if you were to go out from here and begin to form **intentional relationships** with your neighbors and coworkers? What if you invite a neighbor to get **Starbucks** or you sit with a coworker in the **cafeteria** during lunch time? When I worked for the **Farm Credit Administration**, back in my 20s, I stopped going to lunch with my coworkers because I wanted to go for noontime runs. The Lord gave me the opportunity to form a friendship with a running buddy, and we talked about faith, but part of me thinks I signaled to my coworkers that I didn’t like them very much. How can we do this as a **church**? I **love** how much we eat and fellowship as a church; it’s great. Did you know that on Friday, February 23rd, we’re doing a **game-night** at Cornerstone. Bring a **snack** or **drink** to share and invite your non-Christian friends so that we can do this as a church together. Let’s **eat** and **drink** and...
- 2) **Let’s talk about grace and repentance with them**. Let’s tell them about the Savior who came eating and drinking with **outcasts** and people who didn’t have it all together. Let’s also call them to **repentance**, which is the hardest part for me. Jesus wasn’t content to leave sinners as sinners, but called them to righteousness. You can **invite your friends to church**, and I’ll try to tell them about repentance and grace, but I bet if you have a **conversation** with them it will mean more. This is **hard**, so let’s pray for each other to **trust** the **Holy Spirit** and for him to **open** our **mouths** to speak. I recently received some really great **advice** on how to start a conversation about Jesus. Explain how important **spirituality** or your **faith** is to you and ask if they’d be **comfortable** letting you share a little bit. For example, “You know spirituality is a big part of my life. Would you feel comfortable talking with me more about this part of my life?” Then see where it goes. If you need more help and some accountability, sign up for our **evangelism small group** starting soon. *Talk about repentance and grace with people who don’t know Jesus yet.*

To remember our two applications, remember the **title** of this sermon: **Eat, Drink, Talk**. We do this because *Jesus accepts repentant sinners as righteous*. I want to close with a question.

***Are you righteous or repentant?***

If you're **righteous**, you'll walk out of here saying, "**I'm fine**. I'm good enough." By walking out this way, though you may **perceive** yourself as righteous, God won't, and his opinion is what **matters**.

But if you're **repentant**, would you pray this prayer of repentance silently with me as I close?

Heavenly Father, I'm sorry for the ways I perceive myself as better than others. I do this by the little judgments I make in my heart towards others. Father I confess this is sin. Would you help me change? Help me invite broken people who don't know you into my life. Help me **eat** and **drink** with people who don't know you just like your Son Jesus did, and help me **talk** with them about grace and repentance. Help us do this together as a church. Thank you for **counting** me as righteous despite my sin because Jesus lived a perfect life, died an innocent death, and was raised again so that I will live. Thank you for forgiving me and filling me with your Holy Spirit. I love you. We love you. Amen.

*Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote and preached this message for the people of Cornerstone Congregational Church. [Click here to listen to more sermons](#) or [click here to read our story](#).*