

# Call the Doctor

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well now Luke chapter 5, if you were to open your Bibles there on page 59, Luke chapter 5 and actually page 60 at the end of the passage in verse 31, Jesus says one of the two most important things he says in all this gospel.

Luke chapter 5 verse 31 he says, those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance and when you know you're sick, I mean when you know you're really sick, there is no one who you want to see more than your doctor.

You don't really want to see your doctor much when you're not that sick. The better the doctor is the less you want to see him. When my older sister was two and my family worked on a mission station in East Africa, she contracted the disease, began to lose weight, was a week with a terrible fever and a cough and hadn't kept food down and a high temperature.

My mum and dad were new missionaries on this station and the head of the mission station refused to allow them to take my sister to the doctor.

So my father did what every father would do. He stole the only car on the mission station and drove the 50 miles to the doctor. And I know this doctor and I've heard her tell this story.

[ 1 : 39 ] She said if it had been a matter of hours, if Kathy had not been brought to her, she would have died. But the cure was effective and the cure was simple. And when you are sick, if you are really sick, there is no one you need and no one you want more than the doctor.

And Jesus says here at this early part of his ministry, Those who are well don't need a doctor, but those who are sick, I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

And it may help to put the word self in front of righteous. That's what he means. I haven't come to call the self-righteous because the self-righteous have no idea that they need any help.

But I've come to call sinners to repentance. And I'm not sure about this, but I reckon this was Luke's favourite saying of Jesus.

Because Luke was a medical doctor. And he was a medical doctor in a time before antibiotics, which made doctors even more precious in a way.

[ 2 : 44 ] Luke knew what it was to cure people, to hold people's lives in his hands and to bring healing. And he loved the fact that Jesus saw himself as a doctor.

This is the second time he's mentioned it. There are four stories that we read this morning in those two readings. And each of them have this deep purpose of Jesus as the divine doctor.

Now the middle two stories I'm going to leave for next week. I want to leave them for the cantata, because they show beautifully the inside workings of forgiveness.

Let me give you a trailer. In verses 12 to 16, the man full of leprosy, he's an outcast socially, physically, morally, spiritually.

And he says, Jesus, can you make me clean? And Jesus makes him clean and takes him back to his community. And it's a stunning picture of our spiritual condition and the cure of forgiveness.

[ 3 : 46 ] And then in 17 to 26, if there's any doubt about the connection between the healing and forgiveness, there's the story of the man who's paralyzed. And Jesus heals him by saying, your sins are forgiven.

And when that offends the religious authorities, Jesus simply says, to show you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, get up and walk.

And he does. So that the miracle of healing and all the world full of miracles of healing are not as good and not as wonderful as the great miracle of forgiveness.

So that's what we'll look at next week in the cantata. Have you invited someone yet? Are you praying for someone to invite? That would be very good.

But these two central stories are sandwiched between two stories which show us what it means to begin to follow Jesus. It gives us concrete, real life, two real life illustrations of encountering Jesus. [ 4 : 50 ] And I want to just look at the two of them and draw out two lessons. So the first is in verses 1 to 11. And it is Simon, Simon Peter. If you look at the early verses, Simon Peter is, well it opens with Jesus on the beach.

Until now, Jesus has been in church settings, synagogues and homes, but now he breaks out into the marketplace where men are working.

And the crowd is so big gathering around him on the beach to hear him preach that he says to Simon, can I get into your boat and just go out a little ways so that I can preach to the crowd? And although it's a minor annoyance to Simon, it happens. But it's nothing compared to the major annoyance of verse 4. Look down. When he had ceased speaking, Jesus said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

Now, Jesus' preaching is all fine and good for Peter. Everything has been good up to this point. But interfering with fishing is a completely different thing.

[ 6 : 10 ] You can hear this in Peter's voice in verse 5. Master, he says, We toiled all night and we took nothing, but at your word I'll cast down my nets.

He says, Jesus, you have your area of specialty and I have mine. You're a preacher. You're a man of religiousness. You seem to have the healing touch.

Fish, they're my area. And fish don't just jump into nets. That's why we fish at night, Jesus. During the day, the fish see the nets and avoid them.

And I know this lake like the back of my hand. We have worked all night right around this lake.

There's not been a single nibble. The fish are not there. And I think most of us have no real idea of the power of Jesus' words.

We have areas of our lives where we're convinced that we are the experts. We never imagine bringing Jesus' word to bear on certain areas of our expertise.

[ 7 : 16 ] I don't know. It might be investments or marriage or spending habits or family or your ambition or your prejudice or your retirement or how you relate to neighbours.

Jesus marches in as Lord and he speaks his word. And it seems absolutely crazy and upside down and contrary to accepted wisdom and experience.

And so we keep these areas from the word of Christ and we never experience the power of Christ. But Simon wonderfully says, At your word I'll let down the nets.

I'm sure he was expecting nothing. But in verses 6 and 7, No sooner had he dropped the net into the water when the fish that had been hiding from Peter all night from all over the lake leap into the net.

They're called suicide fish. And the nets are so full they're breaking and they pull them into the two boats and the boats these are fairly large boats and they begin to sink under the weight of the fish.

[ 8 : 17 ] The sheer, majestic, sovereign power of Jesus. Put yourself in Peter's shoes you'd be excited, wouldn't you?

You'd be overjoyed. I mean this is a big business success. He's not. Look at verse 8. When Simon Peter saw it he fell down at Jesus' knees saying Depart from me I am a sinful man O Lord.

You find that an unusual response? Maybe he should have said now I can retire but he doesn't.

Because he encounters as he encounters who Jesus really is there is something that makes him deeply conscious of one thing and that is he is a sinful man and he has a sinful and an evil heart.

It's not unlike the day that the prophet Isaiah went to church. You remember and God appeared in a vision to Isaiah. Instead of being happy and delighted and writing a hymn of praise Isaiah falls down on his face and says Woe is me I am completely unraveled.

I am a sinful man and a man of unclean lips. And the reason is the power of God the power that is with Jesus is not just massive supernatural cosmic energy it is the power of holiness.

[ 9 : 47 ] It's the cleansing cleaning power of God the God who made us. And whenever we truly encounter the real Jesus Christ the first and reflexive action in a human heart is to know the vast chasm between Jesus and me and to become very conscious of my own sinfulness.

That's the mark of what it is to be truly Christian. You suddenly realise sin is a very big deal. Where does that knowledge come from? It comes from only one place it comes from encountering the person of Jesus.

If you have no conviction of sin no sense of spiritual need it is simply can only be because you haven't met Christ yet and it's great that you're here because he will meet you through his word. But if you do have this conviction in your heart that you are a sinful person it can only come from God. It's not something you can give to yourself and it is the beginnings of repentance and forgiveness.

If you were here last week you remember in chapter 4 what happened when Jesus began preaching. demons began screaming out they recognised Jesus has come to destroy evil and all who belong to evil.

[ 11 : 07 ] And before we meet Christ it's so easy to convince ourselves that evil is something other people do. It's not really something in my heart I'm a good person deep down sin is no big deal I mean I've made some mistakes I've done some wretched things but fundamentally I'm a good person.

I hear people say that to me every week. But you see sin is a vertical reality. It has to do with my defiance or my rebellion against God.

And Dr. Jesus comes along and he says the fundamental sickness of your soul is not that you don't have enough stuff it's not that you don't have enough choices it's that you put God on the periphery of your lives and live horizontally as though you are God.

This is the fatal and terminal disease that Jesus has come to deal with. It's very important we need to keep saying this sin is not the naughty things that we do it's a power which enslaves me in my own choices and it is beyond the reach of any human doctor beyond the reach of clergy beyond the reach of any human person it's a virulent virus and the symptoms often hide themselves until we meet Jesus Christ.

Until we have a sense of God and a sense of who Jesus is there's no real conviction and no repentance and no forgiveness and when Simon recognises who Jesus is he instantly knows he is the doctor I need a cure I have no claim on Jesus it's the first work of the doctor to get the diagnosis right you see and what does he do what does Jesus do this is a lovely moment I think he doesn't say to Peter yes you know stay on your knees you're a sinful man you're an exceedingly sinful man you're a wretched man keep grovelling look what Jesus does halfway through verse 10 he says don't be afraid from now on you'll be catching men and when they had brought their boats to land they left everything and followed him it's lovely Jesus doesn't only just embrace Simon but he brings Simon into the work of bringing the cure to other people and Jesus uses a pun which is a little bit lost in our English translation the phrase catching men literally means capturing alive for freedom he says

[ 13 : 46 ] Peter you've been hauling in fish to kill them now you're going to be involved in bringing freedom to people by bringing them life it's a lovely thing that Jesus does he doesn't just free Simon he brings Simon into the freedom work or to change the metaphor if Jesus is the doctor he wants Simon not just to be cured but to help out in the emergency ward now what does that look like let's go to the last story to Levi verse 27 to 32 now I'm guessing Levi thought this was going to be an ordinary day just like every other a bit like Peter and Levi had chosen a job that put his reputation in the sewer he had made as much money as he could from his countrymen by using the Roman occupying forces as his backing he was rich and people hated him for it it wasn't just envy it was hatred he seemed to be able to make money effortlessly he was making money hand over fist while all his neighbours struggled more and more he was sinfully rich and how is it possible to free someone from a lifelong addiction to money well in verse 27

Jesus marches up to him and simply calls him to follow him directly and personally he says follow me and it's a wonderful and a terrible moment for Levi it's the moment of truth for Levi can I choose this Jesus over money can I put Christ ahead of all that I've been working for it's the moment of liberty where he's going to be freed from his love of wealth or just continue as he is verse 28 he left everything and rose and followed him it's a lovely picture Levi knows that he is heart sick he's got a sickness which is unto death and he recognises something in the call of Jesus the words of the one who has a cure and so he repents he turns from his slavery to follow Jesus Christ we've got to see how positive repentance is repentance is not just stopping sinning it's not just turning away from sinning it's turning my whole person to

Jesus it's giving myself and following him what is the first word in verse 29 do you notice it's the word and there should be no break between verse 28 and 29 I don't know why they put a paragraph there you see what Levi does is to put everything at Jesus disposal and repentance doesn't put him

in a spiritual quarantine but it means sharing the cure with others let me read verse 29 and Levi made a great feast in his house and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table with him now this is the first meal in Luke's gospel actually it's not just a meal it is a great feast and a great feast becomes the key picture of repentance and belonging to Jesus in the rest of the gospel

I think we're meant to see here Levi has not made a difficult and challenging moral choice to show that he's sorry for his sins he's turned to Jesus Christ and now he's free and the joy and the fellowship of the feast are an expression of what it means to follow Jesus repentance and the meal is an inclusive meal he throws the meal and invites all his friends because he wants his friends to know the joy of repentance there's nothing strained or forced or programmatic about this it's instantaneous it's spontaneous and it flows out of the reality of his repentance Levi is doing exactly what Jesus called Simon to do he's spreading the net of forgiveness he's catching people for life and freedom he is wanting to share Jesus Christ with others because you see repentance is not just about Jesus and me repentance has a profoundly social effect it changes the way I view people around me and how I treat them

I begin to see them as those who really belong to Jesus Christ and need Jesus Christ just as I need Jesus Christ repentance shows itself in feasting by putting my resources at Jesus disposal so that others can join the feast and of course it's very difficult for the scribes and the Pharisees in verse 30 who also make their first appearance in the gospel at this point well actually earlier in chapter five scribes and the Pharisees they got a different view they've got a boundary view of reality once you are on the inside once you are on the safe side of the boundary you don't venture out it's not safe you might catch something and they're deeply critical of Jesus and his followers for hobnobbing and feasting with sinners and they say to him you know if you really were on the safety side of the boundary line you would you wouldn't go outside so often you would spend time inside you see repentance is not about safety it's about freedom the freedom of forgiveness and who is it that needs forgiveness it's those who are sinful and Jesus has come to bring repentance you see repentance that there are no other credentials for belonging to Jesus that's where it begins leaving following feasting there seem to be two kinds of churches that have two kinds of approaches to all this one kind of church holds the gospel of repentance for themselves doctrinally and correctly but that's where it stops and they tend to develop carefully defined religious boundaries and hide behind them they don't work at crossing those boundaries with the good news of Jesus

[ 20 : 35 ] Christ they might they're afraid they might catch something rather than catching someone and it makes those churches ineffective and there are other churches which have a much looser grasp on the message of Jesus they don't hide behind barriers they cross boundaries and they cross barriers but they don't take the gospel of repentance with them they don't offer a cure all they offer is their own niceness which makes them ineffective what Vancouver needs are churches which hold the gospel of repentance and cross the barriers if Jesus is the cure we need to go to him for forgiveness and follow him and stay close to him and cross every barrier we possibly can to bring others to Jesus Christ and the lovely thing about this chapter is it is that that does not mean developing exotic programs it just takes place in the natural domestic arenas of our lives as forgiveness forgiveness gives way to feasting and the place of Jesus so Jesus is absolutely clear he says

I've come as a doctor not to call the self righteous but sinners to repentance very important you see the gospel is not a prescription it's not saying you've got to go out and do certain things and perform religious exercises and climb the ladder of moralism to God it is good news that Jesus has come who is the cure the gospel is news it's not advice it's news that Jesus has come with forgiveness and feasting and he calls us to repent and turn to him for forgiveness so let us finish what does this mean and I just want to say that there are obviously from this passage two infallible marks of what it means to be a disciple there are two marks that repentance has begun in our lives two marks of seeing whether the cure is at work the first is the freedom of forgiveness both Simon and Levi meet Jesus and the meeting

Jesus comes with a spontaneous conviction of sin I say this to us because the conviction of sin is not something that we have to work up it's not something that we have to conjure before we come to Jesus Christ you know if you summoned up enough conviction of sin somehow you'll please Jesus it's the other way around conviction of sin arises spontaneously as we come to Christ and see him and both Simon and Levi turn to Jesus and both of them begin to follow Jesus and both of

them know that Christ brings forgiveness and cleansing so this is the first sign of true repentance it is turning from something it's turning from a life of self and sin but there is a second essential mark and that is repentance is turning to something or someone it's turning away it's turning to and this is the picture of feasting feasting and fishing Christian life is not meant to be static and passive a lifeless amoeba it's a life of feasting and fishing and it's a life where the cure that we have begun to experience is so good that we want other people to know about it it helps explain why churches are so messy churches are not meant to be pristine resorts with immaculately behaved people they're more like emergency rooms they're more like a third world emergency room with one doctor where we're constantly being bound up and healed and we're trying to bring other people in because we know this doctor has the solution and sign of growth and health is not hiding the cure from your friends and family but finding a way that they might meet Christ too that's the longing he puts in our hearts so here are the two marks of meeting Jesus

Christ turning from sin turning to Christ and being involved with him or if you like to put it this way forgiveness leads to following following leads to feasting and feasting leads to fishing amen let us pray lord god on this beautiful autumn morning we worship and praise your holy name you are the creator of the mountains and oceans the fall colors and all that is beautiful around us may we never forget that our world is a gift from you the god of all creation but we thank you most especially this morning that you are our great physician that you draw us close to you that you show us the great need we have of your healing that you show us our sins we pray lord that you will keep our hearts open to you that instead of rationalizing explaining or denying each day we will repent and gladly receive your forgiveness may that daily act of repenting and receiving forgiveness create in us joyful hearts free us lord we pray to be part of your your work of healing in the lives around us in this congregation in this city and in this world lord jesus you lived and died and rose again for all people everywhere in the world give us we pray hearts of compassion for those in need of your care remembering especially operation christmas child we pray for every child and family every person preparing a christmas box and we pray for every child who will receive them may these boxes be a means not only of bringing christmas gifts to children in need but may they also be a means of bringing your grace and truth into many young lives far from vancouver we also remember this morning in prayer churches around the world for all congregations sharing the good news of repentance and forgiveness we remember especially the anglican network churches in canada which are holding fast to the gospel of repentance and crossing barriers for your sake dr jesus dr jesus we thank you that you are the great physician that you can heal in ways beyond our understanding in hearts and minds and bodies and we pray for those in need of your healing touch in our congregation for carolyn for paul for michael for fiona for manny and for rosemary and lastly lord as we leave this church and go out into the week ahead we ask that your spirit will show us what is it this week that we need to turn from and show us new ways in which we need to turn back to you and we as we continue our life together as a congregation may we be a congregation that feasts together and fishes together in christ's name amen and it is