

Citizens of the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Today's passage and scripture reading will be from Luke chapter 5, verses 17 to 39. To encourage you, if you don't have one, to grab one of the blue Bibles that's on the white table in the center of the room.

The scripture reading is from page 861, so Luke 5, 17. If I could pray for us before we start. Dear Heavenly Father, we magnify you, Father. We ask that you quiet our hearts to receive from you.

We praise you for the newness of your promises every morning. In Jesus' name. On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem.

And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus.

[1 : 08] But finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said, Man, your sins are forgiven you.

And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, Why do you question in your hearts?

Which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you? Or to say, Rise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He said to the man who was paralyzed, I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed, and go home.

And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been laying on and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all. And they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, We have seen extraordinary things today.

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, Follow me. And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house.

[2 : 14] And there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?

And Jesus answered them, 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 they said to him, The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers.

And so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink. And Jesus said to them, Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them.

And then they will fast in those days. He also told them a parable. No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new.

[3 : 12] For he says, The old is good. The word of the Lord. Thanks. Good morning.

It's good to have everybody back from traveling and other things. And for those of you who don't know me, I'm Sean for those who are visiting.

I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church. The mic is on, on my side. Can you guys hear me?

I'll just keep going. Yeah. Oh, there you go. Yeah. And in the 1800s, there was a Scottish pastor named John Duncan.

And he formulated what is now known as the trilemma. Instead of a dilemma, it's a trilemma. Three things.

[4 : 34] And he wrote this. He says, Christ either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or he was himself deluded and self-deceived, or he was divine.

There's no getting out of this trilemma. It is inexorable. So this is later taken up by C.S. Lewis and given them even more memorable phrasing.

But this highlights kind of the difficulty of coming to terms with who Jesus claimed to be. But it's something that we have to do. And Luke 5, 17 to 39 helps us to come to terms with who Jesus is by telling us how some of his contemporaries wrestled with the identity of Jesus.

And in this passage, we see kind of the beginning of the growing tension and conflict between Jesus and the Jewish religious authorities. And it teaches us this main point that Jesus brings a new age where sinners who repent can be forgiven and admitted to the wedding supper of God. That's the main point of this passage. And we see Jesus' true identity and mission through the accusations of the religious leaders. They charge him with these three things. They accuse him of doing these three things.

[5 : 55] First is blaspheming God. Second is befriending sinners. And third, breaking tradition. These are the three things that these Jewish leaders accuse Jesus of doing.

And through that, we learn Jesus' true identity. As Jesus' popularity increases, his audience grows. So if you look at verse 17, the beginning of our passage, it tells us that on one of those days when Jesus was teaching, even the Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem.

So the Pharisees were one of the four major Jewish religious groups in the first century. They were Jews who sought to reform and purify Jewish society.

And the teachers of the law, later called the scribes in verse 21, they were the religious academics who kind of lended academic legal credibility, scholarly support for the teachings of the Pharisees.

So if you want to think of modern day equivalents, you can think of the Pharisees as the pastors and the scribes and the teachers of the law as the seminary professors. And so Jesus has become so popular that he's no longer merely attracting the attention of the masses.

[7 : 10] He's also attracting the notice of the religious authorities. And they're coming from the country and from the city. So they've all gathered here to hear and to see what Jesus is all about.

And it says at the end of verse 17 that the power of the Lord was with him to heal. So all of this at the gathering of the Pharisees and the scribes and also the fact that the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal is kind of raising our expectations for what's about to happen.

Something strange and spectacular actually happens. Read verses 18 to 19 with me. It says, There's so many people hearing, You're looking to hear, You listen to Jesus talk, That it's the standing room only and people can't get in.

And so they tear open the roof and lower the paralytic through it. So the roofs in these days were flat and they had stairs going up to a stage. It was kind of like roof decks of our day. And they were made typically of a layer of straw, reeds, palm leaves, and then a layer of clay tiles.

And then on top of that, they would put a layer of thick mud to make it rainproof. So this is quite, if you imagine this scenario, it's quite a dramatic interruption. So here's Jesus teaching, preaching the good news of his arrival of the king.

[8 : 44] And then you start to notice these drops of clay tiles, mud start to drop, and people are starting to duck for cover and making way for this and pushing each other off.

And then, and lo and behold, a mat comes down through it, through the giant hole that's been just poured through the roof. And a man is lying there. And it's obvious to onlookers that he's a paralytic. So it's a very dramatic scene. It's set for Jesus to do some wonder working. Here's Jesus the healer, Jesus the wonder worker. Let's see what he does. And in verse 20, it says, And when he saw their faith, he said, Man, your sins are forgiven.

A little bit anticlimactic, right? What are you talking about? Do you see what this man is here for? He's not here for forgiveness of sins. You need to heal his body. What are you talking about,

Jesus?

It's amazing. Jesus doesn't build any hype like some so-called healers of our day. Ladies and gentlemen, do you see this man lying here? He has been a paralytic all his life.

[9 : 53] There is no cure for his ailment. How many of you think, I can make him walk again? Shall I do it? No, none of that. No showmanship.

No fanfare. Instead, Jesus, the great physician, looks straight through the heart of this man and recognizes what his greatest disease, his greatest need is, and it's the disease of sin.

It's not unlike a woman who visits a doctor because of her hoarse throat discovering that she actually has thyroid cancer. The doctor diagnoses a much more serious condition, and even though this man's paralysis is greatly debilitating, even though he's in desperate need for physical healing, Jesus nonetheless determines that the forgiveness of sins is still this man's greater need.

Because even more than health, we need God. So Jesus says, man, your sins are forgiven you. And that's the greatest need of all of our unbelieving neighbors and friends also.

When our neighbors give birth, we should cook meals for them. When our neighbors are elderly, we should shovel snow for them off their streets. When our neighbor is getting attacked, we should call for help and intervene.

[11 : 13] That's what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves, and we should do them. But we have to do more than that because their greatest problem is sin. And their greatest need is for the forgiveness of sins offered by Jesus Christ.

So if your neighbor had cancer and you had the cure for it, would you not offer it? Why not then? Would we not offer the goodness of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins to people who are in desperate need of cure of their souls?

So the priority of our spiritual need needs to be recognized. And this needs to be applied to Christians as well as we relate to one another as believers.

Because we, as the family of God, of course, have material needs. We have physical needs. And we should strive to meet each other's needs. And we should ask for prayer for illnesses and jobs and finances and more.

That's part of being in the body of Christ. But our sharing of our lives together also must not stop there. We have to go beyond that because do we also share our spiritual need? Do we confess our sins to one another?

[12 : 19] Every Christian is a sinner saved by God. We have no pretensions of self-righteousness. So within the family of God, we shouldn't fear each other's judgments.

To be a Christian is to acknowledge our sinfulness and the need for Christ's righteousness. So we should freely confess our sins to one another and pray for one another as James 5.16 tells us so that we may be healed.

I'm so grateful to God that many people, many members in our church are very quick to confess sins to one another. And if you come to one of the Wednesday prayer services, it's very apparent. We confess our sins. We pray for one another. We're concerned for our eternal well-being and for our souls. I'm encouraged by this. But if there's any of you who are hesitant to confess your sins, I want to exhort you to do so more and more so that you might find healing with each other.

If you're not, it says sometimes, you know, we talk to people and it doesn't seem like they have any sin to confess in their lives. And if you're not sweating when you're exercising, it doesn't mean that you're in amazing shape.

[13 : 27] You guys know that, right? Yeah. It means that you're not exercising hard enough. It's everybody sweats, even the Olympic athletes, right? If you're, if every Christian that is seeking to obey the Father and their training in righteousness, they're trying to become more like Christ and they're trying to keep in step with the Spirit, they will face resistance and they will face temptations and there will be consequences.

There will be sweat and blood. That's the nature of the perseverance of the Christian life. There will be battle scars. So church is not for putting on our best clothes and smiles and pretending like we're perfect.

Church is made up of people who humble themselves, confess their sins and find that God's grace toward them in Christ is sufficient. That's who we are. Some of you are not yet followers of Christ and I want to ask you, do you recognize right now that your greatest need is for the forgiveness of sins?

Your greatest need is not for physical healing from your illness. It's not your career advancement. It's not your next vacation or what you're going to do next year or over the next 10 years.

Your greatest need right now for eternity is your forgiveness of sins. And only Jesus can offer you that forgiveness of sins. But to receive his healing you need faith.

[14 : 48] Look at verse 20 again. It says, Jesus saw their faith. Faith always precedes the healing. When a sick person refuses to go to the doctor there's usually one of two reasons, right?

One, first reason he does not feel that he is sick. Either he doesn't think that it's severe enough to warrant attention or he doesn't believe that he's sick at all.

That's the first usual reason. The second usual reason is that he knows that he is sick but he does not believe that his doctor can heal him. If you're not yet a follower of Christ you need healing from the disease of sin but in order to receive healing you must have faith.

That's what faith is. First, you step out into repentance recognizing, acknowledging that you are indeed sick and then second you believe that Jesus has what it takes to heal you and forgive you of your sins.

That's repentance and faith. That's conversion. That's how you become part of the family of God.

You need faith. So Jesus saw their faith and he said, man, your sins are forgiven.

[15 : 59] Jesus' remarkable answer stirs up the crowd and the professional theologians understand right away the implications of Jesus' statement. So they start murmuring among themselves in verse 21 saying, who is this who speaks blasphemy?

Who can forgive sins but God alone? to blaspheme is to defile or abuse God's name and the punishment in the Old Testament for blasphemy was the death penalty by stoning and the Pharisees and scribes are essentially correct in their assessment because according to scripture no one but God can forgive sins and therefore to claim to forgive sins was equivalent of claiming to be God.

So for them it was considered blasphemy. what they're missing of course is that Jesus is as we have seen over the previous chapters he is in fact the son of God and therefore it's not blasphemous for him to claim to offer forgiveness of sins.

And just as Jesus saw through the paralytic and diagnosed his greatest need he sees right through the Pharisees and perceives their lack of faith. It says in verse 22 that Jesus perceived their thoughts and Jesus said to them in verses 23 to 25 which is easier to say your sins are forgiven you or to say rise and walk but that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

He said to the man who was paralyzed I say to you rise pick up your bed and go home and immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home glorifying God.

[17 : 44] Jesus' logic is pretty straightforward easy to follow it's easy to be able to tell somebody hey your sins are forgiven because that's an unverifiable and therefore unfalsifiable claim.

No one can dispute that you can't see it you can't observe it it's easy to tell someone your sins are forgiven but it's hard to tell someone a paralytic rise and walk because anyone around you who's watching can verify that they can observe that and see whether or not you're actually doing it whether or not they're actually being healed and so Jesus is by doing saying this he's saying that by doing something that is more difficult to prove more difficult to demonstrate he wants to prove that he actually has the authority to forgive sins on earth and Jesus here addresses himself as the son of man in Aramaic which is the language that Jesus spoke the phrase son of man can simply refer to some human being but later in Luke 21 27 Jesus says that in the end times we will see the son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory so he mentions the son of man and so there he's alluding to actually

Daniel 7 13 to 14 where prophet Daniel sees the vision of one like a son of man and he came with the clouds of heaven to the ancient of days which is God and to him to this son of man was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people's nations and languages should serve him his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed so this is what Jesus is alluding to as we find out later when he says he's the son of man when he says I am the son of man he's not being you know meek or demure here he's saying I am the son of man the divine representative with the authority of God and the power of God to come to come to his people and so that's what Jesus is claiming to be and so they don't really quite grasp what Jesus is claiming here as the son of man but they do appreciate what happens next

because Jesus gave the paralytic three commands in verse 24 look at the three commands he says rise pick up your bed and go home and then look at verse 25 it tells us that each of these three commands was fulfilled exactly and immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home glorifying God so this is what you call a command fulfillment formula and it's there in scripture to show reveal the authority of the person who gives the command when Jesus speaks it happens when he commands something it's obeyed and that's what has happened here so the paralytic goes home glorifying God and it says amazement sees them all and they glorify God and were filled with awe saying we have seen extraordinary things today so quite far from blaspheming God

Jesus brings glory to God he has the power to forgive sins because he has the power to make a paralytic rise and walk he is the son of man who represents God so that's the first charge blaspheming God we see his true identity through that charge the second charge is that he befriends sinners and look at verse 27 it tells us that after this Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax booth and he said to him follow me people in this culture usually had multiple names like most people in the US as well they have first name and middle name and last name and so Levi is the same disciple of Jesus who is called Matthew in Matthew chapter 9 verse 9 he was a tax collector which was one of the most despised professions among the Jews I mean I guess it's kind of people don't like the profession nowadays either because it seems like they're taking your money but the people who work for the IRS are actually very responsible people and it's a reputable profession it was not the case with tax collectors in Jesus' day the tax collectors in Jesus' day were people who had paid the Roman Empire to lease the right to collect taxes from the people from the citizens and they had total control over how much they could charge so usually what happened was they would charge enough to make up for the money that they pay the Roman Empire and to make a handsome fee on top of that so they were kind of extortionists they were not morally upright people and on top of this so because of this Jews actually excommunicated all tax collectors from the synagogues because they considered them to be thieves and in this case for Levi it's actually even worse than that because Levi is not a Roman he's not a Greek he is a Jew so for a Jew to sell out to the Roman government and to collect taxes and be an extortionist among their own people is to show that he's to be a traitor so Levi is not only a thief he's a traitor to his own people and so he's the kind of person that Jesus he says went out he saw a tax collector sitting in the tax booth he said to him follow me the same way he called Peter earlier in chapter 5 and in the same way Peter responded by leaving everything behind to follow Jesus here once again Levi says he left everything to follow him leaving everything he rose and followed him as I mentioned last week that is the pattern of Christian discipleship there is no such thing as a halfway disciple you're either with Jesus all the way or you're against him all the way to be an agnostic about Jesus is to not believe in him you're either all in or all out and is there anything that's holding you back then today from pursuing Christ wholeheartedly is there anything should God demand it from your life you would be hesitant to give it up for the sake of following Christ if so then you have not become a disciple of Jesus Christ leaving everything behind to follow him

[24 : 19] Levi chooses to go all in on Jesus and verse 29 tells us that he made Jesus a great feast in his house so this was a party in Jesus' honor Levi's not throwing a going away party for himself and then since Levi was a tax collector his friends not surprisingly are tax collectors they're not from the morally respectable segment of society it says that there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them Levi has met Jesus and his life has been changed as a result and he wants as many of his friends tax collectors or not to have an opportunity to meet Jesus Luke frequently mentions events and conversations that take place over meals he has emphasized this more than any of the other gospel writers so dinner table is a good context for spiritual fellowship and conversation and it's a good reason why we as Christians should share meals with one another but also hold other unbelievers into those contexts and we should be thinking about contexts where we can invite family and friends and neighbors so that we can have spiritual conversations with them and so that because disciple of Jesus Christ by very its very vocation is to become a fisher of men to share the gospel to catch alive people who need to be saved by God and so sometimes

Christians can fall into the mindset that you know evangelism is only for people who are gifted in evangelism how many times have you guys heard that oh no I'm not gifted in evangelism I can't do that but that's just not true not all of us have a great sense of rhythm or pitch either right but does

that mean only the musically gifted members sing not at all because Ephesians 5.19 commends all believers to sing in worship to God the musically gifted members lead and help other members to sing similarly the gifted evangelists help and lead the other church members to evangelize doesn't mean that they're the only ones that are doing evangelism because all believers are commanded to share the gospel with people that's what it means to be a disciple of Christ because it was Christ's mission to proclaim the gospel as we grow in maturity as believers and as we become more like Christ we will also grow naturally in our sharing of the gospel with others that's an essential part of Christian discipleship and maturity but verse 30 tells us that there were some unhappy bystanders look at verse 30 with me it says and the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples saying why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners these Pharisees and scribes obviously refused to eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners so they were presumably not at Levi's party but rather they're kind of spying them out and watching who's going in the night at the party and they see oh wait this is just the rabble whole bunch of tax collectors and sinners going in and out and they grumble at this fact and they indirectly express disapproval of Jesus by criticizing his disciples and so Jesus answers them in verses 31 to 32 those who are 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 the doctor cannot heal the sick without first getting in contact with the sick as we talked about last week for this reason Jesus risks his reputation to go minister among sinners Jesus hung out with religiously and ethically disreputable people do we do that do you have non-Christian friends that you regularly spend time with even the ones that get drunk all the time and swear like a sailor or sleep around you do have people even the ones that are morally disreputable do you have people that you are spending time with or have we retreated to our holy huddles forsaking our mission to seek and save the lost have you invited unbelieving neighbors to your house have you been invited to their house Christian author Rosaria Butterfield puts it this way in her book the gospel comes with the house key Christians are called to live in the world but not live like the world Christians are called to dine with sinners but not sin with sinners but either way when Christians throw their lot in with Jesus we lose the right to protect our own reputation of course when Jesus says that he has not come to call the righteous he's not saying that the Pharisees are actually righteous they too are sick but the difference is that they don't recognize their sickness and therefore cut themselves off from Jesus' healing power only those who acknowledge their sinfulness can repent of their sins and Jesus has come as a physician to heal them and this is bad news for the self-righteous but this is good news for those who acknowledge their sinfulness you can be a murderer a rapist a thief you can be a domestic abuser an adulterer a liar and be safe you can be a slave trafficker a fornicator or a gossip and be safe if only you would acknowledge your sins and repent of them and come to Jesus but the self-righteous cannot be saved because if you're self-righteous by definition you see no need for the forgiveness of sin you do not come to Jesus for forgiveness do you find it offensive that sinners all those kinds of people that I mentioned can be saved because that should be offensive how can such people be forgiven what they deserve is punishment not pardon that's the cry of justice they deserve punishment not forgiveness and you're right about that

God's perfect holiness demands that they be punished but let's not think that they're any better than they are and I'll tell you why Jesus is still able to save these people in a moment one of my best friends from college is a chemist we got some chemists in the room as well and his post on his Facebook from a couple weeks ago was this he's got quite the humor he says you have not lived until you have spent a week getting a compound from 99.84% to 99.9% purity he's joking right he's humorously commenting on the fact that of the tediousness of the work right that this and this highlights an important insight about the level of purity perfection and holiness required by God because for certain chemical reactions to take place a hundredth decimal place of purity matters doesn't matter whether you're 1% pure and 99% defiled or you're 99.84% pure it's still not pure enough just a little bit doesn't matter how big your sins are small your sins are it doesn't matter you have you've just been angry once in a while and it's in an excessive way and you have a murderer sitting next to you before

[32 : 45] God it doesn't matter it's equally disqualifying you cannot make it into the kingdom of God that's why we need Jesus to make God's perfect righteousness available to us and that's what he does in 2nd Corinthians 5 21 it says for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God Jesus was sinless he was righteous yet he died on the cross to pay for our sins so that we can be counted as righteous pure the holy God takes our

sins upon himself so that his holiness can rest on us it's not fair that's why it's grace Jesus dies with the name of murderers rapists thieves adulterers abusers fornicators on him so they can be free now this does not mean that you can keep sinning you can come as you are to Jesus but you cannot stay where you are you come to the physician to find healing not to stay sick to repent means to turn from your sins and to turn toward

Jesus you have to leave your sins behind to follow Jesus that's what it means to be a Christian now I don't mean that you become perfect overnight when you become a Christian but as forgiven people the spirit of God empowers us more and more to become more and more like Jesus so that it's a helpful illustration might be helpful for this you guys know I have two daughters and my younger daughter named Inji is often seen sporting clothes that are too large for her and why is that it's because she's very blessed to have an older sister and she has lots of hand me downs right and it's her clothes it's too small for her older sister but it's too big for her but every day she grows and eventually she will fit snugly and perfectly into that hand me down clothes the Bible often uses the metaphor of clothing to say that the righteousness of Christ that Christians have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ you can think of that like those hand me down clothes it's ours it's fully ours that righteousness is ours but every day we're growing into that and one day we will fit snugly into those clothes the righteousness of Christ but we have to work on that progress in it every day toward Christ the Pharisees and the scribes thought that they were claiming the moral high ground by accusing Jesus of befriending sinners but in reality they were alienating God by failing to acknowledge their own sinfulness so our God is one who befriends sinners it's the only reason why he calls us his friends the final charge that the people level against

Jesus is that of breaking tradition it says in verse 33 and they said to him the disciples of John fast often and offer prayers and so do the disciples of the Pharisees but yours eat and drink so early in verse 30 the Pharisees criticized Jesus for drinking with tax collectors and sinners so now some people are criticizing the fact that Jesus and his disciples spent too much time eating and drinking so this time the criticism is not about the company that they keep but it's about their religious devotion is he really pious holy wise then why doesn't he fast like these religious teachers Pharisees during this time developed fasting into regular discipline so they fasted twice a week and as Luke 18 12 tells us and John the Baptist and his disciples were also known for fasting it says Jesus says in Luke 7 33 to 34 John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine and you say he has a demon the son of man has come eating and drinking and you say look at him a glutton and a drunker a friend of tax collectors and sinners so obviously the fasting itself wasn't the main issue they just were not ready to receive

God's prophet and his son and even though the criticism is directed at Jesus disciples it's addressed to Jesus because they believe Jesus is responsible for the behavior of his disciples so this is an attempt again to discredit Jesus and knowing that Jesus teaches them an important lesson about his identity in verses 34 to 35 look at it and Jesus said to them can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them and then they will fast in those days Jesus Jewish wedding festivities lasted seven days and during that time guests were not permitted to fast or engage in other acts of mourning because it was seen as inappropriate for this joyous occasion but using that analogy Jesus makes the argument that it's actually inappropriate for his disciples to fast right now because it's the time of the wedding festivities the prophets throughout the Old Testament frequently compare the relationship between God and his people to that of the husband and wife

[38 : 40] Isaiah 54 5 says for your maker is your husband the Lord of hosts is his name Isaiah 62 4 to 5 God says to his people you shall be called my delight is in her and your land married for the Lord delights in you and your land shall be married for as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride so shall your God rejoice over you the time when Messiah would come to save God's people was often described in terms of a bridegroom coming to his bride and so by saying this Jesus is claiming to be that messianic bridegroom he is saying that I am the divine representative I am God in the flesh the son of God who has come to redeem my bride my people and he has come the king has come it's inappropriate when the bridegroom is here for the wedding festivities to fast right now is the time of feasting not fasting a literal translation of the phrase wedding guests is sons of the bridal chamber it's a reference to the people who stood closest to the bridegroom during the wedding in order to assist him it's like the modern day bridal party the groomsmen of the groom now this highlights the

intimate and privileged positions that his disciples occupied in relation to him because they are his groomsmen assisting

Jesus in his marriage to his bride which is the church the people of God so Jesus is here fiercely defending his disciples these disciples whom you are criticizing and dismissing they are the groomsmen of God whom you claim to worship and more importantly Jesus making a radical claim about his identity I am the Messiah the bridegroom you have been waiting for as a side point because some of you guys are probably wondering this let me note that Jesus is not ending the practice of fasting altogether in Matthew 6:16 Jesus instructs his disciples on how to fast with full expectation that they will fast in fact Jesus himself fasted for 40 days and looked forward to so instead of saying that right now when he is with his disciples before his death and resurrection ascension that they are not to fast he says the days will come when the bride groom is taken away from them and then they will fast in those days so this is one of the early hints of Jesus approaching death the sad picture of a groom being taken away on his wedding day from his bride and the wedding festivities have begun but it hasn't been consummated yet in the bridal chamber and so we're the people that live in that already but not yet time between Jesus first coming and second coming and because we're still longing for his return and the consummation of his kingdom it's appropriate for us to fast and that's why we as a church fast regularly and we see examples of the early church throughout Acts fasting but this doesn't mean that our fasting is exactly the same as the Pharisees fasting here Jesus explains using the two illustrations will tear the new and the piece from the new will not match the old so this is intended to be a little bit absurd ridiculous imagine that you have two t-shirts one old t-shirt and one new new t-shirt and your old t-shirt has a hole around your armpit let's say and you take your new t-shirt and cut it up so you could patch up your old t-shirt of course to do this he's pointing out that first something about the pharisees religious devotion is old and defective and second he's pointing out that it makes no sense to try to fix their defective old religion with the new teaching of

Jesus the two cannot be reconciled in that way the second illustration makes the same point Jesus says and no one puts new wine into old wine skins if he wine must be put into fresh wine skins these days were made of sheep or goat skin the old ones became brittle so that it could no longer expand and if you put a new wine in it as it ferments it expands it tries to expand the goat skin and it can't expand so it will burst again Jesus saying it's destructive to try to combine the new with the old so continuing the second illustration Jesus adds another point in verse 39 and no one after drinking old wine desires new for he says the old is good people who like to drink wine often say that old wine tastes better and this is not making a point about whether or not old wine actually tastes better or not that's not the point the point is the

Pharisees like the wine who insist on only drinking old wine these Pharisees are rejecting Jesus as new and only in favor of the old so they're accusing Jesus here of breaking tradition and Jesus repeats the phrase the words no one three times no one no one no one no one does this makes no sense because Jesus is bringing a new age where sinners who repent can be forgiven and admitted to the wedding supper of God and that age that Jesus brings cannot be restricted with the expectations and standards of the Pharisees tradition so what exactly is it that Jesus is changing what's new Luke 18 tells again the story of the tax collector who comes with his self righteousness to God in fact he says I fast twice a week and he believes that that's what enables him to get to God legalism there was a fundamental misunderstanding about

[44 : 50] God there and that's what Jesus comes to correct because the entrance to the kingdom of God is not a fence that you have to climb over with the ladder of self righteousness but it's rather a gate before which you have to stoop in humble repentance in order to enter at the judgment seat of God we cannot say God I deserve entry because I fasted often I deserve entry because I never missed a Sunday service I deserve entry because I never littered and always recycled I even lived without a car to save the planet I deserve entry because I donated to a lot of good causes I deserve entry because I read the Bible every day I deserve entry because I share the gospel with a lot of people none of these things are the basis for salvation they may be the evidence of our salvation but they are not the basis the grounds for our salvation because the basis for salvation is what Jesus accomplishes on the cross Hebrews 8 says that

Jesus brings a new covenant new and better covenant with the people of God where the laws of God is not written externally imposed on us but rather is written on our hearts and we are internally motivated by the spirit of God and transformed by God to live in obedience that's what Jesus

changes he brings a new covenant and I will conclude with this how does Jesus enact this radically new covenant in verse 35 it already hinted at the fact that Jesus the bridegroom will be taken away on his wedding day why must Jesus be taken away it's because the bride was not yet ready not worthy of the groom most of the time the image of the bride and the groom is mentioned in the Old Testament it describes us the people of God as the unfaithful bride the adulterous bride the fornicating bride and we see a picture of that in

Deuteronomy 22 if if any man takes a wife and goes into her and then hates her and accuses her of misconduct and brings a bad name upon her saying I took this woman and when I came near her I did not find in her evidence of virginity and then it goes into the whole section about if the man is lying the punishment that he has to get and then it goes into this but if the thing is true that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of the father's house and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones because she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father's house so you shall purge the evil from your midst this punishment will be for both the man and the woman who fornicate but here obviously the man is not around to be found this is what

Jesus our bridegroom should have done with us wedding day discover that the fiance the bride that should have been waiting in holiness and purity has defiled herself with other men Jesus should have publicly shamed us exposed the nakedness which we have shared with people whom we should not have shared it with but instead Jesus our bridegroom makes way for our cleansing and restoration he gives us his robe to clothe us to hide our nakedness and he hangs naked on the cross bearing all our sin and shame that's how Jesus brings the new age we were the prostitute the people of

God yet Jesus brings a new age where sinners like us can repent and be forgiven and admitted to the wedding supper of God as the purified bride so let's be a people who cling to that in repentance and faith instead of trying to bring our own self righteousness to him