

“The Problem of Patching” (Luke 5:27–39)(6.11.23)

Luke 5:27-39

Amplified Bible

Call of Levi (Matthew)

²⁷ After this Jesus went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi (Matthew) sitting at the tax booth; and He said to him, “Follow Me [as My disciple, accepting Me as your Master and Teacher and walking the same path of life that I walk].” ²⁸ And he left everything behind and got up and *began* to follow Jesus [as His disciple].

²⁹ Levi (Matthew) gave a great banquet for Him at his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were reclining *at the table* with them. ³⁰ The Pharisees and their scribes [seeing those with whom He was associating] *began* murmuring in discontent to His disciples, asking, “Why are you eating and drinking with the tax collectors and sinners [including non-observant Jews]?” ³¹ And Jesus replied to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but [only] those who are sick. ³² I did not come to call the [self-proclaimed] righteous [who see no need to repent], but sinners to repentance [to change their old way of thinking, to turn from sin and to seek God and His righteousness].”

³³ Then they said to Him, "The disciples of John [the Baptist] often practice fasting and offer prayers [of special petition], and so do the *disciples* of the Pharisees; but Yours eat and drink." ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "Can you make the wedding guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? ³⁵ But days [for mourning] will come when the bridegroom is [forcefully] taken away from them. They will fast in those days." ³⁶ He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old one; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old [a]wineskins; otherwise the new [fermenting] wine will [expand and] burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹ And no one, after drinking old *wine*, wishes for new; for he says, 'The old is fine.'"

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: "**The Problem of Patching**"

INTRODUCTION:

Do you ever sympathize with the Pharisees? They seemed to truly believe in their rules and rituals of their religion. When they read their holy scriptures,

they thought they were being faithful. One thing this proves is that the sincerity of a person's belief doesn't make them right.

But, there is a foundational truth that they misunderstood. God's law is about relationship, not the rules and rituals themselves. Think about it. God created Adam and Eve, in the image of God, and then walked with them in the Garden of Eden. They only had one law. It was a boundary to protect them, but they trespassed against that boundary.

You might be surprised to hear that The 10 Commandments are also about relationship. They begin with our vertical relationship – the relationship between us and God. The LORD of heaven and earth is to be our primary relationship and nothing should displace it in our hearts. Then the fifth commandment is about our family relationships: **Exodus 20:12:** *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."* The rest of the commandments are about our horizontal relationships; how we interact with others. Let me point out that it is in the family that children are to learn about God and learn about how to live with others.

Let me cement this argument with a third example. Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" Matthew 22:37–39 (NIV84)³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment.³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " Clearly, relationship to God & relationship to neighbor; a LOVE relationship.

There is a second foundational truth misunderstood not only by the Pharisees, but the whole of Jewish people. It is their position as The Chosen People. They understood it as their being better than the Gentiles, the "other," everyone who was not a Jew. Instead, being God's Chosen People comes with an inherent obligation, a responsibility.

Genesis 12:1–3 (NIV84)

The Call of Abram **12** The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

² "I will make you into a great nation

and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,

and **you will be a blessing.**

³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth

will be blessed through you."

God's people are not to look down their noses at other people. We should understand that we are to bless other people in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We see both of these misunderstandings at play in today's scripture.

BODY:

It centers around the calling of Levi the tax collector to be a disciple of Jesus. Levi is also known as Matthew, who is the author of the Gospel by the same name. Tax collectors were not popular, they are not popular today, and they never have been.

Archeologists uncovered a 3,000-year tablet in Iraq. It had on it this inscription: "You can have a Lord, you can have a King, but the man to fear is the tax collector."

"I'm proud to be paying taxes in the United States," said Arthur Godfrey. "The only thing is I could be just as proud for half the money."

And there was that famous reply that boxer Joe Louis gave when a sportswriter asked, "Who hit you the hardest during your ring career?" His reply: "Uncle Sam."

Levi was especially hated because Jewish tax collectors worked for the Roman Empire, the enemy, the occupying forces of the oppressor. He was considered a traitor. With the help of Roman soldiers, tax collectors could forcibly compel you to pay. It was normal for tax collectors to take advantage of their position and become wealthy.

It appears that Levi lived out that stereotype. He gave a great banquet. His house must have been large because there was a large crowd at the banquet. Notice also verse 28: And he [Levi] left **everything** behind and got up and *began* to follow Jesus [as His disciple]. Everything implies it was a whole lot.

Immediately, this brings to mind the rich young ruler who came to Jesus. He said that he had kept all of God's commandments. Matthew 19:20–22 (NIV84)

²⁰“All these I have kept,” the young man said.
“What do I still lack?”

²¹ Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Instead of being sad, Levi was joy filled. He threw this huge party. He announced to all of his friends and the world that he was committed to following Jesus. He was “all in.” Not only in word, but in deed, he left everything to follow Jesus.

The Rich Young Ruler was looking for a patch, something he could add, in order to attain eternal life. What could he fix? What could he do? What should he not do? Jesus said, “There is no patching. You must have no loyalties before your commitment to following me.”

Who was at Levi’s great banquet? Jesus, his disciples, tax collectors and OTHERS. Yes, we have this ugly concept of the OTHERS. The Pharisees called them sinners. The others were outcasts of society. They were rejected. Because we naturally seek relationship, the others would come together.

They were almost forced together by the religious authorities.

The Pharisees and their scribes were greatly offended by Jesus and His disciples eating and drinking with the others. We must understand that in their culture eating and drinking together was seen as a declaration of acceptance, as friendship, and intimacy. Notice they were reclining at the table. When they ate, it was a relaxed, informal, and close experience. Generally speaking, a righteous Jew would not even go into the house of a Gentile. So, the Pharisees were bewildered.

Why? Why Jesus why? They are thinking that the Messiah would not behave this way. How does Jesus respond?

Jesus is the Great Physician. He came to save the sick. The sick are the sinners. But here is the thing. You have to know that you are sick to call on the doctor. You have to know that you are sinner to recognize that you need to repent and come to Jesus.

If you don't believe you are a sinner, you are relying on your own righteousness. The Pharisees and the scribes were self-righteous. They were God's Chosen People. They were part of a works religion where you earn your way into heaven.

Go back to the story of the Rich Young Ruler. Matthew 19:16–17 (NIV84)¹⁶ Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

17 “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.”

Even though the young ruler claimed self-righteousness, Jesus said, “That isn’t enough.” The only one who is good is God. Jesus is the only sinless God-man ever. We need Jesus’ righteousness, the Great Physician’s cure. Remember when Jesus’ preached his woes to the Pharisees, he called them white-washed tombs. They might have looked good on the outside, but they were rotting and dead on the inside.

Remember what the Apostle James teaches. James 2:10 (NIV84) For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

Then the Pharisees started arguing. Let’s get down to cases. Our disciples and even John the Baptist’s disciples fast, but yours eat and drink. This was a good example of how God’s guidance became distorted by the religious establishment and a heavy weight was placed on the necks of the people.

John MacArthur, conservative mega-church pastor, made a big point on this issue. The only mandated fast was for the Day of Atonement. That is one day each year. Remember the proud Pharisee publicly praying, "I fast twice a week and pay tithes of all I acquire." Somehow, fasting evolved into a ritualistic demonstration of piety.

There are many instances of fasting in the Old Testament, but they were connected to mourning. It might be the mourning over the loss of a loved one. Or, it could be mourning over sin. It was a sign of repentance from that sin. It shows our dependence on God. Fasting should be about sincerity and humility; not about a public demonstration to bring attention to your righteousness.

Jesus responds to their accusation with an illustration about weddings. Of course, weddings are all about relationships. They are about joy and celebration. The Jewish weddings of those days lasted a week. Jesus calls himself the bridegroom and his disciples are the wedding guests. This wedding metaphor was often used by Jesus and culminates in Revelation 19:9 (NIV84)

⁹Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the

Lamb!’ ” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

Then Jesus continues by prophesying His death. The time for mourning and fasting will come when I am forcefully taken away. Of course, Jesus is speaking of His passion and crucifixion.

Then Jesus continues to illustrate His argument with parables. You cannot use a new patch, new material, to cover up holes in the old material. The new and the old cannot be mixed for they are incompatible. They are both ruined.

The Pharisees were about rules and rituals. They understood the mechanics of the Temple and the sacrificial system but in a vacuum. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches, Matthew 5:17–18 (NIV84)

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

We needed the law and still need the law to show us that we are sinners in need of the Physician. BUT, Jesus has fulfilled the law by paying our

penalty. He was the final and perfect sacrifice, the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. The law was just. The law is perfect. The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 3:24 (NIV84) So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Jesus came to reconcile us with the Heavenly Father, meaning to restore our proper relationship with our Father. Colossians 1:21–22 (NIV84)

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has **reconciled** you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

You see my friends, this is the new material. This is the New Testament. The Pharisees and the scribes promoted an old worn-out garment that had torn. In fact, when Jesus died on that Calvary Cross, the veil to the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom.

The Old Testament is a history of The Chosen People. Over and over again, they demonstrated that human beings are unable under their own power to live righteously and be in a proper relationship with our Heavenly Father. That veil could not be patched, but it need NOT be patched

because through Jesus we have access to our heavenly Father.

Hebrews 8:13 (NIV84)

¹³By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear

CONCLUSION:

“The greatest life ever lived on earth was the life of Jesus Christ. Therefore no mission can ever compare with the mission which He was sent to do. The great mission of Christ was ...

- a quickening mission: to make people alive to God.
- an eternal mission: to give people life forever.
- a purposeful mission: to cause people to commit their lives to God unconditionally.

Luke’s very purpose in this passage is to reveal the great mission of Christ. With the skillful mind of a man who knew the Lord intimately, he weaves several events together to spell out the great mission of the Lord.

1. The mission of calling outcasts (vv. 27–29).

2. The mission of calling sinners to repentance (vv. 30–32).
3. The mission of bringing real joy (vv. 33–34).
4. The mission of dying (v. 35).
5. The mission of launching a new life and spiritual movement (vv. 36–39)."

My friends, the Church is appointed by God to continue the Mission of the Lord Jesus. The Church is Plan A and there is no Plan B.

There is a problem with patching. The Pharisees and religious leaders before them, kept adding human patches onto God's Holy Commandments. Judaism became a Frankenstein of sorts. Jesus condemned them for all the man-made additions to God's law.

For a modern example and in line with the tax collector theme, think about our US Tax Code. It has become so complicated we need computer software and a whole industry to help us figure it out. It has been patched and patched and the patches have been patched until we have a convoluted mess.

No, we cannot put new wine into old wine skins. When the new wine ferments, the old wine skins will be destroyed. Then the new wine will be

destroyed with it. Additionally, we must resist human nature that clings to the old and refuses to embrace the new. We may rebel against trying the new wine, even when it is required.

In your bulletin, you will see a survey about a potential new mid-week service. Right now, we don't have many specifics. We will want to be flexible and respond to the guidance of God the Holy Spirit. What is clear is that relying strictly on the old methods and formats is failing. Please pray for God's will to be done; that the good news of Jesus would be spread, and the kingdom of God advanced.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.