

Block Party
Week 3: You Invited Who???
Luke 5:27-32

Recap Re:Gen announcement.

- Join us next Sunday for more info about how to be a part.
- Hope and Healing sermon series – We all have some kind of hurt, hang-up, or habit and only Jesus can bring the hope and healing we need.

Excited for this ministry to get started. Many years ago, part of launching a Celebrate Recovery ministry. Got to see the Lord do incredible things in people's lives. One of them, a guy named Josh.

- Was released from jail and attended CR that night. Knew something in his life needed to change.
- Kept coming, working the steps. Gave his life to Jesus. Invited his friends to come, too.
- About a year later, Josh became a leader in the ministry, helping others find hope and healing in Jesus the way he had. He was leading people to Christ.

Thought about Josh while studying this week's text. I see his story in it. **Followers of Jesus leave their old life behind to help others find new life in Him.** That was Levi's story. It was Josh's story. And it's been the story of millions of Jesus followers over the years.

But like this account we're looking at today, whenever people start showing up that don't look like you, act like you, value the same things you do...there will always be people around who are evaluating it all with a suspicious eye.

We see that in the Pharisees in our text. I experienced it during those early days of CR when people like Josh started showing up who didn't quite "fit in." Jesus was doing amazing things in his life and dozens more like him. But instead of celebrating that, there were people in our church who could only see the ash trays we put outside the doors where our recovery ministry met so people had a place to put out their cigarettes before coming in.

Week 3 of Block Party – turn to Luke 5:27. Recap of last week:

- Friends bring friends to Jesus and trust Him with the rest.
- Jesus heals a man who was paralyzed, but He also forgave His sins.
- We move from one controversy to another:
 - Last week: Does Jesus have the authority to do that?

- This week: If Jesus does have the authority to forgive sins, then *who* exactly is that forgiveness for?
- It's for *anyone* who knows their need for it.
- Read **Luke 5:27-28**

If you're new to Scripture, it's important to know that Jewish tax collectors weren't like an ancient equivalent to IRS agents today. They were collecting taxes for Rome, which was occupying Israel at the time, so they were seen as traitors. They also worked in a system that was ripe with corruption. Tax collectors became wealthy by overcharging and then skimming some off the top...all at the expense of their fellow countrymen.

And our text today opens with Jesus inviting one of them to follow Him. It would have been amazing enough for a respected Rabbi like Jesus to invite someone like Levi to be one of his disciples. What's more amazing is that Levi actually took Him up on it. Our text says he got up, left everything and followed Him.

This account is told in 3 of the 4 Gospels, but Luke is the only one to include that line, "left everything." So, let's linger here for just a little bit. What did Levi leave behind to follow Jesus? It wasn't just a job, it was financial security and wealth. Being a tax collector probably gave him a life of comfort that most people didn't experience.

And since tax collectors were so despised, most of them had been disowned by their families. Nobody liked them or wanted to be around them, so their only friends were probably other tax collectors. So Levi was leaving behind his social identity.

And we've already seen other disciples leave everything behind to follow Jesus, but they were fishermen. If this whole "following Jesus" thing didn't work out, guys like Peter had a fallback plan. They could always go back to the family business of fishing. But Rome didn't take tax collectors abandoning their positions quite as lightly. To immediately leave to follow Jesus, Levi was burning the ships. There was no turning back.

First thing I want us to see from our text today: **Following Jesus always costs something.**

What have you left behind to follow Him? What is Jesus asking you to leave behind that maybe you've been unwilling to surrender? Pride, reputation, comfort. Schedule, control, bitterness?

Following Jesus always costs something. The question is, when given the invitation, are we willing to leave it behind? And it doesn't always happen all at once. Jesus is constantly inviting us into a deeper sense of trust and dependency and surrender to Him. Even in our text, the original grammar indicates this. The phrase "left everything" is an immediate

action, but the phrase, “followed Him” is probably better translated, “and began to follow Him.”

As we follow Jesus, He will always put things before us that we need to leave behind. Following Him is not just one big act of surrender and then we’re done. It’s a million little acts of surrender wrestled with over a lifetime. (Camp – Dorm dad to 16 boys going into 5th and 6th grade. Felt like a million invitations to surrendering my need for control and practice patience!)

So, Levi left everything and started to follow Jesus. And the first thing he does is not attend a class or a Bible study. The first thing Levi does is throw a party. **Luke 5:29.**

I love this. Levi abandons his post as a Roman Tax Collector, but he doesn’t abandon his friends. A farewell banquet like this would have been customary for a person of means like Levi. So he invited all of his former co-workers over as well as Jesus and the other disciples.

If you’ve been to a farewell party like this before, you know what people are asking. “So, Levi, what are you going to do now?” “Why the change?” It all gives him a perfect opportunity to point to Jesus as the one he’s leaving behind everything to follow.

(Go back to Josh. Josh’s life changed when he started following Jesus. He didn’t do the things he used to, but he didn’t abandon his friends, either. He wanted them to know Jesus, too. So he kept inviting them.)

Levi is using this party, filled with social and spiritual outcasts, to point people to Jesus and the transformation he’s made in his life, but not everyone is as excited about that as he is. Some people can only see the ashtrays in front of the church doors. **Luke 5:30.**

Don’t miss this. Levi said to his friends, “Come, meet Jesus!” And all the Pharisees can think is, “Why would Jesus want to meet them?”

In the ancient world, sharing a meal with someone was like giving that person your endorsement. It was aligning yourself with them. That’s why the Pharisees were so offended by this. They saw Jesus sharing a meal with people like this as him accepting their behavior and approving of their dishonest practices.

They couldn’t see that maybe it was the other way around. That instead of Jesus aligning himself with them, sharing a meal together like this might be their first step in aligning themselves with Him. The Pharisees had built an entire religious system around protecting themselves from the “wrong people.” And then Jesus comes along and ruins all of it by welcoming people like this.

And to remove any doubts about what he’s doing, or questions about his motives...like, maybe he didn’t actually know what he was doing...**Luke 5:31-32.**

In just two verses, Jesus explains his entire mission and ministry. The Pharisees looked at the crowd of people and saw sinners in need of condemnation. Jesus looked at the crowd and saw spiritually sick patients in need of a physician. The Pharisees wanted to keep people like that at arm's length. Jesus wanted to bring them healing.

Healthy people don't need a doctor, sick people do. And Jesus isn't separating the groups in our text today by who's healthy and who's sick, but by who knows they need a Physician and who doesn't. Jesus' point isn't that some people are sick and others aren't. Scripture teaches us that there is no one righteous, not even one. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

I think this is the point Jesus is trying to make: Everyone is sick with sin (Levi knows it, Luke knows it, Jesus knows it). The only difference is who admits it. Some admit it. Some don't. The tax collectors knew they needed grace. The Pharisees thought they didn't. Repentance is admitting you need the Physician.

So, when Jesus says that he's come to call sinners to repentance, he's not excluding the Pharisees, He's exposing them. He's inviting both the tax collectors and the Pharisees to turn from the life they are living to follow Him. To leave the old behind and start living in the new. Because that's what followers of Jesus do. Followers of Jesus leave their old lives behind to help others find new life in Him.

And as the Gospels begin to unfold, we see Levi embracing this new way of life, while the Pharisees continue to reject it. Levi, and people like him, recognized their need for repentance and forgiveness. Most of the Pharisees just couldn't get there and it kept them from finding healing for their souls that Jesus, the Great Physician, desired for them.

Our text today isn't really about a dinner, it's about discipleship. Followers of Jesus leave everything to follow Him. And that's not just a one-time event. It's a daily decision to die to ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him.

Followers of Jesus know they need forgiveness and practice repentance. They develop a lifestyle of confessing their sin and turning to follow Him.

And followers of Jesus join His mission to help others find and follow Him.

So, as we close...

- What do you need to leave behind today in order to follow Jesus more closely? Following Jesus always costs us something. What's it costing you?
- Is there something Jesus is inviting you to confess and turn from today? Some sin that is keeping you from Jesus? Outward, like Levi's, that everyone can see? Inward,

like the Pharisees? The sin of self-righteousness that's poisoning your heart and keeping you from following Him?

- Who are you helping find new life in Jesus? Praying for? Investing in and inviting?

Block Party Challenge – 100 Block Parties, 11 so far! [\(show image\)](#)

Want to throw one? Let me know so we can pray! sgreen@socc.org

Followers of Jesus leave their old lives behind to help others find new life in Him. Let's go out and do it.