

Luke 5:17-39
NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

¹⁷ One day while [Jesus] was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem were sitting nearby, and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸ Just then some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, ¹⁹ but, finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. ²⁰ When he saw *their faith*, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." ²¹ Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, "Who is this who is speaking *blasphemies*? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ²² When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Stand up and walk'? ²⁴ But so that you may know that **the Son of Man** has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your stretcher and go to your home." ²⁵ Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. ²⁶ **Amazement** seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen incredible things today."

²⁷ After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax-collection station, and he said to him, "FOLLOW ME." ²⁸ And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

²⁹ Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others reclining at the table with them. ³⁰ The Pharisees and their scribes were

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Luke is one of the four gospels. According to tradition it's written by Luke, a disciple-intern of the apostle Paul.

Pharisees and teachers of the law:: the titles are used quite largely in the gospels to describe those who are meticulous in interpreting the law and understanding God's Torah.

their faith:: Curious. Luke calls attention to the faith of the friends, not of the paralyzed man.

the Son of Man :: this is a title used in the dominant prophetic vision of the prophet Daniel used in Daniel 7:1-14.... ¹ "In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream: ... As I watched, thrones were set in place,

and an Ancient One took his throne;
his clothing was white as snow
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
and its wheels were burning fire.

¹³ As I watched in the night visions,
I saw one like a **Son of Man**
coming with the clouds of heaven.

And he came to the Ancient One
and was presented before him.

¹⁴ To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed."

Jesus doesn't pray, he simply "accesses" this healing power – a sign that son of man carries himself as a Son of God. Jesus is more than he seems.

Amazement:: ἐκστασις pronounced /ekstasis/ (properly: distraction or disturbance of mind caused by shock), bewilderment, amazement; a trance; ecstasy or rapture. It's also used in Mark 5:42 " And immediately the girl stood up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this [the gathered crowd was] overcome with amazement."

complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"³¹ Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick;³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

³³ Then they said to him, "John's disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink."³⁴ Jesus said to them, "You cannot make wedding attendants fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you?"³⁵ The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days."³⁶ He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise, not only will one tear the new garment, but the piece from the new will not match the old garment."³⁷ Similarly, no one puts new wine into **old wineskins**; otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins and will spill 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 desires new wine but says, 'The old is good.' "

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged, enraged, or surprised you in the text?
- If righteous means to conform to God's will and sinner means to miss that goal, how are these words understood when applied to the people and actions in these interconnected stories?
- The parable about new wine in old wineskins is directly linked to the healing of paralyzed man and eating with tax collectors. What old wineskins do you have that may keep you from experiencing God's belovedness and will for creation?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, – to act, speak, be, or change, through this scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

blasphemies:: Although priest might pronounce God's forgiveness, only God could forgive sins (Micah 7:18) Later rabbis defined blaspheming more narrowly (cursing with the divine name, as in Leviticus 24:11), but the term used here can mean any demeaning speech, including speech dishonoring God.

a tax collector:: in the Gospels they're probably subordinates who worked for the officials responsible for collection. Most people in the Roman Empire did not like tax collectors; Jewish people viewed them as traitors and collaborators.

FOLLOW ME:: this is the first time that Jesus extends this exact invitation. It is echoed throughout the gospel in particular in Luke 9:23 "Then Jesus said to all the disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and **FOLLOW ME.**"

Levi gave a great banquet:: Pharisees were careful about eating habits in order to conform to the stipulations of Torah Law and valued religiously edifying conversation. In that day people view table fellowship (eating together) as establishing a covenant of friendship. By eating with sinners Jesus thus appears to endorse them. Scripture warned against spending time with the ungodly lest one be influenced by them (see Psalm 1:1;; 119:63). Curiously here, Jesus is influencing them rather than the reverse.

righteous but sinners:: δίκαιος pronounced /dikaïos/ means "Righteous" as in how a person or action conforms or follows God's standard (justice). ἁμαρτωλός pronounced /hamartólos/ means sinning, sinful, depraved, detestable. It comes from the verb hamartano meaning "to forfeit by missing the mark". So, the word *sinner* properly means to lose out on what God wants for us by falling short of what God approves.

old wineskins:: We're used to wine in glass bottles, or cans. Wineskins, made of animal skins would stretch and then after a certain point stretch no more. New wine continues to ferment, and thus expand in volume. So if you put new wine (which would still expand) in an old already-stretched-out wineskin, the wineskin would burst and the wine be lost.