

03/30/25 - Luke 5:1-16 - "The Closer the Light, The Clearer the Dirt"

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me to Luke chapter 5, verses 1 through 16. Luke chapter 5, starting.

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. But at your word, I will let down the nets. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish and their nets were breaking.

They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

[1 : 09] For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken. And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid.

From now on, you will be catching men. And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean.

And immediately the leprosy left him, and he charged him to tell no one but, Go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them. But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

[2 : 15] This is God's word. Thanks be to God. All right, well, praise the Lord. We warmed this place up.

I felt the air conditioning kick on. They're like, oh, man. Again, sweated out in there. But that's the trade-off we get for singing real loud.

Amen. So I show a lot of appreciation. I've wrestled with this passage. Literally on Thursday I was like, I'm going to turn this into two sermons. This is ridiculous.

I've just been wrestling for so long. But colleagues, friends said, keep it together. Figure it out. And I think I did.

And so I'm excited to have you experience his word today with this passage knit together between these two scenes.

[3 : 16] I want to start out by asking you a question. If you've ever noticed how getting close to something bright suddenly reveals things you didn't see before. Have you ever noticed how getting close to something bright suddenly reveals things you didn't see before?

Come on. Come on. It's springtime. It's spring cleaning. Oh, boy. That big bright thing in the sky has come out once in a while in Ohio.

And that sunlight starts shining through the window. And you see all those dust particles and all sorts of particles floating through the air.

Right? And you might think that you're doing okay until maybe you're like me. You walk into the bathroom mirror and the overhead light, sort of between the mirror and the overhead light, they

conspire against you.

And they're showing all those wrinkles, every pore, and all those bags under your eyes for any parents who have kids that kept them up all night, being inconsolable.

[4 : 26] And even your car looks fine at night. Until morning, and that sunlight hits your windshield.

Can I get a witness up in here? And suddenly you're driving through this smeared science experiment. And if you have kids, yeah, it is a science experiment.

You see footprints and all. You don't know what happens. But in the same way, drawing near to Jesus exposes the hidden realities of our hearts.

In fact, the gospel isn't a cosmetic light. It's a surgeon's light. Surgical lighting.

If we want to be honest, often we prefer the shadows. Because they make sin seem a little bit more manageable in our hearts.

[5 : 35] In Luke 5, we meet two people who each had a life-altering encounter with Jesus Christ.

A life-altering encounter. The one being a weary fisherman. He was respected. He was skilled. He was religious. And the other, a desperate leper.

A person rejected. Disfigured. Socially exiled. And now, on the outside, they couldn't be more different.

Right? But on the inside, they shared one thing in common. As the passage unfolds, they knew that they were unclean. Peter's uncleanness was internal, beneath the surface of the skin.

The leper's uncleanness was external, on display for all to see. And both of them found grace in Jesus Christ. And so what we're going to see unfold in this passage is a single main point.

[6 : 44] Especially for you in the back there. Pay attention. You see, the main point we're going to see is that when we truly see Jesus Christ, we also see ourselves.

When we truly see Jesus Christ, we also see ourselves. And I want to unpack this main point today into two sections. Before we do, let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. Lord, thank you for giving us an opportunity to sit under your word. And to be changed by it.

To listen well. To pay attention. And to heed every word of its command in our lives. Let us not just take for granted our gathering here today.

Let us be changed, transformed, and renewed by your word today. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. The sermon title today is, The Closer the Light, the Clearer the Dirt.

[7 : 54] Again, the main point we'll see is when we truly see Jesus, we also see ourselves. Let's break the first section in that first scene.

Let's unpack this first section titled, Cleansed and Called to Follow. This is from verse 1 to verse 11.

And this day for this fisherman began like any other day. He was out all night. He was fishing, exhausted, completely exhausted, emotionally exhausted.

And he's mending empty nets rather than cleaning the fish. The sun is rising over him over such a fruitless night.

And just panned over a little bit, we find another scene. Crowds were being gathered to hear the word of God.

[9 : 06] Wow. And these fishermen get front row as they're kicking around empty nets. And Jesus, in order to do some crowd control, decides to get in a boat and position himself in a floating pulpit.

Isn't that amazing? And he sets out a little bit. He asks Peter to borrow his boat and sets out among the shoreline. Isn't this a crazy sight to see, to imagine?

What a sight. What a sound of the water lapping along that shoreline. You hear the deep words of Jesus Christ going out across that water to meet all the ears that would hear that morning.

What a sight. What a sight. What a sight. What a sight. But the monotony of life begins to break.

Not only is Peter's boat borrowed, his business is about to be as well. Jesus finishes his message and he calls over to Peter, these fishermen.

[10 : 26] He says, put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. He's probably like, poor guys. They're frustrated, mending empty nets.

Peter replies, master, we've toiled all night and took nothing. Peter's a professional. Any professional fisherman knows that 100% of fish are in 10% of the water.

100% of the fish are in 10% of the water. I mean, imagine folding these thousands of pounds worth of nets.

These are about 100 foot long nets. No little butterfly catcher. These are huge nets, heavy. After a long night of them being down in the water, soaking up and absorbing water, you find a carpenter trying to give you fishing advice.

This is offering to Peter double overtime with zero optimism after a night of toiling. Peter responds, at your word, I will let down the nets.

[11:55] You see, Jesus had stepped into Peter's world. First his boat, now his business. And soon he's about to step into his heart. I think it's worth noting here for a moment.

Now, Peter's not always our favorite character in the Bible. He's always the guy who needs to put his foot in his mouth a couple times.

But I really sympathize with him here. He's worked really, really hard. Showed nothing, but still, I admire his obedience here.

Don't you? What an example for us. This state says simply, obedience to Jesus Christ, although it may exhaust us, it may take all of our energy reserves to pour out.

Obedience may exhaust us, but it's always worth the exertion. Obedience. Obedience is not always convenience, but it is confidence in the one who is asking, knowing that he will fill up those precious supplies of energy.

[13:07] It makes you ask, real quick, right off the bat, what has Jesus Christ maybe asked you to do lately that demands trust?

You might be exhausted husbands. Well, guess what? Jesus doesn't want to hear excuses. When you go home from work, you serve your family. You serve your wife.

Carmen said amen. You hear that, Kristen? All right. Exhausted husbands have no options than to go home and obediently serve, as Christ has called.

And after our exhausting weeks, we are commanded to assemble on the Lord's day like we are. One day of rest, doing only the Lord's work. Six days work, one day rest.

This is important, and I think it's worth noting there before we continue. The passage continues in verse 6. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.

[14:13] Verse 7, they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come, help them. I mean, this is like a scene from Jaws. The boat's going down. They came and filled both the boats, and they began to sink.

This was an unmistakable outpouring of power, raw outpouring of power. Even the fish obey Jesus. The result?

This avalanche. I can't even fathom how much, how many fish that was. Right. Nets were tearing. Boats were sinking. This turned into a pretty chaotic scene.

Even the fish obey Jesus Christ. But here, the miracle, the real miracle, wasn't in the catch. It was in Peter's response to the catch.

He says, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. Everyone around were astonished, just like they were last week.

[15:25] At his teaching. Now at his miracle. For Peter, though, he underwent holy trauma. Jesus tells him in the second half of verse 10, do not be afraid.

Peter's freaked out. Depart from me, he says, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. And it's as if God was preparing Peter for this very moment.

Herman Bovnik says, the gospel terrifies before it pacifies. Peter had seen Jesus heal others. Jesus had proclaimed messages.

Peter heard it, even that morning. But now Jesus met him in his own personal world. And when holiness invades the ordinary, it seems to expose our sin.

Peter thought he needed fish. Jesus showed him he needed forgiveness. This qualified, professional fisherman, exhausted in defeat, encountered Jesus Christ personally.

[16:41] Where he was, in what he was doing, and realized that he was the one unworthy. His response is similar to Isaiah in Isaiah 6.

When Isaiah saw the holiness of God and his response wasn't praise, but panic. In reminiscence of Job 52, Job had heard of God.

But when he truly saw God, he repented in dust and ashes in Job 52. And even John, as he wrote in Revelation 1, verse 17, John saw the risen Christ and dropped like a dead man at his feet.

And Peter here drops to his knees, just as Isaiah, Job, and John. Peter's completely undone. See, the fear of the Lord is a great grace.

In fact, this moral agony is often the prelude of the great grace of God. Jesus meets us where we are at.

[17 : 48] And when he does, he changes us. Whether you're a student in middle school, high school, or college students, he meets you there.

He changes you. Whether you're married or single, whether you're a parent, or maybe struggling with infertility, it's the same. He meets you where you're at.

And when he does, he changes you. Great lesson we see here. Church, the closer we draw to the Lord, though, the more we turn from sin.

And the more we see our sin, the more we're driven to draw near to the Lord. It's almost uncontrollable in our response. Did you catch that, or will we be distracted?

The closer we draw to the Lord, the more we turn from sin. And the more we're driven to draw near to the Lord, it's because we see more of our sin.

[18 : 49] Our sin causes us to draw near to the Lord, and the Lord makes us realize our sin. I think today it's very common to sort of sensationalize forgiveness.

Forgive and forget, right? To the extent of forgetting everything that we've been saved from. That we're good. In fact, some of us may go to such a degree that we feel entitled to forgiveness because sin has lost its perspective in our walk with Christ.

There is a sharp rebuke in this. That if you are becoming less aware of your sins as you draw close to God, it is not the God of the Bible whom you are drawing to.

It could very well be a delusion. You see, sometimes we feel entitled to grace because we've matured, right? We know the songs.

We know the verses, right? But the fear of the Lord, the trembling awareness of our unworthiness is not a barrier to grace. It's the gateway to it.

[20 : 01] John Owen said, it is not until we see the brightness of God's glory that we are overwhelmed with the blackness of our sin. And the good news is, in Jesus Christ, our sins are removed as far as east is from the west.

But don't mistake the pardon as permission to forget what you've been rescued from. This creates a Christian swelled in pride rather than emptied in humility.

Jesus said to Simon, don't have a heart attack. Do not be afraid, he says in verse 10. From now on, you will be catching men.

In verse 11, when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. Jesus responds not with rejection, but with a call.

He says, don't be afraid. From now on, you will catch men. Follow me. Peter knew he was unclean.

[21 : 17] Regardless of the rugged exterior, professional skills, on any other day, would prove that he knew what he was doing. Seemed like he had it all together.

His problem was a little bit deeper than skin surface. And Luke turns to another, who, it's a little bit more obvious, it's impossible to miss.

And we see the second section, cleansed and called to go. And we see this unpacked from verse 12 to 16. Verse 12 says, another scene, while he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy.

And the description here used by Luke is vivid, full of leprosy. This would mean his condition was pretty advanced.

It wasn't at the beginning stages. It's taken him over. He's disfigured. He's swelled up. Leprosy makes you unable to feel, touch.

[22 : 28] It loses all the sensitivities to any physical touch. And I was actually going to do you a favor and put a picture on the screen, but I do know we're close to lunch, and I don't want to curb your appetite today.

Google it later, after lunch. Then you'll have something good to go. Leprosy is vile. It destroys. Every appearance that you have, it takes over your limbs.

That even back in this day and age, when they would be sleeping, because they would lose feeling, you know, a dog or something could be gnawing at their hand, and there goes their finger. They have no idea that it's gone.

They've lost all feeling. He's full of leprosy. You get that? According to Leviticus 13, anyone with leprosy was to shout in public, unclean, unclean, which was a social and spiritual death sentence. That's not how you make friends. And even if a leper were to stick his head into a home, that entire house was pronounced unclean. If the leper was traveling, if the wind's blowing towards the leper, away from you, you'd have to stay 150 feet, according to law, from that leper.

[23 : 54] And guess what? If the wind's blowing towards you and the leper's upwind, you got six feet. We all know how to do that. 2020, amen?

Yeah, six feet, social distancing. Anthony Fauci on the live stream is like, amen. But imagine walking into Target and saying, unclean, unclean.

And like a boat going through water, just the people are scattering away from you. I know we can chuckle at some of the remarks, but this is sad.

In verse 12, when we saw, when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

Just as Peter fell before the Lord in his uncleanness, here this leper does the same. He begged, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

[25 : 06] Notice what he didn't say. He didn't say, heal me, but make me clean. In other words, he, by asking to make him clean, he already had a presupposition that he was unclean.

He was well aware and everyone in Target was well aware of his uncleanness. And everyone there watching, six feet away from him, were very well aware.

This whole town, complete aware. It was his condition that drew him to Jesus Christ this day.

He says, make me clean. And the next verse shook the whole crowd. Verse 13, Jesus stretched out his hands and touched him, saying, I will be clean.

And immediately, the leprosy left him. Physical touch has an interesting, interesting effect on human beings.

[26 : 18] Simple hugs release oxytocin to the bonding hormone which promotes trust, connection, and emotional closeness, reduces cortisol, which is the body's stress hormone.

But it also increases and boosts serotonin, dopamine, those feel-good chemicals. Hugging boosts your immune system. It's good for you. Literally, it's known four hugs a day you need to survive.

Eight hugs a day to maintain and 12 hugs a day to thrive. And the lack of touch, hang on, I'm coming for you, Carmen. The lack of touch literally shrinks the brain.

And that's why Carmen's so smart. Now, think about this.

Seriously here. Think about this. This is how God has wired humanity to be. babies fail to thrive without it.

[27 : 27] And grown men pay a stinking barber to feel it. It's so true. It would be unthinkable to be within six feet of this man.

Not to mention to touch him. I don't think our translation gives justice to what Jesus actually did here. Because in this word, he touched him, this action, this verb, it literally means took hold of him. It wasn't just like a finger trying to stay six feet away. It was literally coming close and touching him. Pulling him in. I knew this was going to hit me.

It's hitting me. This leper who was robbed of God's design of physical touch for decades was embraced and he felt it for the first time in decades.

Suddenly and completely, Jesus, knowing what science confirms, Jesus here was considered unclean, ceremonially unclean because he touched a leper.

[28 : 55] And this leper was fully restored. The feet of his toeless ulcerated stubs that he had were made whole.

His sandals, all of a sudden he had to go to journeys to get some new sandals. The knobs of his hand grew fingers, hair grew back, eyebrows, eyelashes. This is the gospel.

Jesus, who knew no uncleanness, became unclean for us. To free us from the bondage of sin's effect.

restore to restore what the fall is broken. This man was a walking parable of sin. And so this illustrates what Jesus Christ can do for us right now today.

The split second, we believe. You're pronounced clean. Verse 14, Jesus charges him to tell no one but go and show yourself to the priest and make offering for your cleansing as Moses commanded for a proof of them.

[30 : 04] During these times, it was a rare event that any leper would ever be fixed and healed from leprosy. But in the rare occasion that a leper was healed, it was celebrated for eight days in Leviticus 14.

Priests would come out and confirm that the person, the former leper, is healed. There would be a public declaration that he's healed, he's clean. And there would be private preparation, seven days of washing, shaving, and to prepare for re-entry into society.

And on the eighth day, to make sacrifice and anointing. Now this wasn't legalistic, but it was important to testify in the temple, in the priesthood, what Jesus Christ's power is doing.

It's reshaping history. Through the power of Jesus Christ, the supreme high priest has already inspected the leper to declare him clean.

And the unclean man proclaims for the first time, clean, clean. Grace doesn't just cleanse, it commissions.

[31 : 19] The passage concludes about news spreading even more. This was huge. Large crowds came to hear him and be healed of their sickness.

Jesus, often like the passage before, he withdrew to quiet, places to pray. In other words, Jesus came to be admired.

He wasn't an activist. He didn't come for that. He came to restore. And while the crowds were just merely chasing his miracles, he remained grounded in communion with the Father.

Two men, two forms of uncleanness, two postures of humility, and one Savior. here. There's a word to Christians here.

That drawing near to Christ should deepen your awareness of sin. Drawing near to Christ should deepen awareness of your sin, not diminish it.

[32 : 31] The more you grow in grace, the more we are to grieve our sin. Ray Ortlund said, if you think you're mostly clean, the gospel will seem like a minor adjustment.

But if you know you're utterly unclean, grace becomes your life. Christian, like Peter, don't grow numb to your need for grace.

Let the holiness of Jesus Christ expose what's still within and trust that He meets it, not with rejection, but a call to follow.

He changes us and transforms us. There's also a word for unbelievers, that no matter how visible your sin may be, Jesus can make you clean.

You don't need to get clean. It's not in your responsibility to do the steps to get clean.

[33 : 41] No matter how many showers you take, if you're not in Christ, you stink. The gospel surety. You don't need to get clean, you need to come to Jesus.

Just come to be made clean. a believer like the leper. Bring your visible mess to Jesus. All of it.

You don't have to clean yourself up. Just come and say, if you will, you can make me clean.

Jesus doesn't expose to shame us. He exposes to save us. Be exposed today. And Jesus will say, I will.

Be clean. See, when we truly see Jesus, we also see ourselves. Let's pray.