

The Gospel According to  
**Luke**

*“You’re A Walking Invitation”*  
Chapter 5:27-39

Introduction

Jesus enjoyed Himself... And it really bothered people:

1. Not too surprising was the fact that His enjoyment of feasting with sinners bothered the Pharisees and scribes.
2. More surprising was that His enjoyment of feasting with saints bothered some disciples. In the parallel account of this story, in the Gospel of Matthew, it was the disciples of John the Baptist who themselves asked Jesus, “**Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?**” (Matthew 9:14). It bothered them that Jesus and His followers were *feasting* while they were *fasting*.

There is something within us that wants to make religion difficult and depressing in order to prove our devotion. Fasting somehow seems more spiritual than feasting.

When it comes to Jesus, we’re not proposing religion; we’re in a relationship with the living God! We should enjoy it – more like a feast than a fast.

**You** should be enjoying your relationship with Jesus in a way that bothers people – sinners, for sure, but even some saints should be bothered.

We’ll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You’re A Walking Invitation To Your Unsaved Friends To Join The Feast, and #2 You’re A Walking Invitation To Your Saved Friends To Enjoy The Feast.

- #1 You’re A Walking Invitation  
To Your Unsaved Friends To Join The Feast  
(v27-32)

In one of her poems, Amy Carmichael wrote,

*I heard Him call, "Come, follow";  
That was all!  
My gold grew dim,  
My heart went after Him.  
I rose and followed,  
That was all.  
Would you not follow,  
If you heard Him call?*

Luke 5:27 After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me."

"Follow Me!" was a favorite expression of Jesus. He was a walking invitation.

"Levi" is another name for "Matthew"; they are the same person, and I will probably refer to him as Matthew. "Matthew" means *gift of God*. These second names were common since several languages were prominent; but they also remind you that, when God calls you, radical changes occur. You're the same person, but you're a whole new creation.

I don't think "tax collectors" have ever been very popular; but, in Jesus' day, they were despised. Tax collecting was a franchise you could purchase from Rome. You then collected whatever was required by the government and were entitled to keep anything over and above it as your profit. Your power of taxation was almost unlimited, and it was enforced by the Roman military. A Jew who owned a tax franchise was considered a traitor to his own country.

Luke 5:28 So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

Matthew was already familiar with the ministry of Jesus in and around Capernaum. He knew Jesus had the authority to forgive sins, and the power to make you spiritually whole and healthy.

"He left all." He abandoned his tax franchise. He had already paid Rome to own the franchise, so he wasn't being a poor citizen. It was a great financial loss to him to close-up shop. In that moment, as He

heard the invitation, he realized it would do no good to gain the whole world if it meant losing your soul. “He left all” in order to gain everything.

Jesus, the walking invitation, sometimes got R.S.V.P.’s from people! He would invite them to “Follow Me,” and they would give excuses why they could not. For Matthew, ‘gold grew dim’ and his ‘heart followed Him.’

Luke 5:29 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.

Think of the events for which you might throw a festive banquet: A coming of age; graduation from High School or College; a wedding; a special anniversary; your retirement.

**Your conversion is a far more important life-event than any of these, or any other!** J.C. Ryle writes,

“It is the rescue of a sinner from Hell! It is a passage from death to life! It is being made a king and priest for evermore! ...It is adoption into the noblest and richest of families, the family of God!”

Matthew’s friends were of the sordid-sort. They were “tax collectors and others.” The “others” would include the usual cast of characters: robbers, murderers, drunkards, prostitutes, and every other kind of irreligious person.

Matthew understood that his conversion and commitment to Christ was a cause for celebration. Life with Jesus was a feast to be enjoyed, not a fast to be endured.

Luke 5:30 And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, “Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

They didn’t go directly to the Lord; they tried to discourage the disciples. There is a vast world of seemingly religious people who question everything that seems to add enjoyment to your walk with God. They practice a self-righteousness of keeping their own rules and regulations, then project it onto others.

You need to go to the Lord, and to His Word, about what you *can* and *cannot* 'do' as a Christian. God has given you all things to enjoy; just make sure you enjoy them in ways that glorify God and build-up others in their faith (First Corinthians 10:23).

The question of the Pharisees and scribes implied that they were too good, too spiritual, to associate with sinners. Jesus' answer exposed them as self-righteous, religious phonies:

Luke 5:31 Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."

Imagine, for a moment, you are a doctor... *But you never go around sick people because you are healthier than they are!* If you are spiritually whole and healthy, it is the spiritually broken and needy you must be among.

Luke 5:32 I have not come to call *the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*"

The Pharisees could diagnose sin, but offered no cure. Jesus was offering the cure; we saw it in verse twenty – the forgiveness of sins. He called to sinners, they received the forgiveness of their sins, and repented – turning to God from sin with the power to say "No!" to sin

Matthew threw a banquet for his unsaved friends. Maybe **we** should hold Conversion Celebrations, like Matthew. Born-Again Brunches. Sinners-Dinners. Whether or not we throw an actual party... We should be like Jesus and be walking invitations to the unsaved. There should be a joyous, celebratory quality to our lives that let's the unsaved know that a relationship with Jesus is more of a *feast* than a *fast*.

The apostle Peter would speak of a joy that was unspeakable and full of glory (First Peter 1:8). John wrote, "that your joy may be full" (First John 1:4). Even in your adversities and afflictions, you are to "count it all joy" (James 1:2). Jesus promised you would experience some trouble in the world; but He told you to "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

There should be a spiritual joy about you that invites the unsaved to join the feast. But it's not just the unsaved that miss the point.

#2 You're A Walking Invitation  
To Your Saved Friends To Enjoy The Feast  
(v33-39)

Christians can lack joy. We have an example of that in the remaining verses. In verse thirty-three you read,

Luke 5:33 Then they said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?"

Who are "they"? *It included the disciples of John!* In Matthew 9:14 you read,

Matthew 9:14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do **we** and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?"

John the Baptist had been imprisoned. Prior to his imprisonment, he had pointed to Jesus and told his disciples to follow Jesus.

The disciples of John were having a hard time following Jesus. They were bothered by His feasting. It wasn't just the feasting; it seemed that His whole approach to godliness was more joyous, less monk-like.

By the way... Do you know there is no command to fast in either the Old or New Testament? Don't get me wrong; people fasted, and fasting is an important spiritual discipline. But the only regular fast prescribed by God in the Bible was on the annual Day of Atonement, and even then it was only implied that you should fast; it was not directly stated. The context for the question they asked Jesus about fasting was their Jewish tradition. Jewish tradition had come to require fasting twice weekly, and these disciples of John followed that practice.

Jesus put the issue into perspective with an illustration:

Luke 5:34 And He said to them, "**Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?**"

Jesus established that a relationship with Him was like a marriage, preceded by a wedding banquet. It was to be joyous and enjoyed. *These guys had never been to a wedding feast that required fasting!*

Jesus was being super kind to these guys. John the Baptist was famous for referring to himself as “the friend of the Bridegroom” (John 3:29). Jesus was showing respect for John. Jesus extended the illustration to include John’s disciples, and all disciples.

There was nothing wrong with fasting. There are times fasting is appropriate:

**Luke 5:35** But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days.”

Jesus would be crucified and buried. For those several days, He would be “taken away from them.” Let me quickly add, however, that upon His ascension into heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to permanently accompany and comfort us; and He promised He would never leave us or forsake us.

This means there are no prescribed fasts; fasting is not required. Here is the bottom line: Fasting does not make you more spiritual. Nothing you do outwardly, no work of righteousness, makes you more spiritual.

Fasting is a fantastic spiritual discipline. Just keep it between yourself and Jesus. Jesus indicated that, when you fast, you should appear joyful so folks don’t know it:

**Matthew 6:16** “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

**Matthew 6:17** But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,  
**Matthew 6:18** so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Joy unspeakable and full of glory; fullness of joy; this is the mark of your walk with the Lord. It should extend an invitation to **even your saved friends.**

The real issue wasn't fasting; it was the traditions that had been developed about fasting, and the attitude that keeping these traditions was necessary to gain and maintain a right standing with God.

Jesus continued His illustration:

**Luke 5:36** Then He spoke a parable to them: "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was *taken* out of the new does not match the old.

**Luke 5:37** And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined.

**Luke 5:38** But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

**Luke 5:39** And no one, having drunk old *wine*, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'"

The patched garment, the burst wineskin, and the refusal to try new wine, were scenes from the wedding feast.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus would tell a parable about a great wedding feast that a king held for his son. Everyone was invited to attend; but you must wear a particular wedding garment that he would provide. Those who wore their own garments were expelled.

In Scripture, a garment often represents your righteousness before God. Your own righteousness is compared to filthy rags. When you get saved, it's like Jesus giving you His robe of righteousness that makes you acceptable in heaven.

Some disciples think that their traditions can make them righteous. They know they need Jesus; but to them, the Lord is just a small patch on their own extensive works which they believe make them acceptable to God.

Wine was an important beverage at weddings. Jesus' first miracle involved the changing of water into wine at a wedding. A wineskin was an animal bladder used to put in the fresh, unfermented grape juice. Once it was re-opened, air would begin a process of decay that would render the skin brittle. If you put more grape juice in an old skin, the resulting fermentation would burst it.

In Scripture, wine is contrasted with the Holy Spirit. “Be not drunk with wine... but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). The Holy Spirit is the power to live-out your life with Jesus. The external traditions of men cannot provide any power; neither will He empower your own self-righteousness. You must depend fully on Jesus, not trusting in your works to gain or maintain salvation.

There were those wedding guests who refused the new wine. They represent all those who prefer their self-righteous traditions.

It’s all profoundly simple: Religion is self-righteousness that keeps outward rules, rituals, and regulations. You are to realize you have no righteousness; that there are no works of righteousness you can perform to gain or maintain your salvation. Instead, you receive Jesus Christ as Savior and He gives you a right standing before God, and the power to live for God on a daily basis.

The result will be joy. You will enjoy your walk with the Lord; and you will be a walking invitation to your saved friends to enjoy the feast.

Conclusion

“Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?”

Sadly, yes; **you can!** Christians tend more towards fasting than feasting. Their lives are more like funeral wakes than wedding banquets. Their religion is solemn... gloomy... joyless. Their daily life consists of doing things you don’t want to do, and of not doing things you want to do – because you think it makes you more spiritual.

As the Great Physician, Jesus offers sinners new life and spiritual health. As the Bridegroom, He brings new love and joy. He gives you a robe of righteousness and the “new wine” of the Holy Spirit.

Invite sinners to **join** the feast... Invite saints to **enjoy** the feast.



