



-- Read Luke 5:27-39

-- Pray

In the passages that precede our text for today, we have been given several remarkable pictures of the life and ministry of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In them we have become witnesses to the tremendous love, mercy, and kindness that Jesus reveals in His miraculous capacity to heal both broken bodies and broken spirits. Yet, in 6:11, we nonetheless see the Pharisees plotting against Him. And, of course, the joy, the glory, and the hope that have been revealed in Christ naturally elicit the question, “Why would *anyone* want to kill somebody like that?” Well, as we discussed last week, we presently find ourselves in a section of the Gospel of Luke—from 5:17 through 6:11—where Luke is gathering together events from Jesus’ ministry that serve to answer that important, yet vexing question.

First, in 5:17-26, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of blasphemy because He claims the authority to forgive sins, and even though He proves that unique authority by healing the paralytic, they are peeved nonetheless. Next, in the passage we examined two weeks ago, the Pharisees are repulsed by Jesus because He freely associates with people whom they loathe. And then last week, we began to examine verses 33-39, in which we see the Pharisees annoyance and antagonism toward Jesus growing yet deeper.

And what is it about Jesus that is enraging them this time? Well, last week we introduced an answer to this question that we shall conclude this morning, which is this: The scandal this time is the revolutionary new way of life that Jesus sets forth in this morning’s text. // This revolutionary new life is a life of joy, and in the haughty eyes of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, the joy that Jesus establishes is scandalous indeed.

-- Video – True Joy

As the video compellingly suggests, there is tremendous delight and matchless joy in the life that Christ offers. Jesus Himself says as much in John 10:10, where He declares, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”* Of course, this statement ultimately applies to the eternal bliss secured in Christ for those whose sins are forgiven through faith in Him. However, it also applies to our days on earth in which we prepare for and wait for our heavenly eternal home. As true believers in Christ, we have already been given the Holy Spirit, we are already established as citizens of heaven, and although it has not yet been made complete, we have already inherited the joy of Christ Jesus. And in this passage, Jesus reveals the revolutionary manner in which the life we have in Him is a wonderful life of true joy.

I think that our Scripture passage this morning reveals this revolutionary joy in at least three ways, the first of which we discussed last Sunday morning. If you will recall, last week we made the point that authentic Christian living is truly revolutionary in the following way: Unlike the heavy-handed and miserable religion of the Pharisees, revolutionary living in Christ is fun.

In making that point, we first remarked that the Pharisees seem to have asked Jesus about fasting largely because they were shocked by the amount of fun that He and His followers were having. Then, by contemplating the example of Jesus and His followers, and by gathering an understanding of why Jesus refers to Himself as the Bridegroom, we emphasized the truth that it is a good thing to have a good time, and we praise God for that. Of course, we must be careful how we define “good time,” but we see in Christ and in His followers that we have been created to dwell in the joy of Christ, and a significant part of that joy means that we should not be afraid of fun. Joyless living is horrible evangelism, but the fun-loving life of revolutionary Christian living draws people to the Savior who is Himself the source of genuinely revolutionary joy.

There can be no question that if we will abandon ourselves to the type of authentic Christian living that we see both modeled and described by Christ in these verses, we will surely discover that, in God’s will for our lives, there is an exhilaration and enjoyment unlike anything this world can buy or create or sell, try as it may. Indeed, revolutionary living in Christ is the most fun life of all.

Second, not only is revolutionary living in Christ fun, but it is also fresh. Now, I suppose that even the Pharisees might have even agreed with this point—that is, if I meant “fresh” in the same sense that a perturbed parent does with a

disrespectful child, saying, “Now, don’t you get fresh with me!” However, that is not all the sense in which I mean to use the word “fresh” here. I mean it in its vibrant sense of uniqueness and vitality. I mean it in the sense of refreshing originality that replaces something outmoded and defunct. In essence, the ultimate freshness of revolutionary Christianity points directly to the blissful newness and absolute distinctiveness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we read through verses 33-39 about wine and wineskins and patches and garments, I imagine that many questions are raised in your minds—questions such as, “Huh?” or maybe “Eh?” or maybe even, “What on earth is Jesus talking about?” Jesus is asked a question about fasting, and He answers by talking about new patches, old garments, and bursting wineskins. What is going on here? Well, know this: as usual, Jesus is up to something masterful. In these verses, He is taking a simple, misguided question from the Pharisees and using it as an opportunity to reveal truths of astonishing depth and utmost importance. In this case, Jesus’ response to the Pharisees reveals the comprehensive freshness of the message He came to preach. In other words, these verses are about the absolute and unmitigated distinctiveness of the Gospel, and in them, Jesus is telling us that revolutionary living in Him is fresh, indeed.

I pray that you will hear this point this morning, because its implications are astounding. This single theological truth lies at the very root of all that we are, all that we do, and all that we should hope to be as God’s people through Jesus Christ. The point is this: When we proclaim that revolutionary living in Christ is fresh, we mean that it is founded upon a message that is distinctive in every way. It is the glorious gospel of grace. It is the matchless message of hope and of life and of the forgiveness that comes only through the finished work of Jesus Christ. It is the singular truth of salvation and the perfect culmination of all that has been revealed to us by God. It is the one message that all true believers have received by which we have repented and rejoiced. And—now hear this—it is, in the purest and best sense of the word, absolutely, remarkably, resplendently unique!

The message we preach is the one and only Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is utterly incompatible with any and all opposing religious beliefs. In Galatians 1:8-9, the Apostle Paul writes, “*But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*” The Gospel of Jesus Christ most certainly stands alone, and its distinctiveness necessitates a revolutionary way of living.

The freshness of authentic Christian living means that the Gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be mixed or blended together with other religious systems or beliefs in order to suit our personal preferences. It means that our testimony to Him must never bow blindly to political correctness. It urges us to know that the Gospel cannot be mixed with the New Age ideas of Oprah Winfrey, or anyone else for that matter. It beseeches us to understand that the Good News of Jesus Christ cannot be combined with Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Christian Science, or with any other cult, nor can it be mixed with any type of sacramentalism, be it Roman Catholic or orthodox. It means that true Christianity stands entirely apart from all other world religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and secular humanism.

Let us know it and declare it: The Gospel of Jesus Christ is absolutely and wonderfully exclusive. As John MacArthur has said, “[Christianity] mingles with no other religion. It mixes with no other religion. It accommodates no other religion. In fact, it replaces all other religion. The gospel is absolutely exclusive.” Listen to how Paul emphasizes this point in Ephesians 4:4-6, where he writes, *“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”* Let us focus our hearts and minds on these essential truths today: There is one, and only one, God—our Heavenly Father who created and sustains the heavens and the earth. There is one, and only one, authoritative book—the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God found only in the Holy Bible. There is one, and only one, Redeemer of souls—our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. There is one, and only one, Gospel—the Gospel of grace and faith through the atoning sacrifice Christ.

Let there be no doubt, then, that revolutionary living in Christ is wholly distinctive and entirely fresh. And let this message be clearly preached from this pulpit, for it is a truth that desperately needs to be heard and understood by our culture, for the larger culture around us is abandoning exclusive about Jesus Christ as if they were scrap iron on a sinking ship. Ours is a culture in which people increasingly believe that there are no moral absolutes, and that all people, no matter what religion they may profess, pray to the same God. Into this stale, confused environment we must joyfully proclaim that alluring freshness and uniqueness of revolutionary living in Christ, for in this revolutionary freshness of authentic Christian living lies matchless hope and abiding joy.

Yet with it comes a great caution as well, because the absolute distinctiveness of the Christian Gospel means that any intrusion that alters its primary message or

misunderstands its central truths will quickly nullify it and render it void. And this problem is precisely what Jesus is speaking against in our passage this morning. You see, the Pharisees didn't like what Jesus was doing because it made them uncomfortable. They wanted Him to fit into the mold that they created and over which they could maintain control. In our Scripture passage, neither Jesus nor His disciples were fasting like the Pharisees demanded, and that angered them.

But, you see, Jesus didn't come to add to the Judaism of the day. He didn't come to alter it or to blend with it either. Rather, He came to complete true Judaism and forever transform the former covenant with a new covenant in His blood. He came to establish the Gospel of grace which would forever fulfill and replace the Law that Moses received on Mount Sinai. And in the verses before our attention today, Jesus shows us the utter bankruptcy of the misguided Judaism of His day and its complete incompatibility with the Good News He came to proclaim. This clash becomes exceedingly clear in this passage, and it helps us understand the anger with which the Jewish leaders opposed Jesus, a fury which ultimately led to their irrational screams for His execution. All this hostility was based upon the fact that Jesus preached a Gospel that was new. In other words, as the Scripture suggests, He came to offer a glorious and savory new wine, but the Jewish leaders of the day were absolutely adamant that the old wine they were peddling tasted better.

Thus, the exclusiveness and uniqueness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the main message of our text, and it represents a revolutionary new way of life. Notice the constant repetition of the words "new" and "old" in verses 36-39. In these four short verses, the word "new" occurs no less than eight times, and the word "old" appears five. And all of this language comes together to give us the following inspiring, yet extremely challenging, message about the Gospel: It cannot be an add-on in our lives. If it is sincerely received, the Good News of Jesus Christ makes us entirely new and demands that we be completely transformed. It cannot be a new patch that we try to add to the old fabric of our lives; it requires that we clothe ourselves with a garment that is altogether new.

Let me ask you then, has your life been revolutionized by Jesus Christ? In other words, are you sold out to Christ and becoming more like Him each day? Is it obvious that you are, over time, putting off the old self, being made new in your heart and mind, and putting on the new life of Jesus Christ? Can you look back upon your conversion and see that the Holy Spirit is giving you the power to become a radically different person? Or, on the other hand, is your life basically the same as it ever was? Are you casting aside every aspect of your old life that keeps

you from experiencing the revolutionary new life of Christ, or are you hanging on to pet sins and other hindrances incompatible with the freshness of true faith? Are you submitting entirely to Christ, or are you attempting to fit Him into your own lifestyle and preferences? Please hear this caution: You cannot have it both ways, because the revolutionary life of Christ is altogether fresh.

As I mentioned earlier, with the freshness of the Gospel great caution is in order. But with it there is also matchless joy, and the revolutionary joy it brings is best seen in the third aspect of revolutionary living in Christ that we see in these verses, which is this: Revolutionary living in Christ is free.

The subject of this revolutionary freedom that authentic Christian living inspires is an exceptionally deep well, and we do not have anywhere near enough time this morning to plumb its remarkable and liberating depths. However, for our purposes today, suffice it to say that God gave the Old Testament Law to Israel for a paramount purpose, and that purpose was to reveal to the flawless nature of His perfect holiness. It was given to God's people to demonstrate our desperate need for perfect purity in every aspect of our lives, and it reveals a perfection of holiness far too lofty for any person anywhere at any time to attain or acquire.

Yet, at the same time this perfect holiness is God's righteous requirement for all, and therein lies a problem that, by ourselves, we can never solve. Therein lies the slavery to sin in which every person is born. Therein lies our sin-sick condition which Pharisees badly misunderstood and so often refused to acknowledge. Therein lies the necessity for the perfectly-lived life of Christ offered as a sacrifice for our sins. Therein lies the reason why Jesus Christ is the only name given to men by which we must be saved. And... remarkably... therein lies the incomparable joy of the Gospel, for the revolutionary life that Christ offers frees us from this Law that we cannot keep. By the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are truly made free to become who God has created us to be. As Galatians 5:1 so delightfully declares, *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."*

In the context of the book of Galatians, that verse is directed against people just like the Pharisees we read about in our passage today. It is aimed at people who seem uninterested in embracing the radical freedom Christ offers. It is directed against people who insist upon wearing the yoke of slavery that necessarily comes with any religion of works. You see, the Pharisees didn't ask Jesus about fasting because they wanted to tell Him about an exciting aspect of their religious lives. They didn't suggest fasting to Him as a means by which He could have drawn

nearer to God (that would have been impossible anyway). No, they didn't have any of these noble intentions in mind.

Rather, they asked about fasting as a means of telling Jesus that He and His disciples had better be doing what they were doing "or else." They asked about fasting in an attempt to place the miserable yoke of works-based righteousness firmly around the necks of Jesus and His followers. They asked about fasting because they had become completely obsessed with their religion of "Have-to's." They had to fast twice a week. They had to give a tenth of all they got. They had to pray three times a day, every day at noon, three o'clock, and six o'clock. For the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, these activities were not blessed opportunities to bring glory to the God they loved and worshipped. No, on the contrary, for them these religious activities had become absolute, yet utterly meaningless, obligations, and they were convinced that Jesus should be obligated to them as well.

You see, the Pharisees were so often so very miserable because they were so completely consumed by a life of incessant religious demands and pressures. // Such is the common experience of anyone who believes his salvation is based upon his own works. // Those who feel like they must earn God's favor are destined to be dismayed by the obvious truth that their religious aspirations are impossible.

However, praise be to God that it is for freedom that we have been set free! You see, the unrivaled joy of the Gospel is that genuine faith in Jesus Christ instantly rescues us from all these impossible religious "Have-to's" of life, and it gloriously sets us free to embrace the "Get-to's" of real Christian worship and service. Unlike the religion of the Pharisees, revolutionary Christian living is not a life of intense religious pressures and demands. It is, rather, a life in which all the demands of righteousness have already been met on our behalf by Christ, and we are saved because of what He has done for us, not by what we can do for ourselves.

Thus, we are rescued completely from a life in which we must earn God's favor, and we are set free to do our best to live lives worthy of the salvation that we did not earn yet cannot lose. In other words, revolutionary living in Christ is blissfully free because in it the "have-to's" of false religion are superlatively supplanted by the get-to's of grace. As God's children, we are not coerced by a heavy-handed taskmaster. No, in Christ, we are freely invited to serve the risen Lord who loves sinners like us so much that He has given His flawless life to save us from sin. God does not desire us to be robots who do religion because we are

forced. Christ has set us free from that mundane, meaningless misery. On the contrary, God desires followers who will meditate upon who He is and all that He has done, and who respond to Him in joyful obedience and service.

(Summary)

This is the revolutionary joy of life in Christ. It is a fun-filled life that wholeheartedly embraces the distinctive freshness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and is set free for meaningful worship and joyful service. // Are you living the revolutionary life that Christ offers today? It is fun, it is fresh, it is free, and it is offered to any who will deny themselves and receive it today.