

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] Frank was a good dog but he really wanted to be a flamingo. So, Frank went to the library and got some books on flamingo transformation. He tried panting himself pink and gluing feathers to his body. He listened to podcasts about having a flamingo mindset and starting meditating and imagining that he was a flamingo. He downloaded some apps that helped him change his diet so he could only eat flamingo food. But no matter how hard Frank worked, he couldn't get his knees to bend backwards, his nose was still soft and wet, and he was still just a dog. All of the techniques and effort in the world couldn't bring about the transformation he desperately wanted.
2. [Need] Like Frank the dog most people today want to be transformed. Maybe not into a flamingo, but we want to be smarter, healthier, less angry, more talented, or you fill in the blank. And we think that if we just read the right book or master the right technique then maybe we could transform ourselves there. The problem is that none of those things ultimate work. The diet fails, the app stays unused. And you can't ever seem to get the motivation we need. No matter how hard we try, our lives are not transformed in the way we hope. The transformation that we need can only be found in Jesus. We will never be able to life hack our way to a changed life. The dead can't bring themselves back to life no matter how hard they rattle their bones.
3. [Subject] We are going to look at the kind of transformation that Jesus brings. He brings them to each person in these stories and He brings to all of His disciples. The salvation that Jesus brings transforms everything about us.
4. [Text] Luke 5:1-26

Point number 1: Jesus transforms our identity (v. 1-11). Jesus transforms our identity (v. 1-11).

The first transformation that the disciples experience is a transformation of their purpose and their very identities.

Let us take a look again at the story.

Verse 1, **"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, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets."**

Jesus is continuing His preaching ministry.
And such a great crowd gathers around him while He is near a lake.
So, Jesus spies two boats that are nearby.
And Jesus has an idea of how to use them.

Verse 3, **"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."**

Jesus asks to borrow Simon's boat.
And Jesus goes out into the water so that the crowd can hear Him better.
But it seems that Jesus has another purpose beyond good acoustics.
Because everything Jesus does is on purpose.
And the purpose is revealed in verse 4,
"And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

This is anything but a simple request.
This is not just Jesus asking Simon Peter to try for a moment.
Jesus is asking Peter to engage in serious labor.

Look at how Simon responds.
Verse 5, **"And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."**

They have been working all night long.
If you have ever worked a night shift of any kind, then you know the exhaustion they must have felt.
And fishing is hard physical work.

Most likely they were using drag nets.
So they would have long maybe hundred foot nets.
They would spread them out between the boats and slowly drag them together to get the fish.
It was long and physically demanding.
All night they had worked, sweated, and pulled only to get nothing.
When Simon says **"toiled"** he means it has been backbreaking work.

And remember in verse 2 it mentions that they were washing their nets.
This is also hard work.
They had finished up for the day and were slowly repairing and cleaning.
To try even one more time would have meant having to clean and wash those nets all over again.

We can understand why Simon tells Jesus he would rather not.
Besides, after all of this effort they have not caught a single thing!
An entire night of hard work with nothing to show for it.
Not a single fish.

Not to mention they have been listening to Jesus preach for hours.
It is a miracle they are awake.
I probably would have fallen asleep.

Yet, Simon says, **"But at your word I will let down the nets."**
Simon is willing to obey even though he doesn't understand.
He is willing to obey even though he thinks it's foolish and a waste of time.
Even though he doubts, he has faith.
Because faith is not about believing with every fiber of your being.
Faith is about letting down the nets anyway.
Faith obeys even when it doubts.

So, they let down their nets.
Verse 6, **"And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking."**

When they step out in faith, God meets them there.
The fishermen who had not caught a single fish now catch hundreds.
They catch so many that their nets are beginning to break!

Verse 7, **"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."**

They have so many fish that they need the other fishermen to come pull them in.

Suddenly both boats are so full that they begin to sink.

Can you imagine the shock?

The joy and laughter?

This would be the most surprising day of their professional life.

Verse 8, **"But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."**

Peter recognizes at this moment that Jesus is God.

Peter has seen Jesus work miracles.

He saw Jesus heal his mother in law.

He has heard Jesus preach and teach on the Kingdom.

And now Peter has seen Jesus work a miracle for himself.

And Peter responds the same way as every person who has ever entered God's presence.

He falls on his face like Isaiah in the throne room.

He acknowledges his own sinfulness.

He actually asks Jesus to leave because he knows that he does not deserve to be in God's presence.

⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon."

They are amazed at what God has done.

And James and John, who will be called as disciples are also there.

They are all amazed by Jesus.

"And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

This is where the transformation takes place.

Because an encounter with Jesus should always leave you transformed.

And Simon has had a powerful encounter with Jesus.

Simon Peter is overwhelmed by Jesus.

When he sees Jesus, all he can think of is his own unworthiness.

But Jesus knows Peter's sin.

Jesus already knows everything Peter has done.

Jesus already knows everything that Peter will do.

Jesus knows Peter will cut off people's ears and betray Jesus.

Yet, Jesus says **"Do not be afraid."**

Because it does not matter what you say you are.

It does not matter what you actually are.

What matters is what the "I AM" says you are.

Because Jesus changes our identities.

Then Jesus tells Peter **"from now on you will be catching men."**

Jesus says that you are no longer a fisherman, you are a fisher of men.

Jesus gives him a new identity.

Simon probably identified himself by his occupation, like we do today.

He thought of himself as a fisherman.

But Jesus changes his identity.

He gives him a new purpose.

But Jesus does not just wipe us clean and start over.

The transformation of Jesus does not take who we are and erase it.

It is not as if Jesus says, "you used to be a fisherman, but now I will make you something completely different."

Jesus says, "You were a fisherman, and now I will take everything that you are and make it new."

Jesus makes us a new creation.

He restores what we were meant to be.

And our new identity is found in Jesus.
Peter will now use all of his fishing abilities to make disciples.

Verse 11, "**And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.**"

These men left everything to become disciples of Jesus.
I don't know if we recognize how significant this is.
They are turning their backs on their families.
They are turning their backs on their way of life.
They are turning their backs on their occupations.
They are also turning their backs at the height of their careers.
This is the most successful day they have ever had.
And they completely walk away from it.
They do not even sell the fish and take the money.
They leave it all behind.
Because Jesus has changed who they are.
They are not people who catch and sell fish.
They are people who follow Jesus and make disciples.

This is still true for us today.
God takes who you are and makes you new.
It does not mean we have to quit our jobs, but it does change our identity.
We are longer just what we do.
Now we do what we do, but for the Kingdom of Jesus.
Now we do what we do, and we are trying to make disciples.

No longer are you a banker, who saves people money, you save souls.
No longer are you a doctor who heals the body, but a doctor who tries to heal people's souls.
No longer are you just a stay at home mom who raises children, now you raise up disciples of Jesus.
Whatever our occupations or identities, Jesus changes them.

[Transition] Jesus changes our very identities. But Jesus also transforms the way that we think about ourselves in our second story.

Point number 2: **Jesus transforms our shame (v. 12-16). Jesus transforms our shame (v. 12-16).**

This is one of the most wonderful things Jesus does for us.

He does not just change who we are.

He does not just remove the stain of sin.

He removes the shame.

That is what this story of Jesus cleansing the leper is all about.

Verse 12, **"While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy."**

Now we don't know exactly what kind of leprosy he had.

It was often a catch all way to refer to disease.

But this man does not just have a small case of leprosy.

He is **"full of leprosy."**

It is all over his body.

"And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

This leper is begging to be made clean.

Now why would he say clean?

Why wouldn't he ask to be healed?

Because the primary problem a leper faced was not their disease, It was being unclean.

Clean and unclean are categories in the sacrificial system.

They were partially symbolic of being righteous and holy.

Only the things that were clean could enter into the synagogue for worship.

And there were various ways someone could become unclean.

To touch something unclean would make you unclean.
If you came into contact with blood, or something dead you were unclean.

And leprosy always made someone unclean.

To be an unclean leper was a painful life.

Leviticus 13:45-46 give instructions on lepers.

"The proud person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out 'Unclean, unclean.' 46 He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp."

This is the life of a leper.

They must wear torn clothes and gross looking hair.

Everyone who sees them must know they are unclean.

In case they miss it, they must constantly yell "unclean, unclean."

They don't get to have conversations with people.

They have to live alone.

Not just by themselves in a house, but outside of town.

Far away from everyone.

Because if anyone touched them,

If anyone came in contact with them,

They would be made unclean.

Some rabbi's even said, "stay 100 yards away from them if they were upwind and 400 yards away if it was downwind."

What a lonely painful life that would be.

Can you imagine it?

How hard would it be to not just deal with your disease, but do so alone?

Years of never touching anyone.

Years of no conversations with anyone.

Years of everyone running away from you and averting their eyes.

Tens of thousands of times all you have ever said is "Unclean, unclean."

How much shame would you carry?

And so, this leper dares to enter where Jesus is.
He dares to come around where people are.
The whole walk there he has had to yell, "Unclean, unclean."
We don't know but I'm sure people gave him dirty looks.
They wondered why the leper didn't stay far away like he should.
But the leper has heard of Jesus.
And he comes to be made clean.

"And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."

Like Simon, he falls on his face.
He falls out of shame and desperation.
And the leper begs.
He seems to beg repeatedly.
Possibly through tears and sobs.

But look at what he says.
Because this leper has faith.
"Lord, if you will, you can make me clean."
He knows Jesus can make him clean.
He does not doubt Jesus's ability.
He only wonders if Jesus desires to.

Verse 13, "**And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.**"

This is probably the first time he has been touched in years.
Jesus reaches out and touches him.
Just the touch from Jesus probably would have been enough.
Even if Jesus said no, but touched him the leper could have held onto the memory.
But Jesus touches him and says, "**I will, be clean.**"

Jesus does not say, "be healed."

He says, "**be clean.**"

Jesus takes away all of the shame of being unclean.

And immediately his leprosy and all of the shame that goes with it.

Verse 14, "**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."**"

Now why would Jesus do this?

Partially this is because Jesus does not work miracles for attention.

But primarily here this is for the good of the leper.

Jesus has declared him clean.

But the community and priests need to see that he is clean.

Jesus makes reference to the commands of Moses.

These are found in Leviticus 14.

I won't read it all, but it is a week long ceremony.

It begins with the priest bringing out two birds.

The birds are cleaned.

Then one is killed.

The blood of that bird is spilled on the other and on the leper.

The priest says you are clean and the bird is released.

Then the man gets to wash and now can come in the camp again.

But for seven more days he must live outside.

After seven days he shaves all his body clean and wash like a baby.

Then two lambs are sacrificed.

And the man is clean again.

Jesus wants him to do all of these things.

That might seem like a lot of bureaucracy.

But it would have been a celebration.

The community would have gathered for these sacrifices.

They would have cheered and celebrated.
It was an honoring and a public declaration that this man was clean.

Verse 15, **"But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities."**

Crowds gather anyway.
Because this is the Jesus who heals.
This is the Jesus who takes dirty people and makes them clean.
This is the Jesus who takes the pitiful and makes them beautiful.

And Jesus does something interesting in verse 16, **"But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray."**

Jesus repeatedly leaves the crowds.
And this time He does so to pray.

But I also think something else is going on here.
Jesus leaves to a desolate place.
I think He does this as a symbol as well.
The leper has had to live in desolate places because of he was unclean.
Now, Jesus goes to the desolate place.

Usually those who touch lepers are made unclean.
Even holy things when they touch unclean things are made unclean.
Now Jesus is not unclean because He is God.
But Jesus leaves the crowds anyway.

At the very least this reminds me of how Jesus takes our shame
He takes our sins even though He is without sin.
He endures the shame of the cross even though He is perfect.
The cross was not just a gruesome painful death, but a shameful one.
It was for slaves and criminals.
You died naked and mocked by the crowds.

But Jesus endured our shame.
He takes the lepers uncleanness upon Himself.
He touches the unclean.
This is why I think Jesus goes to the desolate place.
Not because He is truly unclean, but because He carries our shame for us.

Jesus came to take away the shame of your sin.
And He transforms us into people who are clean.

I don't know what kind of shame you carry.
Maybe there are things that keep you up at night.
As you lay drifting off to sleep you remember things you have said and done that you wish you could forget.
Maybe you carry the shame of being divorced.
You carry shame of your children, or grandchildren not living as you hoped.
Maybe you carry shame because you are poor.
Maybe you carry shame from a chronic illness and you hate complaining.
Maybe you carry shame from sexual sin.

Maybe you even carry shame because you have been sinned against.
It is not uncommon for the abused to be filled with shame.
Especially when that abuse is sexual in nature.
That is a lot of the shame I have carried in my life.
I have talked about this before, but I was sexually abused.
That brings lots of shame.
Because our culture cries out that the abused are unclean.
Especially if you are a man.
I was even sexually abused by an older male.
That only compounds the shame because no one wants to admit that.

I don't know what your shame is.
I don't need to know what makes you feel unclean and unworthy of God's love.

Jesus knows.

Jesus knows as much as He knew Peter and the Leper's uncleanness.

But Jesus can make you clean.

Jesus can take away all of your shame.

And Jesus is willing.

If you will only let Him wash you clean.

Come to Him in faith.

Come to Him asking if He will make you clean.

And the answer will always be yes.

[transition] Jesus transforms our shame. But our shame is only on the outside. Our shame is just how we feel about sin. But Jesus needs to actually do something to our sin.

Point number 3 **Jesus transforms our sins (v. 17-26). Jesus transforms our sins (v. 17-26).**

This is at the heart of the work of Jesus.

He came to change sinner's hearts.

He came to forgive us of our sins.

The last story is all about how Jesus transforms our sins.

Verse 17, **"On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal."**

Jesus has been healing and teaching.

And one day the religious elite come to visit.

They come from all of the villages and even from the capital Jerusalem.

Presumably, they come to evaluate Jesus themselves.

They want to know if this preacher is the real deal or a charlatan.

Verse 18, **"And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus,"**

In contrast to these men, regular people come.

And they come bringing someone to be healed.

They have heard of Jesus too.

But they come to to evaluate, but for this paralyzed man to be healed.

Verse 19 **"but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus."**

This is one of my children's favorite Bible stories.

And it is a great one.

They can't get to Jesus.

There are too many people.

And many of the people in the way are these Pharisees and scribes.

But instead of turning around,

Instead of just waiting and hoping,

They take action.

They get up on the roof.

They push tiles out of the way and make a hole.

They drop their friend right at Jesus feet.

Verse 20, **"And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."**

Notice again what Jesus addresses.

He does not start with healing, He says they are forgiven.

And they are forgiven because of their faith.

They cut through the roof knowing Jesus would heal.

They were bold enough to come before God.

They came believing that Jesus would heal.

And Jesus does above and beyond what they imagined.

Verse 21, **“And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”**

These are theological experts.

And so knowing their Scriptures, they say this must be blasphemy.

Only God can forgive sins.

They would be right, except Jesus is God.

They also doubt because they likely believe this man was paralyzed because of his sin, or at least his families sin.

They believe he is getting what he deserves.

And the religious elite always doubt that sinners can be forgiven.

They might believe that God can forgive small sins and small sinners,

But they believe great sinners are past God’s grace.

Verse 22, **“When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, “Why do you question in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’?”**

Because Jesus is God he can read their thoughts.

And He asks them a hard question.

Which would be easier to say?

Sins are forgiven, or you are healed!

This is a trick question because they both should be impossible.

But they are not impossible for Jesus.

Verse 24, **“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.”**

Jesus has now said both.

Jesus has said, “your sins are forgiven.”

And Jesus has said, “Rise.”

Remember that each of these instances of healing as its own significance.

The primary point of this story is not the faith of the friends.

It is not about the judging of the Pharisees.
It is about the fact that Jesus has the power to forgive sinners.
Jesus can transform us from sinners into saints.

Jesus Himself says that He will heal the man so they know Jesus has the authority to forgive sinners.

And Jesus heals so that every time the man wonders if he really was forgiven, he can look down at his feet and remember what Jesus said.

Verse 25, **"And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶ And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."**

Immediately at the word of Jesus he stands.

And he runs home to see his family.

The whole way home praising and giving glory to God.

Not just the paralyzed man, but the whole house glorifies God.

They have seen extraordinary things.

They have seen God in flesh.

They have seen Jesus not just heal the paralyzed, but forgive sinners.

Which do you think was the greater miracle?

Which is more extraordinary?

Making a paralyzed man walk?

Or making a sinner a saint?

Forgiving sinners is the most extraordinary work Jesus does.

It is His greatest miracle.

Because the forgiveness of Jesus is not cheap.

It is not empty words.

Sometimes we tell people that we forgive them when we don't mean it.

Or we tell people "no worries."

Or maybe we try to help someone's guilt by saying "it's not a big deal."
But Jesus does none of those things.
Jesus offers true forgiveness and transformation.
Jesus says not just that He has forgiven the man,
Jesus says that God does.
Jesus says, your sins are forgiven.

That means all of them.
Every shameful thing.
Every last moment.
Not because of any obedience, but because of faith.
Daring to run to Jesus and not letting the crowd or anything stop you.

I invite you this morning to run to Jesus.
Jesus still works miracles everyday when He forgives sinners.
And this salvation and transformation is available to any who want it.
The house of God is not too full.
God's grace has not run out.
Don't let your shame hold you back.
Don't let your weakness hold you back.
Dig through the roof,
Put down your net,
Fall at Jesus' feet.
And anyone who has faith can be forgiven and transformed.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Jesus transforms our identities, our shame, and our sins.
2. [Challenge] You no longer have to be who you believe you are. You no longer have to be what your occupation was or is. You don't have to be what your shame says you are. You can be who Jesus says you are. You can be transformed, made clean, and forgiven. Come and be transformed by Jesus. He is waiting and willing.