

INTRODUCTION:

There is no better time to feast in our country than on Thanksgiving day. There is also no worst time to fast. Yet, for four straight years in high school I found myself on Thanksgiving day trying to fast. I was a wrestler. If you are not familiar with wrestling, one of the main components of this sport is that you have to weight a certain amount before you can compete. So, much of my weeks were spent cutting and fasting, often in unhealthy ways, in order to compete on the weekends. And we always had a tournament Thanksgiving weekend. I needed to make weight, so I would not eat very much. My family would goad me into eating. So, I would have the smallest piece of turkey you have ever seen, a teaspoon of mashed potatoes, and a couple green beans. I always hated Thanksgiving. Because it's hard to fast when everyone around you is feasting. And I imagine for my family it was hard to feast when others are fasting.

In our story this morning Jesus is also having some conflict over fasting and feasting. The Pharisees are angry with Jesus and His disciples because of how they engage these practices. What I want us to see this morning is how we can engage in these spiritual practice the way Jesus does. We especially need to know the right time to fast and feast.

Turn with me in your Bibles to Luke 5:27-39. We are going to see what Jesus has to teach us about these spiritual practices. And afterwards we are going to practice feasting.

Stand with me if you are able for the reading of God's Word.

Point number 1: **Feast with sinners (v. 27-32).**

This is what we are meant to take away from this story.

We are to eat and feast with sinners.

Because this is what Jesus does.

In Biblical times sharing a meal with someone was an intimate act.

It is a sign of fellowship and hospitality.

It is a serious act.

And this is still true for us today.

We may not typically think of meals in those terms,
But we know that sharing a meal together is significant.

Who do you normally eat with?

Who do you invite over to your house to dinner?

Typically we only invite people that we like.

We invite over our family and our close friends.

We do not usually invite over people we find weird or annoying.

We do not want to spend a meal frustrated with our guests and wondering when they will leave.

We don't invite our enemies and those we hate to dinner.

But let's look and see who Jesus feasts with.

Verse 27, **"After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me."**

Jesus goes out of his way to find a tax collector.

Most of us would avoid meeting a tax collector.

This would have especially been true during Jesus' day.

Tax collectors were not just hated because no one liked to pay taxes.

They were hated because of their corruption and reputation for stealing.

The Romans had an intricate system for collecting taxes.

The right to collect taxes for a region, like Israel was sold at auction to the highest bidder.

That person paid Rome, and then had the responsibility to collect taxes on their own.

They could tax people whatever they wanted.

And they got to keep all the left over money.

They also functioned as loan sharks.

They might lend out money, but only at exorbitant interest rates.

The person who won the bid for a region would then sell out the right to set up smaller tax booths, or the right to collect at a certain city.

Levi is one of those smaller tax collectors.

As you can imagine, the rich got richer and the poor got robbed.
They were unpopular people.

You would avoid a tax collector.

Not just because he might make up extra taxes on the spot, but because they were hated.

Especially if they were a Jew, like Levi.

The Jewish people would have viewed Levi as a traitor.

He was a Benedict Arnold or a loyalist who has sided with the oppressor instead of his own nation.

Levi would have been hated and shunned by his own people, and probably not well respected by Romans because he was a Jew.

Yet Jesus goes out of His way to find Levi.

Jesus finds Levi at work.

Levi is sitting at the tax booth.

He is currently robbing and stealing from people.

And he said to him, "Follow me."

Jesus loves to go where sinners are.

And Jesus invites Levi to be His disciple.

I can only imagine how Levi felt in that moment.

He probably had heard of Jesus.

Word about Jesus was going throughout all of the regions.

And the Messiah comes to his tax booth.

He does not come to lecture and condemn him for his sin.

Jesus instead invites Levi to come and be His disciple.

Verse 28, **"And leaving everything, he rose and followed him."**

Like Peter, James, and John last week Levi leaves everything.

He leaves behind his lucrative job.

He leaves behind the financial security to following a wandering homeless preacher.

What incredible faith.

Then Levi wants to celebrate.

Because anytime a sinner comes to faith in Christ, we should throw a party.

This is what the angel's do.

This is even what Zacchaeus, another tax collector will do,

So this is what Levi does.

Verse 29, **"And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them."**

Instead of hoarding all of his ill gotten gains,

Levi throws a great feast.

And everyone seems to be invited.

All of the sinners are welcome to come.

Even the other hated tax collectors are welcome.

It like a going away party.

It is his retirement from being a tax collector.

And when everyone asked what he is going to do now, Levi would have to say he was now a disciple of Jesus.

He was leaving it all behind to follow Him.

When Luke says, **"and others"** You might wonder who that could be.

The pharisees give us a hint in the next verse.

Verse 30, **"And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"**

Who is at this meal?

Sinners and outcasts.

People that the religious elite would be ashamed to be seen with.

Prostitutes and drunks.

Addicts and junkies.

People you would not want your children to be friends with.

This is who is at the party.

And Jesus has no problem eating with them.
He does not simply call them to repentance and discipleship.
Jesus and His disciples **"eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners."**

This is offensive and the Pharisees believe no one should do this.
And we need to understand that this is not just arrogance and pride.
The Pharisees are the most serious religious group.
They take their faith and the Scriptures seriously.
They know the Scriptures.

They know that often in Israel's history they were sent into exile.
Because they often kept eating and drinking with sinners.
Then they adopted the gods and practices of those sinners.
The Pharisees believe they are in the right.
Because righteous people should avoid the unrighteous!
They need to avoid the influence of sin.
Just like you wouldn't want your teenagers eating and drinking with
sinners and unbelievers because you would be afraid of their influence.

But Jesus doesn't do that.
Jesus feasts with sinners anyway.
And is Jesus' response to this religious question?

Verse 31, **"And 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."**

Jesus has come for this very purpose.
Jesus came to eat and to feast with sinners.
Jesus came to spend time with the sick.

Jesus uses the metaphor of a doctor making house calls to the sick.
Because only people who are sick need a doctor.
The emergency room is usually not filled with healthy people.

The unfortunate irony is that the Pharisees also need a physician.
They are sinners in need of a savior.
But they believe they are righteous.
They believe that they are just fine.
They are like a family member who is obviously sick and refuses to go to the doctor.
They have a fever, a cough, and all the symptoms of someone sick.
But they refuse to ask the physician for help.

The Pharisees believe they are righteous and well,
But their bodies are riddled with a spiritual cancer that will kill them.

What is sad is that the Pharisees are welcome at the feast.
They are invited to eat with Jesus.
Later throughout the gospel of Luke we will see this.

Jesus does not just eat with tax collectors and sinners.
Jesus is willing to eat with anyone who will come to the table.
Jesus will eat with anyone who invites him.
We will see later in the Gospel of Luke several stories of Jesus eating at the table and breaking bread with the Pharisees themselves.
Anyone who wants can come and eat with Jesus.
But you need to recognize that you're sick.
You need to recognize that you are a sinner.
You need to recognize that you need Jesus.

It is amazing that we are allowed to eat and feast at Jesus's table.
Jesus doesn't have the disciples at the door like bouncers looking for VIPs.
Jesus doesn't keep out those who are shameful.
Jesus does not keep out those who are the worst kind of sinners.
Jesus doesn't keep away those people who if they walked in the doors of our church we will hush would come over the place and we would all start whispering about "can you believe who's here?"
Jesus goes right up to those people and says come and follow me.

Jesus goes and feasts with them.

But notice the qualification that Jesus gives.

Jesus is not calling for us to just live and let live.

Jesus is not saying that sinners are fine and they're soon as not a big deal and aren't we all just the same anyway.

Jesus is happy to eat with sinners.

Jesus is happy to fellowship with sinners.

Jesus is happy to eat and to drink with sinners.

Because He loves them.

And because Jesus loves sinners He, **"calls them to repentance."**

This is why Jesus is eating with Levi.

This is why Jesus eats and drinks with prostitutes and tax collectors.

This is why Jesus hangs out with the worst of sinners.

It is not because their sin is no big deal it is because He is inviting them and calling them to come and to follow Him.

We cannot miss this part.

Some will point to Jesus eating and drinking with sinners.

They will point to the way that the sinners loved Jesus and felt seen by Jesus.

And they will use it to say that we shouldn't tell sinners to repent.

That we should only eat and only drink with them and not invite them to follow Jesus too because we don't want to offend them.

That is not what Jesus does.

But Jesus also does not only call people to repentance.

He does not just stand on the corner and tell Levi that he needs to get his acts together.

He doesn't stand up at the party and tell everyone how sinful and wrong they are.

He eats and drinks with them AND He calls them to repentance.

We cannot miss that Jesus does both of these things.
Some of us need to eat and drink with Sinners because we are not.
You need to be willing to invite people to your home that you wouldn't if you weren't a Christian.
As a follower of Jesus you have left everything to follow him.
That means that you have left behind the ability to veto who is and who isn't allowed in your home.
Some of you need to be willing and need to eat with those bigger sinners and that seem too far gone.
Some of us are eating and drinking with sinners and we're not calling them to repentance.
Some of us need to make sure that we are not just eating and drinking with sinners, but we're also calling them to repentance.

It is great to spend time with people who do not know Jesus.
They're not enough Christians who make that a regular practice.
But just eating and drinking and feasting with sinners is not enough.
We also have to be inviting them to follow Jesus.
We need to do both.
Jesus feasts with sinners because He calls them to repentance.
We should do the same.

This is not just something that Jesus did during His earthly ministry.
We are all still invited to come and feast with Jesus.
Every week in churches all over the globe, the dinner bell rings.
All the weak and the strong, the poor and the rich, the foreigner and the citizen, the righteous and the sinner, all are invited to Jesus' table.
We call it communion, the Eucharist, or more commonly the Lord's Supper.
There we are all invited to come to Jesus's table and eat with Him.

And the feast is rich.
We call it a feast not because the abundance of the food or drink but because of the abundance of what is in it.

Is it a feast because Jesus says that the food and the cup are His body and His blood.

That we mysteriously **"participate in the blood of Christ"** 1 Cor 10:16

And though it seems to be just some bigger juice and a little cracker.

Because our savior is here,

because it is the meal that our savior provides for us,

because it is the meal that our savior invites us to eat with Him,

because we are fed from His very hand,

it is a feast.

This is one of the reasons I personally believe we should eat with Jesus every week as we gather as a church.

Because Jesus invites us to His table.

If Jesus called you and invited you to dinner, would you turn Him down?

Would you reply? Sorry Jesus, we just ate together two weeks ago. I am afraid that if we eat together again it might not be as special.

Try me again in a couple months.

Yet that is often what we do with communion.

And Jesus invites us sinners to eat with Him every week.

And all are invited to partake.

Most people in this world like Levi are hungry and thirsty.

They long for something that can satisfy their souls.

But there is nothing in this world that you can eat.

There is nothing in this world that you can drink.

There is nothing in this world that can satisfy you like what Jesus offers.

If you were here and you were hungry,

I invite you to come eat at Jesus's table.

We're going to celebrate communion after I finish this sermon,

and the feast is going to be open to you,

I hope that you come and you take it in faith.

And as you partake of it as a believer I hope you recognize that every time we observe communion we are feasting with Jesus.
And every time we eat of the Lord's Supper He is feasting with sinners.

[Transition] That is the feasting. We are to feast with sinners because that is what Jesus does with us. But what about fasting? How does this practice fit into the Christian life?

Point number 2: **We fast without Jesus (v. 33-39).**

I'm going to explain what I mean by that.
Because this is basically what Jesus says.
It is the simple idea is there are seasons we are to feast.
And there are seasons we are to fast.

Verse 33, **"And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink."**

The Pharisees have another complaint.
Before they were complaining about the way Jesus's disciples were eating and drinking.
Primarily they were upset about who they were eating and drinking with.
But here they are upset that they are eating and drinking at all.
They don't understand why Jesus and his disciples don't seem to fast.

Fasting is a regular religious practice.
It's a common religious practice.
It is not just something that the Pharisees invented in their legalism.
It is something that even the Disciples of John partake in.

And fasting has a rich Biblical history.
Fasting is the practice of not eating and instead praying.
It is not a weight loss plan it is a spiritual practice.

Daniel fasted in Daniel chapter 9 as he prayed for God's people and he sought God's will.

Jesus himself fasted for 40 days in the wilderness to prepare himself for Ministry and to resist temptation.

In the prophet Joel in chapter 2 verse 12 God commanded the entire nation to fast as a sign of repentance.

In the Book of Jonah the city of Nineveh calls for a Citywide fast in order to turn from their sins.

The prophets Moses and Elijah both fasted for 40 days as well as they sought the Lord.

King Josiah, Nehemiah, and Ezra all called for fasting.

Esther asked that all of the Jews would fast for three days before she went before the king to ask for their lives to be spared.

There's a lot of fasting in the scriptures.

We need to understand this.

The Pharisees are asking Jesus a fair question.

They're saying Jesus we all do this why don't you do this?

And if you notice what does Jesus say in verse 34 and 35?

"And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"

Jesus does not say that fasting is wrong.

Jesus does not say that fasting is a legalistic practice.

Jesus doesn't say that his disciples will never fast and that the Pharisees should stop fasting.

What Jesus says is that it's not time to fast.

Jesus says that now is the time to feast.

Fasting is going to come later.

Take a closer look at what Jesus says.

He uses the image of a wedding party or wedding feast.

He says that when you are at the wedding and the bridegroom is there,

When the wedding party has all arrived, then it is time to eat.

That's always the hardest part of the wedding reception isn't it?
So when the bridal party is off and they're taking their pictures and you're at the reception and you can see the food, you can see the beautiful cake and the dessert, but you can't eat yet because you're waiting for the bride and the groom to come.

Because once they arrive then the party starts.
Now you can celebrate it now you can eat.
How strange it would be if the bride and the groom came and they said no no we're not eating we're fasting today.
They kept the cake instead of giving each other a bite they're pushing in each other's faces they set it aside.

We would all recognize it's strange because weddings are times to celebrate, they are not times to be solemn.
Weddings are not times to fast they are times to feast.

And Jesus throughout scripture calls Himself the bridegroom.
And we the church are called The Bride.
Jesus says the Bridegroom's here.
The Messiah has come.
It is not time to tear her clothes, dump Ash on her heads, or fast begging for salvation to arrive. It is here.
The Salvation that every fast longed for.
The Deliverance that every fast pleaded towards.
It is found here in Jesus the Bridegroom and it's time to feast.

Jesus came as the Messiah.
Jesus is the one that every Jew has longed for.
Jesus is the one that every follower of God has hoped for and prayed for since Adam and Eve.
The 400 years before Jesus were marked by silence with no prophets.
After all of that waiting after all of that long and Jesus finally comes.

Jesus arrives.

In Jesus will only be here for three short years.

His public ministry will not last long.

These men like Levi who are going to follow Jesus as His disciples and even be His apostles,

They will only get to be with Jesus for a very short time.

During that short time with Jesus, it is not time to fast.

It is time to celebrate.

It is time to feast.

Verse 35, **"The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days."**

But in verse 35 Jesus says it's not always going to be time to feast.

The reality is that Jesus is only going to be there that short time.

And the time is going to come when the Bridegroom is taken away.

He'll be taken away on His crucifixion and His death for 3 days.

And He will be taken away when He ascends into the heavens at the right hand of the Father to prepare a place for us.

Those are the days when they are to fast.

Again notice Jesus does not say His disciples will never fast,

Jesus says it's not the right time to fast.

He says they will fast when I leave.

When I send it to the heavens and I am here no more than my disciples will regularly fast as a part of their spiritual practice.

But the time is not now.

Some of us like to misinterpret these verses so that we can excuse our lack of fasting.

But again Jesus says they will fast.

Not that they can fast if they want to.

This means that we as followers of Jesus should regularly fast.

That word regularly is where we have lots of Christian freedom.

It doesn't mean that we have to fast once a month, or once a week, or even just once a year during Lent.

But it does mean that fasting should be a normal part of our rhythm.

Jesus then goes on to teach them with a parable.

And like many of Jesus's parables it is misunderstood and misapplied.

Let's start at verse 36 and the new and the old garment.

Verse 36, **"He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old."**

If you get a hole in your your old favorite pair of well worn jeans.

You don't go buy a brand new pair of jeans that's bright blue and patch that to your old jeans.

Because it won't match and it's going to look obvious.

He then uses the example of wine and wine skins.

Verse 37, **"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins."**

These wineskins is what they would carry their wine in and it was kind of a delicate process.

As Jesus makes it clear if you take your old favorite line skin and put some brand new wine in it it'll break apart.

The old wine skin can't handle it.

And then you're going to be out of wine skin and you're going to be out that wine that you just bought.

So if you're going to put some new wine in a wine skin it needs to be a fresh brand new wine skin.

So what does that mean?

While this talk of the new and the old and how they don't quite fit?

I believe that Jesus is trying to teach us something significant here.

Jesus is not just trying to teach us something about old and new things.
Jesus is not just some Fortune 500 CEO was teaching us how to
implement change in organizations.

Jesus is not just trying to teach us that you have to be careful making
changes.

I believe that Jesus is after something much deeper than that.

The point that Jesus is trying to make is that a brand new eschatological
reality is here.

What I mean by that, is that the Pharisees and the people need to
recognize that Jesus is appearance marks the beginning of a new era.

This is not business as usual.

This is not like the old wine.

This is not like an on garment.

Jesus is not like the prophets they're used to.

Jesus is not a rabbi or a teacher like they are used to.

Jesus is God.

Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus is their salvation wrapped up in flesh and he is finally here.

And because He is here, things might not look exactly how they expect
them to look.

And because Jesus is finally here it's time to feast,
the fasting can come later.

Because Jesus is not trying to make a statement about how the new is
better than the old.

Jesus is not trying to say that the old needs to be thrown away that
everyone was toss out all of their wineskins and their old wine.

Verse 39, "**And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says,
'The old is good.'** "

I don't think this verse is about their lack of faith.

It's not about how people just hold on to their traditions and they hold on to their favorite songs and they just need to get with the times and enjoy new things.

Maybe I'm wrong and that's what the verse means but I don't think so. I think when we try and make this passage seem as if it is just about the old and the new we miss the radical craziness of the bridegroom being here and what that means.

I think when we try to reduce this passage, as some Christians I love and respect do when they make it just about new and old things, We make the same mistake as the Pharisees and we don't understand how crazy it is that Jesus is here.

After all, the fasting is the old.

The not fasting is the new.

And Jesus says his disciples are going to do both at the proper time.

But they don't need to be mixed together.

And because Jesus is here it's time to feast and to party.

And when Jesus leaves it'll be time to fast again.

But we're only fasting because we're waiting for the party.

So how do we apply this to ourselves today.

Was Christians we believe that Jesus isn't here yet.

He came once, and he lived a perfect life and he died on the cross and he was resurrected and then ascended into the Heaven's.

And now we wait.

And now we pray.

And now we long for him to come back.

And one of the things we do as we long for him to come back is we fast.

And we are fasting in preparation for the arrival of the Bridegroom.

We fast as we wait for the wedding Feast that will come when Jesus returns.

Let me say this another way.

Thanksgiving morning how big of a breakfast do you eat?

If you're going to have your Thanksgiving feast at 2:00 do you eat a big lunch or do you fast?

Do you hold off on eating in anticipation of the greatness of the feast that is to come?

This is practically what we do as believers.

There are many good reasons to fast.

We can fast to aid our prayers.

We can fast to show our repentance.

We can fast corporately as a spiritual discipline.

We also fast because we are waiting for the feast that is to come.

And each fast is a spiritual reminder that the greatest feast of Our Lives is coming.

And we should prepare not just our minds and our souls but our very bodies in anticipation of what is to come.

The world fasts these days to lose weight for themselves.

We fast in these days because we wait for the King.

Not simply for health reasons, but for spiritual ones.

So fast and make yourself ready for the feast.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] We should feast with sinners. We should fast without Jesus. Because we are waiting for Him to return.
2. [Challenge] We are about to have a chance to feast with Jesus. I hope you recognize the wondrous blessing that is.