



Enlarging the Circle of Grace – Similo Sanqela – 16.7.2023



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Luke 5:27-32

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God's word to you.

Spend some time in worship.

Observation

Jesus has already been associating with those who were outcast by society. Luke records He has already healed a paralytic, a leper and a man possessed by an evil spirit. Each of these would have attracted the people's attention. Now He turns to a tax collector – another person who was shunned by society.



Malibongwe // We Will Worship

Someone who collected taxes was contracted to the Roman government. Taxes were high. Rome demanded a certain amount on each taxable item, and the tax collectors were free to collect more than that amount to keep for themselves. It was the norm

for tax collectors to charge very high rates and pocket the excess. A Jewish man who was awarded such a contract from Rome was immediately ostracised by society. He would not be able to hold a position as judge in the community, nor could he stand as a witness in court. He was forbidden entry into the synagogue and brought disgrace down on his family.

Jesus looked at Levi, loved him as He loved everyone, and called him to follow Him. The people around Jesus would have been shocked. Levi did not hesitate but left everything to do as Jesus asked. For Levi there was no turning back. Giving up his position as tax collector meant that someone else would be awarded the contract and he could not change his mind about following Jesus. Luke records that Levi left everything even though he would have been a wealthy man.

It meant so much to Levi to be with Jesus that he threw a party that night, inviting all his friends to meet Jesus. His friends would have been others who were also marginalised and outcast from their community. Such people were seen as disreputable sinners. The scribes and Pharisees complained at the company the disciples kept, indirectly including Jesus in the group.

Jesus told them He had come for people such as Levi and his friends. They needed healing and Jesus was the Healer of their souls. In fact the scribes and Pharisees would have been included in this description of those needed healing but they were too self-righteous to recognise the fact.

Icebreaker:

When have you felt as if you don't belong or are not welcome? How did such an attitude from those around you make you feel? How did you deal with it? How do you feel about that situation now?

Application.

- What groups of people does your community consider to be marginalised, outcasts, different? Why do you think this is so?
- If someone from one of these groups walked into this session, how would you react to them, personally and as a group? What would make you respond in this way? What do you think Jesus would say to you about this reaction? (Remember - it may be easy to give the 'right' answer to these questions, but that is not the point of them)
- 'Grace is the only reason' Jesus called Levi. To whom in your own circle do you need to extend grace? How do you feel about doing so? What would make it difficult for you to reach out to these people/this person with grace? How do you think they would respond? What difference would it make to you/to them? What

would those around you say?

- 'One act of kindness, one word, can change a life'. What can you do for or say to those who are on the edge of society in the next few days (and beyond) to draw them in to the circle of Grace? What obstacles stand in your way as you consider this action/conversation?
- Are you the light that shines in the dark places of exclusion in the Name of Jesus? How can you spread the light of His Good News in groups of people that would not find it easy to enter a church?
- How did Brian's story affect you? Listen to the sermon again in your own time if you have to remind yourself of his story and notice your emotions as he speaks. How would you react to someone like Brian who has undergone similar situations in their life in the light of the discussion you have had in this session.
- What does the term 'real people' mean to you? How does it affect you as a Christ-follower?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

Prayer

Pray for those who are marginalised and ostracised by society and for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and in regard to other needs of the group.

Service

Make an effort this week to extend the invitation of Grace to those around you to enlarge your own circle. Report back to the group next week what happened.

Bibliography

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/luke-5/>