

GLORY OF JESUS' MINISTRY: TO CHANGE LIVES

Luke 5:27-32

K.V.: 5:27-28

"After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth.

"Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him."

Good evening! Are you experiencing God's Glory in this conference?

And this is just the beginning!

There is still so much more glory to see and experience!

We just learned the glory of Jesus to forgive sins.

He forgave the sins of the paralyzed man and made him walk.

Through this message, we will learn how Jesus completely changed the life of Levi by forgiving his sins and calling him as His disciple.

Nobody would ever think that Levi could be forgiven or changed to become one of Jesus' 12 disciples.

But through this message, we will learn how Jesus completely changed his life.

If Jesus changed the life of Levi, He surely could change ours.

May we all experience the life-changing glory of Jesus, and be changed entirely to become Jesus' disciples. Amen.

After healing the paralyzed man, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector, Levi, sitting at his tax booth.

Tax collectors were regarded as public sinners by the Jews, just like prostitutes.

They were treated as national traitors because they were working for the oppressive Roman Empire.

So, why did Levi become a tax collector?

We don't know the exact reasons, but a tax collector was a job with a high income.

Perhaps Levi was poor and pursued money over God.

Levi studied hard and passed the Roman Empire's CPA exam.

He worked more than 12 hours daily, earned a lot of money, bought a mansion with a pool, drove a Tesla Roadster, and married a gorgeous girl.

He achieved the American dream!

But was he happy?

No! His people rejected and condemned him.

He suffered from loneliness and meaninglessness.

He lost his life direction.

He was sitting at his tax booth and spacing out.

How about you?

Can you be happy if you achieve your worldly dreams?

I don't believe so.

We need to meet Jesus and see His glory to find the true meaning of our life.

At that moment, the most amazing thing happened to Levi.

Jesus saw him sitting at his tax booth with the eyes of compassion and hope.

Jesus saw his loneliness, sadness, wounds, and confusion.

Jesus knew that Levi needed a new life direction.

So, Jesus said to him, "Follow me."

"Follow me" was not an invitation for Levi to follow Jesus on Twitter, Instagram, or Tik Tok.

Instead, Jesus was inviting Levi to be His disciple, to learn from Him, and grow to become like Him.

Jesus was challenging him to set a new life direction.

Life direction is fundamental to all of us.

If we pursue pleasure and our own dreams, we will become increasingly selfish and useless.

On the other hand, if we follow Jesus, He will forgive all our sins and bear all our weaknesses until we grow to be useful men and women of God.

"Follow me" is a great invitation, full of grace, hope, and love.

Anyone who follows Jesus can become a new creation.

When we follow Jesus, our future will be meaningful, fruitful, and hopeful.

Levi saw the glory of Christ when he heard, "Follow me."

He began to see a light of new hope in the darkness.

He could find the true meaning of life and real purpose in Jesus' calling.

So, he immediately got up, left everything behind, and followed Jesus.

Then, heavenly joy and peace filled his heart.

Later he became St. Matthew, who wrote Matthew's Gospel.

Can you believe it?

This is the life-changing glory of Jesus!

Levi could not keep his joy to himself but wanted to share it with others.

So, he held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, inviting a large crowd of tax collectors and others.

He cooked barbeque and brought his selected wines.

For the first time, his large house was full of people.

Levi spent a lot of money, but he had no sense of loss because his life had been changed by seeing the glory of Christ.

People were amazed at the change in Levi's life and wanted to meet Jesus.

When they met Jesus at the banquet, they shared their life stories, confessed their sins with tears, and received the grace of forgiveness.

They laughed and talked freely and enjoyed delicious food.

It was like the feast in the heavenly kingdom.

But the Pharisees, who were legalistic religious leaders, complained saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (31,32).

Jesus did not come to spend time with the Self-Righteous Club like the Pharisees.

He came to heal all the sin-sick people by calling them to repentance.

Repentance is the change of direction from self to God.

Jesus doesn't see us like a judge to condemn us but as a doctor to heal us.

There are so many sick people like Levi.

Outwardly they seem to be okay, but inwardly their souls are dying of loneliness, sorrow, despair, and fatalism.

No one can fully understand them and heal them.

Only Jesus can.

Now, Jesus is inviting you: "Follow me."

Please come to Jesus as you are without shame or hesitation.

Then, the life-changing glory of Jesus will come to you to save you and heal you by forgiving all of your sins.

I was a hopeless and sinful person like Levi.

I was born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1983 as the first of two boys.

When I was three years old, my father suddenly abandoned my family.

I thought he left me because he didn't love me.

My mom was always too busy and disciplined me severely, so I felt she didn't give me the love I needed.

So, I started to look for love in girls.

In middle and high school, I had many girlfriends, but my relationships did not last.

I became a rebellious young man.

I began to listen to rock music all day, drinking alcohol, and watching pornography.

I even became an atheist and wanted to join a satanic cult.

I was angry and tormented with no peace.

When I was 17 years old, I argued with Christians, trying to prove there was no God.

But one of them was very peaceful, and I wanted the peace he had.

I attended his church to find the peace of God.

However, I could not leave my sinful lifestyle and left the church.

In 2004, when I was sitting in my sinful lifestyle, I was invited to Caracas UBF and started 1:1 Bible study with Missionary John Seo.

Through Bible study, I heard Jesus calling me: "Follow me," and learned that God still had grace for me and could forgive my sins.

A few months later, I attended my first Summer Bible Conference, and the cross of Jesus showed me how much he loved me and what a terrible death he suffered for me.

Jesus didn't condemn me but forgave all my sins.

By his wounds, Jesus healed my wounded heart.

I met God as my Heavenly Father, who was always with me, even when my earthly father was gone.

I realized that I didn't need anyone else's love but His.

Then I understood that my underlying problem was not forgiving my father for abandoning me as a child.

So, returning from the conference, I gave a big hug to my dad for the first time ever and forgave him from my heart.

Since then, I have been following Jesus.

My sinful life is being changed into a meaningful and fruit-bearing God-centered life.

God gave me a beautiful family with my wife and my two daughters.

In 2011, God sent my family to Panama as missionaries, and we have been serving Panamanian young people since then.

As Levi did, we have opened the doors of our apartment to the Panamanians, sharing with them the word of God and all the blessings God has given us.

We have shared barbecues, pizza, and birthday cakes and had a great time together in God's grace and love, learning Jesus.

Currently, we are serving about 12 people in Panama.

We pray for them to obey the calling of Jesus and become His disciples like Levi did.

I used to be a sinful and love-seeking atheist; now, I'm a love-giving missionary for the Panamanians and others throughout Latin America by the grace of Jesus.

If you hear the invitation of Jesus tonight: "Follow me," please come to Jesus with repentance, and the life-changing glory of Jesus will transform your life. Amen.