

# Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany

## January 28, 2025

### Home Study: Luke 5:33-39

#### INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been at a celebration and experienced people who wanted to “rain on the parade”? Maybe you were at a wedding or at a celebration, and someone behaved so inappropriately they made a spectacle of themselves. Perhaps you were at a party and people started bickering, ruining the experience for everyone around them. Or maybe you know someone who likes to stand out by showing off how much they know, making sure everyone around them how right they are and how wrong everyone else is in comparison. Most people do not appreciate it when people around them act like “know-it-alls” and criticize everyone around them.

Hospitality was a major part of the culture in Jesus' time. Throughout the Scriptures, we see that there were expected standards of behavior and customs that went along with hospitality. At the beginning of today's reading, the superior-acting Pharisees attempt to show the inferiority of Jesus and his disciples. Jesus' response highlights this cultural practice while illustrating his point about celebrating the gifts of a neighbor's hospitality, and, through this, the importance of celebrating the gifts from God.

#### TODAY'S READING

In today's reading, Jesus makes it clear how we are expected to receive gifts, especially gifts from God. For this reading, it is helpful to understand what events have come directly before a section. Luke 5:27-32 has set the stage for today's reading when Jesus called Matthew, then known as Levi, to service as an apostle. In response to his calling, Levi made Jesus a great feast in his home, and invited his fellow tax collectors, as well as others to join in the feast. A group of Pharisees were part of the others attending and Luke records they criticized and questioned Jesus. Today's reading is following the Pharisees original questioning of Jesus and his disciples, and they pose pointed questions to him about fasting.

Open up your Bible and read Luke 5:33-39. Focus on what Jesus is communicating in his response to the Pharisee's questions and criticisms.

*How does Jesus' initial response to the Pharisees communicate what our response should be to God's gifts?*

*Read Ecclesiastes 3:1. What time and season is it for the disciples when Jesus is there in the bridegroom's [his] presence? Of what time and season is Jesus prophesying when he speaks of the bridegroom's [his] departure? Why would fasting be appropriate once Jesus departed?*

In Scripture, the Pharisees consistently make the mistake of focusing on the letter of the law as righteousness instead of focusing on righteousness through faith. In this case, they were focusing on the work of fasting. Throughout the Scriptures, fasting was used

for spiritual training, a sign of repentance and while in mourning (e.g, Jonah 3, 2 Samuel 12:9-20, Isaiah 58:3-7).

*Is physical fasting of any value? Will physical fasting lead to eternal salvation?*

*How do we respond to the gift of faith in Jesus from God in our lives? How should we respond to the gift of faith in Jesus from God in our lives? How do we grow our faith through spiritual training?*

Ecclesiastes 3 is a good Scripture to help put in context the parable Jesus tells today's reading from Luke 5:36-38. Using the examples of the old and new garment, and the old and new wine, he is echoing the wisdom of the time and season for everything, and the difference between opposites found in Ecclesiastes 3.

*Why does he use what would have been common sense examples at the time to illustrate the point that his disciples are eating, drinking and making merry while he is with them? How are the Pharisees confusing Law and Gospel by challenging Jesus about fasting?*

Remember that people at that time did not have the technology for containing and fermenting wine like we have today. New wine, if young enough, may still have enough yeast content to still be active and fermenting. The alcohol fermentation process creates gas, and if new wine is put in an old wineskin -- which is old, dried out and inflexible -- the gases of fermentation created from active yeast in new wine would cause the old wineskin to burst open, and spill the wine everywhere.

God sets the times and seasons for everything, including the right time to send his Son Jesus as a gift for our salvation.

*How do you celebrate God's gift of salvation every day? Do you receive it in faith and thanksgiving? When have you "ruined the party" so to speak, with your sin? Have you inappropriately criticized a neighbor like the Pharisees at the party in this Scripture? How has the Gospel and the Holy Spirit led you to works of righteousness through faith?*

#### PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for coming to us and dying for us to restore us with God the Father. We thank and praise you for the gift of eternal life that God has given us through you. Please help us to receive all your gifts with gratitude and thanksgiving, and send us your Holy Spirit to lead us to share the Gospel with our neighbors in faith and love, that we may grow your kingdom here on earth. May God's will ever be done in our lives. In your holy name we pray. Amen.