

Sermon

Good morning, my name is Jeremy and I'm one of the pastors here at City Church.

Before we get started, let's have a moment of silence...pray. Amen

I'm pretty sure nearly everyone in this room has tried to keep something safe., right?

I would imagine most of you likely wear your seatbelts bc you value your life. You likely drive on the right side of the road and within the speed limit. Now we have a state trooper in here so be careful what you say?

When you go for a bike ride you might put on a helmet. Or to keep your bank password safe, you change it everytime you have to log in bc well you forget it and then you have to reset it... it has to be 42 characters long with 2 numbers, 3.5 special symbols and a touch of your mother's breathe. I understand why we have to do that but where is this bank password fun gonna be in the next 10 years?

I think back 20 years ago when I first got an online banking account in college and I'm pretty sure my first password was the name of my college and the current year. It definitely wouldn't have taken a genius to break that code but I'm also pretty sure who ever would have cracked the code would have sprinted away with \$3.75.

BUt do you ever catch yourself with keeping something safe and then making another rule to keep that thing safe and you keep stacking safeties on top of one another to keep the first thing safe.

Here's one...now I'm confessing to you so don't be harsh on me. There is one thing that I keep in my my house that I highly prize. Daily I revel in taking it in. There's the Lord Jesus Christ, my family, and then the next is a cold seltzer after the kids go to bed. Now the people in my community group wherever they are in the room are nodding bc they know my deal with my seltzers. When someone comes over I always ask if they want one but my heart does not at all want to release one my little pride and joys. I confessed this to my community group last year and you know what they did, they laughed at me...can you believe that?...and then they started bringing seltzers to group. Who's laughing now?

Look it's an issue. If I know a bunch of people are coming over, I've been known to pull them out my choice flavors (espeically the Topo Chicos) out of the fridge and put them on top leaving them to get warm bc...do you know why...no one wants a warm seltzer. In order to protect my seltzers but give the appearance of generosity, I ask if anyone wants one but limited are the ones that are cold. So, in all my sinfulness, I created layers to protect the things that bring me a little joy. And I end up sitting in my chair at about 8pm gripping my precious seltzer with the look of Smeagol.

I recognized that in the intricate steps I had set up to protect what was precious to me, I was missing out on a whole lot of joy. The joy of seeing someone someone take that first cold swig of the perfectly peppered seltzer fiz.

I admit, this is kind of silly, but even this silly thing can give you insight in to where you've not let Jesus have his way with you.

And that mostly the issue with sin. We set up elaborate protections to keep Jesus and others from what we deem as most important. We can begin to think that if we don't protect me and my way to perceived joy, then well...we won't get it. Joy will flitter through our finger tips. It's so close but we never seem to really grasp it.

So we set up all these elaborate schemes to protect ourselves from what we fear we might lose and we go about getting what we think we need in all the wrong ways.

We trek our kid to 5 baseball practices a week not bc they like the game but bc they feel like they have to do it to make us proud. You fear disconnection from your kid while remaining emotionally disconnected as they earn your love through their performance. Not to mention how you speak negatively about other players, coaches, and the officials. You build up by tearing down and your kid is watching and listening

Or In order to get that deal done at work, you give the appearance of care by inviting the decision maker to coffee and give the appearance of vulnerability and friendship while really you're not making a friend...you're making a deal.

Or maybe you text someone bc you're lonely and want to hang out but instead of just asking if they'd like to hang out, you just say...Hey! And that's all. And if they don't respond, no one cares for you. But if they do...instead of simply asking "would you like to hang out"...you ask "what are you doing?" Hoping they'll read between the lines and when they don't you regret ever saying anything to anyone. All people are terrible and you have no friends.

And after all the elaborate ways you protect you and your way you come to church where you're supposed to be encouraged and uplifted

And then the church does that stupid thing where they're emphasizing that initiative that clearly wasn't well-thought out. The pastor says that stupid thing and gives an utterly dismal sermon and the band...can they even play an instrument and what is that person wearing up there as they lead us into worship? And why are they even up there leading in the first place? I know what they did with that person 3 years ago. I know their friends.

And when your kid seems distant or you get the payout from the deal or you end up sitting at home alone on a Friday night...even after Sunday, in this room, Do you ever feel that joy just evades? You go home after church. You eat lunch with a thousand mile stare and cynicism grips you. What is even the point? It all feels absolutely worthless.

Have I introduced myself? Hi, I'm Jeremy. I'm one of the pastors here. And I'm a recovering cynic

Now let me introduce you to someone who is changing me and can change your life....if you won't protect yourself from him.

This morning we're gonna be in Luke 5. So if you have your Bibles you can turn over to Luke 5. If you don't...

Luke 5. Let's start with vs 31.

31 Jesus replied to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. **32** I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

33 Then they said to him, "John's disciples fast often and say prayers, and those of the Pharisees do the same, but yours eat and drink."

34 Jesus said to them, "You can't make the wedding guests fast while the groom is with them, can you? **35** But the time^[h] will come when the groom will be taken away from them—then they will fast in those days."

36 He also told them a parable: "No one tears a patch from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. Otherwise, not only will he tear the new, but also the piece from the new garment will not match the old. **37** And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, it will spill, and the skins will be ruined. **38** No, new wine is put into fresh wineskins. **39** And no one, after drinking old wine, wants new, because he says, 'The old is better.'"

This is God's word from the gospel of Luke.

In your Bible you'll see that all of this is taking place at Levi's house. Jesus had just done the scandalous thing of inviting the worst of the worst, a tax collector, to follow him. And Levi takes him up on this offer. He follows him. and then Levi invites Jesus over to his house for a big party.

So at this party Levi invites what are likely his only friends...other tax collectors. We talked about this last week with Zacheus. Levi would have likely been considered a traitor since he was working for the Romans collecting taxes from his own people... the Jews. So it's likely that his only friends were his bamboozling co-workers who were stealing their own people's hard earned money.

And the Pharisees and religious leaders were there, too. And they asked Jesus, Now why do you eat with people like this? Why do you associate with tax collectors and sinners? At this point the religious leaders are still trying to figure out who Jesus is. They likely witnessed his teaching in chapter 4 but they're not mentioned in that story but they were likely there bc it happened in the synagogue. That's when Jesus read a scroll about the Messiah, the long-awaited person who would bring freedom to the Jewish people...He read that scroll and basically said...I'm the

one you've been waiting for...Oh and this salvation won't just be for our people, the Jews, it's gonna be for the whole world...even the people you think are the worst. And they got angry.

So Luke introduces the Pharisees and religious leaders as a group of theology protectors. They're protecting the way making sure the people don't get misled. And They're policing the religious rules making sure people don't accidentally go off track. They're trying to maintain status quo. They're protecting the way.

And here they are at Levi's party where he's introducing his friends to Jesus. And they ask Jesus, "Why are you eating with these kind of people?" These are some really dangerous sinners, Jesus. One minute you're eating and then the next minute, Jesus, you're on a highway to hell. Now, while there is a lot of truth in the adage of "show me your friends and I'll show you your future" The religious leaders were less interested in Jesus's soul and more interested in protecting themselves.

You see in an attempt to be the guardians of the faith and help people follow God, they became the benefactors of a system that they got to enforce. Their whole livelihood depended on the obedience of the people they were shepherding. There was some money involved but it mostly about respect and prestige and Jesus calls them out for this. He calls them on trying to get the courts-side seats to the parties bc that's where the who's who would be sitting offering smiles to camera and thumbs up of approval.

And trying to protect that whole elaborate system that they had developed over centuries was hard work. With their words they were looking out for God and other's interests. They were doling out seltzers but in their hearts, they were manipulating trying to protect their own way of life.

And the DEEP rumble of joy that followed Jesus. That was just a threat to their existence.

This is the first thing I want you to see...

1. Dead faith protects the status quo...

So, at this party, they ask Jesus why are you hanging out with those kind of people? Jesus we don't need to dilute the good things we have going for us. If we allow those bad people in here to interact with the good people in here...Oh Jesus, that's gonna make a mess. It'll make everybody a little bit worse and then the whole thing'll get ruined.

Vs 31 and 32 (with pt 1 at the top) **31** Jesus replied to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. **32** I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Jesus recognizes that the mall is monotonous but the ER is a mess. Healthy people strolling about at the mall, well that doesn't create any issues at all, does it? Now if it's tax-free weekend in middle TN in an age of inflation...now that's a different story. But the ER ...now that's where urgency is required. Life and death are in the balance. and that's where Jesus is aimed. but the

religious leaders...they're just protecting the status quo. Keeping the sidewalks clean, the trashcans empty, and make sure there's plenty of parking. They have a religious economy to uphold. You don't need gauze! We have plenty of white t's 40% off. Trust us. We're trying to help you. Let us help you.

Vss 31- 34 (vss 31-32 with a space between 33-34; pt 1 still at top)

31 Jesus replied to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. **32** I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

33 Then they said to him, "John's disciples fast often and say prayers, and those of the Pharisees do the same, but yours eat and drink."

So the RLs are asking Jesus, now why do you hang out with those who drink, smoke and chew? And he replies, well. I'm here for the sinners who know something is wrong with them. I'm here for the people who if they don't get help immediately, they're gonna bleed out. I'm not here for the guy whose riddled with tumors but he's convinced he's ok bc he can throw the ball right over them there mountains. I can only help those who can't help themselves.

And then the Pharisees ask Jesus about fasting (vs 33). John's disciples fast and pray and ours do the same but yours, they have a good time.

This is not how they follow God. Here's what's going on.

You see in vs 31 where Jesus says he's calling sinner to repentance? You see that? That triggers something in their mind. It's kind of like if You called me a "Pickup man" within 1.5 seconds I would start singing "Well, I got my first truck, when I was three, Drove a hundred thousand miles on my knees, Hauled marbles and rocks, and thought twice before, I hauled a Barbie Doll bed for the girl next door" That's a 90s country song by Joe Diffie. And now I feel really old. I realize for some of you That's my parent's version of oldies when I was a teenager. Mercy. Anyway...

Do you have things like that?

When the RLs heard Jesus talk about repentance, they were very familiar with this. They studied it and actually had a system for it that was started from the book of Leviticus. Leviticus 16 provides the initial guidance for God's people for this. In Leviticus 16 Moses provides the specific religious rites for what was Called the Day of Atonement. This was a yearly event in which the chief priest would enter into the most sacred part of the temple, the place where God's presence was, and there the priest would present an atoning sacrifice..which was a sacrifice that would satisfy God's anger and displeasure for their sin. As you can imagine this was a solemn occasion. Leviticus actually uses the word solemn.

Lev 16:31 31 It is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you must practice self-denial; it is a permanent statute.

You see there where it says "Practice self-denial" That phrase in Hebrew is hard to translate. It basically translates, "You will afflict your souls" and for the Hebrew people, for the Jews it was understood as a call to fasting and repentance. Repentance was serious business to the Jews and it had nothing to do with a party, it was quite the opposite.

So when Jesus eats and drinks and attends a party with sinners and then he says he has come to call sinners to repentance. The RLs heard their version of pickup man and they're thoroughly confused bc that's not how they've been protecting the faith.

They had set up this system to make sure people were religiously in line. Recall that the Day of Atonement was to happen 1 time a year. And it consisted of fasting. Do you know how many times at minimum the RLs taught you needed to fast? 2 times...per week.

If you wanted assurance that your soul wouldn't be afflicted, they had a system for that...the problem was it wasn't bringing life. It maintained the status quo and it actually was marching people straight into joyless lives.

Where are you just maintaining the status quo?

Week in and week out, you simply attend church but yet you fail to attend to your soul. You come in here and you hear something that sparks belief and a little bit of joy and then you walk out and you give yourself over to cynicism.

Or perhaps, you hear something here that to other people around you, probably the people less mature than you,... they hear something about Jesus having control of their life and you see belief take root in them and they grow.

You hear the same thing, and don't understand what the big deal is...They must really need that. and yet you wither away. Instead of taking a look inward and asking what's the true thing God wants me to hear, you look at the message and you despise the messenger in anger.

Listen to me...Unless an actual injustice is done towards you, Let me warn you....Your anger is a compass to identifying the false things you've staked your life on. The things you've set up around you that you're trying to protect. Because unless it's an actual injustice, we will always hate truth if our hearts are not open and ready to hear it.

Anger is only a gift if you explore it hand in hand with God's spirit and a close friend. Anger is the worst motivator. Perhaps some of you use anger to motivate yourself, your kids, your employees, or anyone who steps into your radius. Do you know what you're trying to do? You're attempting to control the situation through emotional manipulation. You feel out of control and expressing anger is a way to gain control over the situation once again. The hangover of an angry outburst is filled with shame.

The status quo loves to be maintained by anger. Do you know why? Comfort. What happens when your comfort is taken away. It what happened to me when my seltzers were taken. A little bit of anger and whole lot of protection planning. Any place it notorious for this but it's kind

norotis in churches. We've heard the stories about a church that fell apart simply bc a new pastor decides to get rid of the pulpit that somebody's great granddad hand made.

I've seen stuff like this more than I care to admit. I've also been angry over stuff like this more than I care to admit.

But what if instead, when you feel like something unjust has happened to you and you feel angry, you feel that moment building, you step away and you ask, "God will you show me why I'm angry?" What am I protecting?" What needs to change about me? Not what needs to change about him or her...what needs to change about me? Tori and I over the last year have mentoring several couples and this is one of the most important phrases for any marriage and any relationship for that matter. "I can't change anyone else but myself. What do I need to do to change? God help me do it."

Do you know what begins to spring up from that sort of humility? Overflowing joy

You see:

2. **Dead faith protects the status quo...BUT Joy-filled faith overflows.**

As Jesus is walking around healing people, attending parties, eating with kingpins of sinners, he unleashes joy. And the RLs have a really hard time understanding this. They haven't experienced this sort of thing before. Luke says in chapter 4 that people were amazed at the things Jesus was saying and then when Jesus heals the man who is lowered down through the roof the people are filled with amazement.

The RLs are trying to get Jesus back in line with the questioning about fasting. You're not doing it the right way Jesus. If you don't get back into line, we going to lose control of these people...and you know what happens when they can't control Jesus...that lack of control will lead to anger and anger to murder...but for now they hide behind the scripture. This is not the biblical way they say...

Jesus says in vs 34-35 (with pt 2 at the top) **34 Jesus said to them, "You can't make the wedding guests fast while the groom is with them, can you? 35 But the time will come when the groom will be taken away from them—then they will fast in those days."**

It's not enough that he's eating one day with sinners at Levi's house. He says oh you haven't seen yet the kind of joy I'm bringing. We're gonna party like it's a wedding. This is not the time to afflict your souls, I'm bringing healing to souls. And I'm the groom that 's gonna get the party started. I'm coming for my bride.

Jesus didn't have in mind a Saturday afternoon wedding at your favorite barn wedding venue. These were week long ordeals. There was lots to eat and lots to drink. It was like a week-long family reunion but just imagine it without the disfunction.

Jesus is saying, I've come to upend the old the ways of relating to God. You've done that for a long time through joyless religious pursuits. Now I'm coming to change some things.

You see. Dead faith doesn't depend on the kind of worship music you sing or hear, or whether or not you pray in the sign of the cross or even do hail Mary's. Dead faith relies on the actual ritual to bring life. Dead faith places it's hope in the power of the ritual. If I do this exact thing, God will be happy with me.

Joy-filled faith doesn't necessarily remove the ritual, which is what Jesus doesn't do. He doesn't say stop fasting. He simply says. I'm the one you've longed for. There will be a time for fasting but for now...the ritual is intended to focus your attention on me...but look I'm right here in front of you.

Joy-filled faith simply fixes the location of the faith. The ritual itself is simply a way to move your heart back towards God. That's why the OT law was given. Paul writes in the book of Galatians that it was given as a babysitter to make sure they were kept on the way to following God. It was there to make sure they didn't accidentally set the house on fire. But the babysitter will never be mom or dad. And Jesus steps in and says...Hey...these rituals you have are not the way...I'm the way.

It's like the subtle difference in why you eat food. We're told the healthy way to eat food is to only eat when we feel hungry, right? But some of us tend toward the see-food diet. We see food so we have to eat it. We end up in unhealth bc we don't get the nutrients we need.

Jesus is saying, fasting and all of the RLs rituals...these and the OT were given as a way to understand that you're hungry. They're not bad in and of themselves. BUT what you need is not more rituals to understand your hunger, what you need is food.

SOME of us though, bc we don't inspect our souls... even in the midst of all the affliction our souls feel, we try to satisfy our spiritual hunger with more activity. More stuff. More success. More money, more trips and experiences. Better sex. More entertainment.

And Jesus is over in the corner asking...what about me?

What you're longing for is joy-filled faith that overflows. You're looking for something to flow into you that will fill you and you know this...this is how you live your life without Jesus...if I have this thing then I will be happy...then I'll overflow with kindness towards the people around me. If I can get this many X...this many sales, this much money, this kind of sex, this kind of vacation, this kind of obedience from my child, this kind of relationship with my child,...If I can get X...then I'll rest.

This is your religious ritual...but listen...it's dead. It won't ever people able to satisfy the affliction of your soul. It just won't. And how do you know? How do you know what the things are that you've built your life on?...What do you get angry at? Or who? Who can't you stand?

If you'll let Jesus into that...he can make you overflow. Anger consumes, but joy overflows.

Why does joy overflow? Joy as you've heard us define it here...it's "glad to be togetherness". It's relational. It's arms wide open. It's "I'm so glad you're mineness". You ever been around someone like that?

John 15:11 11 "I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. What things is Jesus talking about here? Abiding with him. Making your home with Jesus. He says...come abide, remain, stay a while, in my love.

When you know someone is happy with you...how do you feel?

When your spouse looks at you that way...or your boss says that really nice thing about you....or your adult child comes to you and says...you were right...You feel happy.

And in all the ways you fight to get that sort of happiness. Jesus says "that won't satisfy. I can keep on giving you that. That's my objective...I want my joy to be in you. And once you know and keep reminding yourself that God is happy with you...you'll overflow. But you will never overflow until you know that and not only know that...until that's the constant thing you remind yourself of.

Only Jesus can satisfy the affliction of my soul. Everything else will only bring you more affliction.

But for those who want to overflow, Jesus is ready for us to experience something new and different.

Lastly, **3. "Jesus is always different than you imagine. He'll grow you and it'll always be messy"**

If you've read the Bible, have you ever noticed that Jesus regularly goes against all PR standards? He regularly communicates things about himself and what it's like to follow to follow him in less than idealistic ways. Things like...Lose your life and you'll find it. Eat my flesh. The first will be last. If you want to follow me, get your cross and let's go.

And he regularly does this with insiders...the people who think they know all the things about God. and he does that again here with another parable.

Vss 36-39 (with pt 3 at the top) **36 He also told them a parable: "No one tears a patch from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. Otherwise, not only will he tear the new, but also the piece from the new garment will not match the old. 37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, it will spill, and the skins will be ruined. 38 No, new wine is put into fresh wineskins. 39 And no one, after drinking old wine, wants new, because he says, 'The old is better.'"**