

(Luke) 19 - Levi's Banquet & Grain Fields

by Ed Miller

The Christian life is a wedding and not a funeral, and it is a relationship with the bridegroom lover of our souls.

Duration: 47:54

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 4:14-19, Luke 5:27 - 6:5, Luke 9:51-56, Luke 15:1-7, Luke 19:1-10

Topics: "Christian Living", "Redemption Story"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that the Christian life is not meant to be gloomy or restrictive, but rather a joyful and celebratory relationship with Jesus. He uses two common experiences, sitting down to eat and going for a walk, to illustrate spiritual truths. The first scene depicts Jesus and his disciples walking through a grainfield, where the disciples become hungry. This highlights the idea that the Christian life is not about fasting and deprivation, but about enjoying the presence of the groom, Jesus. The second scene focuses on Jesus performing miracles and teaching, emphasizing that his actions and words have a deeper spiritual meaning and tell the story of redemption.

Transcript

Join me again. I say these things and I know you don't need to know them. You already know them, but we need to be reminded so often.

When we bow our heads, we don't come into the presence of the Lord. We're already in the presence of the Lord. And bowing our heads just acknowledges His wonderful presence.

So let's just acknowledge Him and then commit our time unto the Lord. Our Father, thank you again that we are so privileged to come to this place for these moments and just focus again upon our Lord Jesus. We pray that we might be completely detached this morning from all of the affairs of life and the legitimate concerns that we have.

And that you might give us an attention to your heart and to your spirit. We wait upon thee and we thank you in advance that you're going to meet with us this morning. You know our hearts and our needs and our hungers and our capacities.

Meet us where we are and take us where you desire to have us. We ask in the precious name of our Lord Jesus. Okay, I'll ask you to turn please to Luke chapter 5, if you would.

Let me just give a little bit of a review. Luke, as you know, presents our Lord Jesus as the Son of all mankind. He's the friend of sinners.

He's the lover of the downcast and the oppressed. He's not just for the Jews. Luke brings this out.

But He's for the Gentiles as well. He's for all people. In our discussion we've come to the second great division in the book.

Chapter 4 verse 14 all the way to chapter 19 and verse 28. It's a big section. And we just call it the ministry of the Son of all mankind.

And you might just add the Galilean ministry of the Son of all mankind. In this section Luke actually divides it up into two different ways. In chapter 4 verse 14 through chapter 9 and verse 50.

We have what we call the work section. We call Jesus the friend of all mankind. And in a special way Luke emphasizes what Jesus does.

Jesus does something. Jesus says something. This is the section in which He does something.

And so many of the miracles of the Lord are recorded in this section. And then beginning at chapter 9 verse 51 through 19, 28. We have the teaching section.

And this is where there are many parables. Now that's not to say that there's no overlapping. In fact this morning we'll be looking at what He does.

But in a sense it's a teaching section. And there's even a little parable in what we'll look at this morning. For the past few weeks we've been looking at some of the redemptive miracles of our Lord Jesus.

Now why do we say redemptive miracles? We call them redemptive miracles because they tell the story of redemption. In other words they're not just physical miracles. They're physical miracles with a spiritual story.

It's almost like a parable. It's a parable of action. Behind the physical miracles are spiritual realities.

Jesus called Himself in chapter 5 verse 31, the physician of the soul. He said the sick need a physician. I did not come to call the righteous but the sinners to repent.

In other words He's saying I'm the doctor of the sinful. And I'm doing physical miracles so that you can see the counterpart what I desire to do for you spiritually. I want you to walk in spiritual health and I'll illustrate it physically.

So when He healed the blind He not only had mercy on a physically blind person but He taught the lesson and He taught it to the Pharisees as well. They said are we blind too? I'm talking about a spiritual blindness. He heals the blind to show that He wants to give sight to the heart.

He heals the deaf because there are those who have ears but don't hear. Spiritual ears. He cleanses the leper to show the power of His forgiveness over the corruption and defilement of sin.

He heals the woman all humped over so that we might learn how to walk before God. He heals the paralytic so that we might know where our power is. In other words every physical miracle had a spiritual counterpart.

And it's deliberate and He does it on purpose. So far we've looked at four miracles. I won't get back into the spiritual side.

But in chapter 4, 38 and 39 He healed Peter's mother-in-law of a high fever. In chapter 5, 1 to 11 we saw the miraculous catch of fish. In chapter 5, 12 to 14 the cleansing of the man who was full of leprosy.

And last time we looked together at chapter 5, 17 through 26 the healing of the paralytic. Remember the four friends let the stretcher down through the roof in the presence of our Lord Jesus. I told you although this section deals primarily with miracles it's not exclusively so.

Sometimes when Jesus taught, He taught in a way that you can think of a teacher. He stood behind the pulpit. He was at the front of the classroom.

He taught. He lectured. The Sermon on the Mount and so on.

He lectured. But sometimes His teaching came out of everyday experiences. In other words something went on and He just used that occasion to bring out some spiritual truth.

This morning I'd like to look at two events with you. Everyday happenings that took place in the life of the Lord Jesus that became the occasion of a wonderful life principle. Now let me set them before your heart and then we'll develop them one by one.

The first is chapter 5, 27 to 39. Jesus is sitting at the banquet that Matthew threw in His honor. We'll just look at Jesus sitting down with His friends eating.

That's an everyday experience. We sit down and we eat. Jesus used that opportunity to teach a wonderful truth.

And then the second is in chapter 6, verses 1 to 5. The disciples were walking with the Lord Jesus in the grain field on the Sabbath day. Now what could be more common than those two experiences? Eating and going for a walk. And that's exactly the experiences Jesus took and said, I can use this in order to teach some great spiritual truth.

And so those two illustrations, sitting down to eat and then to go for a walk, became the illustration, the occasion of these wonderful spiritual truths. Both of these occasions raised in the minds, the hearts of the Pharisees profound religious questions. And Jesus used these incidents to answer those questions.

I'll ask you to turn please to chapter 5. And we'll look from verse 27. This wonderful party. And after that He went out and noticed a tax gatherer named Levi.

Sitting in the tax office. And He said to him, follow Me. And he left everything behind and rose and began to follow Him.

And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house. And there was a great crowd of tax gatherers and other people who were reclining at the table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, why do you eat and drink with tax gatherers and sinners? And Jesus answered and said to them, it's not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.

I've not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance. We're in Luke chapter 5 and verse 27 to 32. Now in our introduction to miracles, I pointed out this wonderful party that Jesus is attending here is in

the miracle section.

Now in Matthew's gospel, it's right in the middle of the miracle. Matthew is a little more logical than Luke. And He arranges His material logically.

And so He has a miracle section. In chapters 8 and 9, Matthew gives ten miracles. And right in the middle of the ten miracles, He tells about Matthew's conversion.

His own conversion. Now if you were the author and you were writing things logically, why would you put your own conversion right in the middle of all the miracles? And the answer is because that's the greatest miracle of all. And He put His conversion right in the middle of the miracles.

Luke does the same thing. Only Luke emphasizes something Matthew didn't emphasize. Matthew just said, Jesus came and called me.

Luke says Matthew threw a wonderful party for the Lord Jesus. See Matthew was too humble to tell you about that. So God let Luke tell you about that wonderful party.

Luke tells us that Matthew was a tax gatherer. And that he was actually converted at the office of the tax gatherer. King James calls them publicans.

I was talking to a brother one time. He actually said this. He said, I know publicans are mentioned in the Bible but are democrats.

Well that's not exactly what the publican is. It's not a political party. In one sense it is a political party.

The Jews were not fond of the tax collectors. For this reason, the tax collectors were Jews. They were renegade Jews.

And they were working for the Roman government. And they just felt like that was treason. Why should these Jews, we're supposed to be the head and not the tail.

The Jews. And we're under the heel of Rome. They didn't want Rome.

In fact their idea of Messiah was someday he'll come and deliver us from Rome. And this awful bonding. And so they didn't like the Jews on that point that they're working for the Roman government.

And they didn't like it because, to be honest, they weren't honest. And a lot of those tax collectors were ripping people off. They got a lot of extra money.

In fact, remember Zacchaeus, the tax collector, after he came to the Lord he just said, I'm going to pay back four times everything that I've robbed from the people. And so it was synonymous with a thief. And Matthew was one of those thieves.

And he was a chief tax collector. In other words, in that occupation he was way up on the top. But the Lord saved him.

And the Lord reached him. And in response to that, he just wanted to pour out his heart. Now, the Jews were not the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day.

Don't forget now, they were the spies and sort of the self-appointed watchdogs to make sure no cults would come in to contaminate the Jews. And they came to the party too. Now, they were probably not invited, but the Pharisees were allowed everywhere, even without a written invitation.

And they just were overseeing, making sure that nobody was spreading heresy and nobody was doing anything that they shouldn't do. Now, this is going to come to a head, this idea of the tax gatherers and the publicans. In Luke 15, I'll just read or quote two verses.

We'll see it in detail when we get there. Luke 15, 1 and 2. It says, And all the tax gatherers and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.

Jesus was at the party that Matthew threw with tax gatherers and sinners. And it bothered the Pharisees that Jesus would hobnob with these Pharisees, I mean these publicans, and the sinners, and be their friend. Anyway, Matthew calls attention, or rather Luke calls attention to Matthew as one of these tax gatherers.

Look at verse 29. Levi gave a big reception for him in the house. Some would say he's just trying to win his friends to the Lord, and so he invites his friends.

And others would say it's for some other reason. Probably it's a thank you party. Jesus saved him, and he says, Thank you, thank you, thank you.

You reached me, you saved me. And he throws this big banquet in his house. And according to verse 30, chapter 5, 30, the publicans, or rather the Pharisees and the scribes were also there.

And they were just checking everybody out. Now they were not comfortable at this party. Again, they probably weren't invited, and it was lower class.

And Jesus seemed at home at this party. And it bothered the Pharisees, and so they asked two questions. And these two questions became the occasion by which the Lord Jesus took an everyday experience eating and laid out this great principle of the Christian life.

It's the answer to these questions that give us the truth of the story. The first question they ask is in verse 30. And the Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at his disciples saying, Why do you eat and drink with tax gatherers and sinners? Now there's a lot implied in that question.

Implied in that question is, we wouldn't do that. We're religious. We're righteous.

We're holy. And in fact, the word Pharisee means a separated one. And they just prided themselves in not touching the untouchable and being aloof and away from that.

We're the doctors of the law, and we're the scribes of God's law. We don't associate with those kind of people, and we're religious. Now Jesus claims to be religious.

How come he's eating with publicans and sinners? That was their question. And Jesus gives a double answer. His first answer is in verse 31 and 32, and basically it's this.

They need me. That's what he said. He said the sick need a physician.

I didn't come to call the righteous. I come to call the sinners to repentance. And one reason I'm so comfortable here is I am the doctor, the physician of these sinners, and they need me.

You see, the scribes and Pharisees were so self-righteous, they didn't know that they needed the Lord. They needed him as much as the publicans did, but they didn't know that. And why am I fellowshiping with them? Because they need me.

The second answer is in verse 29. Levi gave a big reception. You know what a reception is? A reception is just a party thrown in honor of somebody else.

And Matthew had been saved by the Lord, and he was full of thanks. His heart was pouring over in gratitude, and the Lord was saying, in effect, I'm enjoying this not only because they need me, but because they want me. They want me.

I didn't command the party. I didn't tell Matthew, now that you're saved, you better throw me a party. See, I didn't give any order or any command.

There's no rule. Why am I here? Because they need me. Why am I here? Because they want me.

And I will always be at the table with those who need me and want me. That's one of the great hearts. That's the heart of the Lord, and that's always his passion.

They have the second question. It's implied in verse 33. And they said to him, the disciples of John often fast and offer prayer.

The disciples of the Pharisees do the same. But yours eat and drink. Basically, the question is this.

How come we're fasting and you're feasting? How come you're at a party and we're busy fasting? It doesn't make sense to us. You see, fasting contains the principle of denial. And the idea is you give up a meal or several meals to show that you're detached from this world.

And so they say, we are self-denying. We fast. How come we're spiritual, we fast and pray? John, the baptizer's disciples are spiritual.

They fast and pray. You claim to be spiritual, and you're at a party. And you're eating and drinking and having a good time.

We don't like what we're seeing. You're among the wrong group. You're hot-nobbing with the lower class, and you're having a good time.

And it bothers us. Why in the world are you enjoying this? Jesus gave a wonderful answer and then illustrated it by a parable in two parts. His answer is in verse 34, 35.

Jesus said to them, you cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them. They will fast in those days.

Now basically what our Lord Jesus was saying is this. The reason we feast instead of fast, the reason we party instead of deny ourselves, is because the Christian life is a wedding and not a funeral. That's basically what he was saying.

He said the joy of the Christian life is fellowship with the groom. They're not fasting because they have the groom. Now if the groom wasn't there, then there's a reason to fast.

The presence of the bridegroom is the secret of the Christian's joy at all times. Now for the Pharisees, the Christian life was just a philosophy of life. You pray, you fast, you separate yourselves, you have a list of rules and regulations, you do this, you quit that, you don't go here, you don't do that.

And that to them was the Christian life. And Jesus said no, you missed it. Let me tell you what the Christian life is.

The Christian life is a party. The Christian life is a banquet. The Christian life is a good time.

It's fellowship with the groom. Believe it or not, friends in Christ, there are still thousands upon thousands of Christians that don't get it, that have never caught on, that still think Christianity is what you believe and how you behave. That is not Christianity, what you believe and how you behave.

Christianity is who you know and how much you enjoy Him. It's the Lord. And Jesus was bringing that out at the banquet.

They have the groom. That's why they're so happy, because they have the groom. If the groom weren't there, then they could get into all of these other things.

Years ago, when I was a student, it's called Moody Bible Institute, but we used to call it Instant Bible Moody Tooth. Years ago, when I was a student there, and it was a lot of years ago, there was a man who actually taught a couple of classes at Moody, but he also was the emcee of a radio station in Moody. His name was Paul Rader.

Anybody hear of him? You have heard of Paul Rader? Yeah, Paul. He was one of these guys, a big fellow and very husky voice. And after he came to the Lord, he was just bubbling with the exuberance of emotional joy.

If you're in his presence for five minutes, it's contagious. And he had one of these boisterous, hearty laughs. And at all times, he was just boisterous.

Well, we had a couple of instructors at the school who were the other way. They were grave, and they were sober, and they felt like things should be serious. And I was in the cafeteria one day, and dear Paul Rader was being so Paul.

He was just bubbling over. And one of the other instructors, I thought was so interesting, I want to take notes. And he went over, and he said, Brother Rader, I think I should remind you that Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And he turned around, the loudest laugh I ever heard. He said, exactly why I can laugh. They were my sorrows and my grief.

And I thought, oh, wasn't that wonderful. That's what the Christian life is. And he was exactly right, because the Christian life is not a funeral.

It's a wedding. And it's not following a bunch of rules. It's relationship with the bridegroom lover of your soul.

The bridegroom lover of my soul. Now after Jesus gave this wonderful principle. Now don't forget, they said, we're separatists.

We fast. We pray. A lot of people separate themselves, deny themselves and pray.

And they don't have a clue about what it means to walk with the Lord and enjoy the bridegroom lover. And so after this, Jesus gave a parable. You see it beginning in verse 36.

And he was also telling them a parable. No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. Otherwise he'll both tear the new and the piece from the new will not match the old.

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the new wine will burst the skins. It will be spilled out and the skins will be ruined.

But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wishes for new, for he says the old is good enough. Now any seamstress or tailor would understand the first part of this parable.

A new patch on an old garment will not work. And the reason it won't work is because the new patch will shrink when you want it. And it's going to tear up and so you're going to lose both.

You're going to lose the patch and you're going to lose the old. And just so, the second part of the parable in verse 37. New wine can't be put into old skins.

Because the old skins are too restricted, too narrow, too limited. And as the new wine ferments the old can't take it. It's going to expand and it's going to break the old skin and the new wine is going to be spilled out.

You're going to lose the old and the new together. The point Jesus is making is this. You Pharisees have this idea that life with God is a bunch of rules and regulations and fasting and separating yourself and denying yourself.

And you miss the party, you miss the banquet, you miss the joy of walking with the groom. And then he gives this wonderful parable as if to say that your old ideas have got to go. Now whether you're saying the old covenant and the new covenant and the Jews and grace, law and grace or whatever.

What he's saying is that I've come to introduce a new concept. That Christianity is relationship with the groom. And all of those old ideas.

All the rules and separation and prayers and fasting. Do this and don't do the other thing. That's the old garment and that's the old wine skin.

Jesus was very radical in what he said here. So radical. Because what he said is you've got to discard the old entirely.

And then you've got to embrace the new completely. And then he said never under any circumstance can you mix what is essentially different. You cannot mix the old with the new.

You've got to get rid of the old. You've got to embrace the new. And you must never try to put the old with the new because they can never be mixed.

Things which essentially differ cannot be united. I think there's a little theological problem with what we hear so much and sometime in song. And the idea is that Jesus will pick up the pieces.

And Jesus will repair the shattered life and all that kind of thing. And there's a glorious truth in that. And I'm not trying to undermine that glorious truth.

But he didn't come to repair the old life. He came to give a brand new life. That's not just her.

That's another direction altogether. He doesn't want to put together the pieces. This whole idea of O-A-I-S doesn't exist.

That's an old Adam Improvement Society. There is no old Adam Improvement Society. He's come to start all over.

And to begin anew and to begin afresh from the inside to the outside. This illustration in his parable of a robe and the wine in the skin. You've got two things there.

You've got the outside and the inside. The garments have to do with the outside. The wine has to do with the inside.

And what he's basically saying is this. Christ's life. That's what everybody can see on the outside.

The new robe. I like to call the wine in the new skin the life of Christ. It's the life of Christ inside that produces the Christ life on the outside.

I think it's wonderful that on Pentecost, remember when the Holy Spirit came into his people and they had the life inside. What were they accused of? Being full of new wine. The reality was, that's true spiritually, that's exactly what happened.

What Jesus was saying. This was the new wine. And it of course came to the outside.

So that's the first lesson that in this common everyday illustration. Let's sit down and eat. And out of that banquet came this wonderful picture of the Christian life.

Why are you eating with sinners? Because they need me and they want me. Why do you not fast? Because the Christian life is not gloomy. It's not a funeral.

It's a wedding. And the Christian life is relationship with the groom. You need to understand, I have come to make all things new.

Not to patch up the old, that won't work. I've come to make all things new. Then the next scene is another common illustration.

Not only does he take an occasion of sitting down at the table to bring out some spiritual truth. But now in the next scene his disciples go for a walk. What could be more precious than a walk? And out of that walk he says, let me tell you again.

Now turn please to chapter 6. It came about on a certain Sabbath. He was passing through some grain field. His disciples were picking and eating the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands.

Some of the Pharisees said, why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath? Jesus answering them said, have you not ever read what David did when he was hungry? He and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God and took and ate the consecrated bread. Which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone. And he gave it to his companion.

And he was saying to them, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day. Now before I discuss the story and show you the wonderful life principle. Now let me call attention to the terminal points on the story.

When you study the scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. One way to get into the heart of it is look at the terminal point. How does it begin? How does it end? And you notice in verse 1 it came about on a certain Sabbath.

And then in verse 5, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. This story is told in the backdrop of the Sabbath. Now I introduce it at this point because Luke is going to give a long series of head-butting stories.

Concerning the Sabbath, Jesus and the Pharisee. Now remember Jesus was radical, no question about that. But he wasn't a troublemaker.

In other words, the Lord Jesus wasn't out to aggravate people. To needle them. To hold some truth and say, in your face.

That's not our Lord Jesus. He wasn't trying to antagonize. But sometimes it looks like that's what he was doing.

There are 8 Sabbath stories in the record in the ministry of our Lord Jesus. And we see Jesus doing things on the Sabbath day almost intentionally. As if to say to the Pharisees, here's another one.

And just sort of turning that screw into their own hearts. The Pharisees judged Jesus because of his view, they thought a faulty view, of the Sabbath day. In fact on one occasion they said, that's proof he's from Satan.

Look what he does on the Sabbath day. He healed Peter's mother-in-law on the Sabbath day. Sometimes when you get Sabbath day stories, you know it's delivered.

For example, that man at Bethesda, 38 years, he's laying at the pool. Don't tell me Jesus couldn't heal him on Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday. The man's there for 38 years, he could wait another day.

But he doesn't wait another day. He says, good, Saturday, Sabbath, now let's do it. And it's almost like he does it intentionally.

He tells a man to pick up his bed and carry it on the Sabbath day. And the Pharisees go chasing him down the street. Don't you know it's not lawful to carry any weight on the Sabbath day? He constantly did this.

The man with the withered hand on the Sabbath day. The man born blind on the Sabbath day. The woman humped over for 18 years on the Sabbath day.

He knew they were watching. And he knew they were bothered. But he was trying to rescue the Sabbath from their hands.

They had so twisted it. And he wanted everybody to understand. When God gave the Sabbath, He gave it to serve man.

And the Sabbath had become the master. It was now ruling man. They had made the Sabbath a tremendous burden.

Are you familiar with the word Mishnah? Mishnah is a Jewish commentary on the Old Testament Hebrew Scripture. And these Pharisees were constantly quoting the Mishnah. In the Mishnah, I had a chance to see a translation of the Mishnah.

And I read through 39 classes of rules just for the Sabbath day. And here's some of them. I won't spend a lot of time.

But here's what they believed. For example, if you tried to tie a knot on the Sabbath day. Just tie a knot.

Tie a shoe. The only way it would be legitimate is if you did it with one hand. Otherwise, you violated the Sabbath day.

If you're praising God with a stringed instrument on the Sabbath day, and one string breaks, you're not allowed to put another string on the instrument. You violate the Sabbath day. In those days, for toothaches, they would rinse their mouth with vinegar.

On the Sabbath day, it was a sin to spit. So you could rinse your mouth if you swallowed the vinegar. Otherwise, you couldn't even do that for a toothache.

Later on, we'll see how they were upset with the disciples walking through the grain field because they plucked the grain. Well, that's harvesting. You're not allowed to work on the Sabbath day.

And then they would take the shells off. Well, you see, you can't do that because that's threshing. In those days, they wore sandals.

And you had to lift your feet. They walked around marching on the Sabbath day because if you let your toe rub in the dirt, you were plowing. You're not allowed to plow on the Sabbath day.

And when Jesus made mud on the Sabbath day and put it in a man's eye, you know what they got him for? Kneading. You're not allowed to knead on the Sabbath day. And so on.

And they had all of these rules and regulations encumbered by endless laws. And they just had a slavish adherence to the letter of the law. Jesus wasn't trying to be mean.

He's trying to say, now look, when God created rest, it was a beautiful thing. Now, in order to get this marvelous story here, let me break it down into, I'm going to ask you to call on your spirit-controlled imaginations and try to visualize this wonderful scene. Because if you get all four parts, you're going to see, in my view, a wonderful second illustration.

The Christian life is not only a party where you enjoy the groom, but it's this. So let me just take it apart one by one. The first thing I want you to picture, actually Luke doesn't tell us this.

It's implied. But Matthew, in the corresponding story, gives us this detail. Matthew 12, 1, His disciples became hungry.

So when they were walking through the grain field, they were hungry. I don't think they were starving. But hunger is illustrated here.

And Jesus used the story of David. When I first read that, I thought, oh, I wish Jesus used a different illustration. Because at that particular story, when David ate out of the temple, I don't know if you're familiar with it, but he was really messing up.

A lot of people died because David was doing a lot of things wrong at that particular time. But the point is, if you're hungry, that's sort of more basic. And Jesus wasn't afraid to use that illustration.

I never would have used it. Jesus used it because he was saying, just like he was hungry, there is some spiritual truth about hunger. So picture that first.

The disciples are hungry. Second fact, verse 1, chapter 6, 1. Walking with Jesus in the grain field. I remember one time, I shared some of these principles about walking with Jesus in the grain field.

And one man at the study was a wonderful artist. And I have in my study the most beautiful picture he painted for me of Jesus. I'll just treasure that forever.

Jesus walking in the grain fields with his disciples. Lay hold of that because it's becoming, this is part of the Christian life. What is the Christian life? It has to do with being hungry.

And it has to do with strolling with Jesus in the grain fields. This whole idea of walking with Jesus, you know that's all through the Bible. Enoch walked with God, Noah walked with God, Micah 6, 8, remember that? What does God require of thee? But to walk humbly with your God.

Walking with God is such a picture of the Christian life. One of my favorite hymns, In the Garden, you like that hymn? He walks with me, talks with me, tells me I am his own. The joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.

What is the Christian life? Well, it's being hungry. And it's walking with Jesus in the grain fields. And then in verse 1, And it was a Sabbath day.

Oh, this is glorious. It was a day of rest. They not only were hungry, walking with Jesus, allowing Him to meet their needs, but they were entering into this rest.

They were not walking on eggshells like the Pharisees. Oh, make sure you only go so many steps and count it out and don't drag your toes and all that. To many Christians, the Christian life is nothing than walking on eggshells.

Oh, I better watch out. God's going to get mad. He's going to club me if I do something wrong.

I've got to walk this way. They were on the Sabbath day walking with the Lord Jesus. No condemnation in their hearts at all.

Just enjoying a walk with Jesus, having my hunger met on the Sabbath day. One of my favorite verses on the Sabbath day is Exodus 23.12. Exodus 23.12 says, Six days you are to do your work. On the seventh day you must cease from labor in order that your ox and your donkey may rest, the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger.

And then it says, may refresh themselves. And the Hebrew word for refresh themselves is catch your breath. Isn't that a glorious thing? What is the Sabbath day? What is God's rest? It's a time to catch your breath.

It's a time to just relax and enter into all that God has done. The Pharisees, of course, were out there spying. Chapter 6.2, some of the Pharisees said, Matthew 12.2 said, When the Pharisees saw it, here are the disciples just walking out, enjoying the Lord, having their needs met, entering into this rest, and behind the bushes, here are these Pharisees, watching, spying, stalking the Lord Jesus and His disciples, and they pretend to be horrified.

They're not horrified. They're glad they think He's violating the Sabbath because they're trying to find something on Him. I love in this connection, Psalm 23.5 from the Shepherd Psalm, Psalm 23.5 says, Thou preparest a table, can you finish it? Isn't that wonderfully illustrated there? Here they are, walking with Jesus in the grain field, having their hunger supplied, entering into rest, and the Pharisees are behind the bushes, ready to pounce on Him.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies. And that's exactly what you see here. God has called us to enjoy the bridegroom and to walk with the Lord Jesus in the grain field.

Now, don't doubt it for a moment. Not for a lonely moment. They're out there.

They're watching. And they're ready to pounce on you. Now, I know some will say, oh, you know, that's just easy grace.

You just say, look to the Lord and live any way you want to live. You know, we're not saying that. We're not saying look to the Lord and live any way you want to live.

We're saying if you look to the Lord in reality, then as a byproduct and a fruit of your life, you'll want to live the way the Lord wants you to live. I've seen it a thousand times when you say, what's the Christian life? You encourage somebody. Just walk with Jesus.

Let Him feed you. Enter into rest. Somebody will be there and say, oh, but now wait a minute.

There's more to the Christian life than that. More than walking with Jesus. More than getting your hunger satisfied.

More than enjoying rest in the presence of your enemy. One thing I love here, Matthew makes it more clear than Luke. In chapter 12-2, when they had a quarrel, it says they went to Jesus.

They went to the Lord and said, why are your disciples doing this? They didn't come to the disciples and say, why are you doing this? I call attention to that to say, you're going to have legalists all around you constantly criticizing your liberty and the simplicity of your faith. Just walking with the Lord Jesus. Let Jesus handle it.

Don't deal with the legalists. I love when somebody comes up and says, well, now you claim to be a Christian and you're not resting in the Lord. You're just lazy.

And you're just passing. And you're not entering in. You should be doing this and that.

And I say, thank you. One time I got a call. Oh boy, my ear almost burned.

I got a call. This pastor was so angry at me. And he just laid me out in laughter.

Lillian, listening in on the other end. She shouldn't have been on the phone, but she was sort of spying. And I felt bad.

But he was rebuked. You're going to answer at the judgment seat of Christ? And he went on and on for ten minutes. I didn't say a word.

And then when it was done, I didn't know what to say. So I said, well, thank you for calling. She felt bad because the way he... But it didn't bother me at all.

You know why? Because I have a defender. I'm living under the Lord. I'm going to please the Lord.

To me, the Christian life is on ball. It's fun. Someone says, oh, the Christian life, you should be doing this and doing that.

I'm having a banquet. I'm having a ball. I'm enjoying the bridegroom.

Now if I get separated from him, then I've got to fast. Then there's reason to be sad. What is the Christian life? May I suggest in these two simple illustrations, sitting down and walking.

He grabs those two illustrations. He said, let me tell you what the Christian life is. The Christian life is a wedding and not a funeral.

The Christian life is strolling with Jesus in the grain field, allowing him to meet your needs, enjoying his rest in the presence of your enemy. And if anybody has a problem with that, Jesus will take care of it. Not you.

Don't worry about it. You just walk with the Lord in the grain field. Well, we'll stop there for now.

Comments or questions? Well, let's bow before the Lord, please. Our Father, we thank you that you've made these things so clear. We pray that we'd never try to put the new garment on the old garment, the new wine into old skin, but that we might embrace a full Christ and have a new life.

Thank you for making it so simple. Deliver us, we pray, from the letter that kills and grace us to embrace the Spirit, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Teach us how to walk with Jesus in the grain field on the Sabbath day.

We ask in Jesus' name.

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