



Campbell Chapel

Sermon by Bob Bradley



What do we see, when we see people?

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Bob Bradley

- Luke 5:27** And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, **Follow me.**
- Luke 5:28** And he left all, rose up, and followed him.
- Luke 5:29** And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.
- Luke 5:30** But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?
- Luke 5:31** And Jesus answering said unto them, **They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.**
- Luke 5:32** **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**
- Luke 5:33** And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise *the disciples* of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?
- Luke 5:34** And he said unto them, **Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?**
- Luke 5:35** **But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.**
- Luke 5:36** And he spake also a parable unto them; **No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was *taken* out of the new agreeth not with the old.**
- Luke 5:37** **And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.**
- Luke 5:38** **But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.**
- Luke 5:39** **No man also having drunk old *wine* straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.**

If I would use the word *elastic* what would you think? Elastic does stretch. Something about elastic is that we can stretch it and it can be all out of shape and then we can let it go and it will go back just like it was. I know that does not make much sense now but I hope it will in a minute. I think that is a word that we should think about in our Christian life is elastic.

The Bible tells us here in verse 27...

Luke 5:27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, **Follow me.**

When you read that in the original, it brings out and tell you something here that Jesus here is leaving a house or the city but He is going forth for a purpose. He had something deliberately in mind here when He is leaving where He is at. As He is going

forward, He has something that He is going to do. He is not going out—Hey, I am going to walk down the road and see what happens. He has deliberately left this area. The Bible says...

Luke 5:27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, **Follow me.**

Now He is going and traveling, and He encounters and He sees a fellow here. It tells us his name. Many times, Jesus encounters people in the scriptures and He did great things for them and we do not know their names but we do know this one. I think it is very important that we know who this guy is because this guy is going to do something that is going to be great and we are still yet talking about him tonight.

Jesus meets this guy and his name is Levi. He tells us something about him. He tells us his name. He also tells us his occupation. If you know anything about a publican; we know that publicans were tax collectors. Tax collectors were usually Jewish people that had, that were working for the Roman government. They usually would exact taxes from Jewish people, take it and give it to the Roman authorities for them to build their cities and to fund their armies with and so forth. Also, along with that the government would allow these guys to overcharge for tax and for the taxes and they became very rich, a lot of these guys did because they were overcharging people and charging more than they should be charging.

When you read about a publican, a publican was classified in the same class as a murderer, or a robber, a thief, or some person that was really bad. A tax collector, a publican was put in that same group. The Jewish people hated tax collectors. They despised them. They were outcasts. They were not permitted to go to synagogue because of what they did. They looked at them as being unclean. They were somebody that was absolutely despised by the community.

Get this. Jesus goes down the road and runs into this guy that is a tax collector. He is here. Again, Jesus is coming with a purpose. He just did not happen to show up here but He had a purpose. The Bible says here that Levi was sitting at the receipt of customs. They usually had a little booth that they would put up on stilts or poles or something. They usually sat up above the road so when people came through with their carts and things like that; they would look down in their carts and see what they had. Here sits Levi. He is sitting here where he normally sat, no doubt, every day; and here comes Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus just simply said two words to this guy. He said, "Follow me." That is all He says. He did not give him a five-point message and spoke seven words or seven minutes and thirty-six words and had a three-minute benediction. He did not do that. Jesus simply spoke to him and said, "Follow me."

This guy was an outcast. He was hated. He was looked upon as being unclean by the religious leaders. Yet Jesus was not like that. Jesus saw this fellow who he really was. Jesus saw this fellow that he was unhappy. He was empty. He had no peace. He was going the wrong direction in life. His life was in turmoil even though he had all kinds of

money. Jesus knew all about this guy. Jesus knew what the crowd thought about this guy. Jesus knew that they Pharisees and religious leaders looked at him as being an outcast and unclean. However, do you know what? He did not care. He saw someone that needed to follow Him. He saw someone that needed a change in life.

I thought today and yesterday—this thought has been on my mind a few days. What do we see when we see people?

I was somewhere yesterday. There was someone there that a lot of people do not like. I will just say it that way. It does not matter who it was. It could be a politician, lawyer, it could be anybody. However, there was somebody there that a lot of people would not want to associate with. I thought about this person when I looked at them and all the other people all around everywhere. However, this particular person was just by themselves. I thought how lonely they must be and how empty they must feel, how all alone they are. They had no peace. There is no joy on the inside. They have all these issues. I got to thinking—what are we doing? Why is it when we look at people that may be living a different lifestyle than we do, and people who lives a lifestyle that we know is wrong—and we know it is wrong—but why is it that our minds are so...and our hearts gets so hard that there is no elastic there. Why is it that we get so hard? What is it in our thinking that when we look at people sometimes and the way that they live and what they do. We get to the place in life that we think—we will not give them a break. We will not help them. We will not allow our minds to stretch a little bit or grow a little bit. To think maybe that we just may be wrong in how we are dealing with people.

The religious crowd; the Pharisees, and scribes were there. They looked at this guy as being unclean. They looked at him as being worthless. He was menace to society. They would not allow their minds and the way they thought to grow any.

Elastic—that is what it does. Do you know what we do when we grow? Do you know what we do when we get fat? We get clothes with elastic. Do you know what they do? We think it does not make us look as fat but it really does. It does not change our weight any. Elastic will grow. It will grow with us. Our minds—listen—your mind should not be and our minds should not think the same way today that it did the day we got saved. Our minds should grow. Our minds should have some elastic about it. Our minds should not be settled in stone. What I mean by that is—I am not talking about the cardinal truths of the Bible. I am not talking about the blood, going to heaven, or sin. I am not talking about none of that because that needs to be settled. The way that we deal with people needs to grow. That needs to have some elastic in it and about it. We need to look at people differently.

Listen. This is important. If the Holy Ghost is in you then your way of thinking is going to be different. He will change how you think. He will change how you look at people. Do you know why?

Because Jesus looked at people different than the crowd did, different than the religious people did. Amen!

Here is a guy that everybody hates. He is despised. He is a menace to society. Most people would just be glad if he would die and be gone. Yet—get this. Here comes the Creator of heaven and earth walking down the road. Never did a man wrong. He never sinned one time. No guile found in His mouth. He looks at this guy and said, “Hey, I’d like for you to follow me. Come and be one of my disciples.”

What would we have done if we went down the road? What do we do sometimes in a crowd when people are there that we may not want to associate with? When we look at their lifestyle and what they have done and how that they lived; how do we deal with folks sometimes? Do you know what happens?

Our minds get so hard, our hearts get so hard. We get so stooped, heaped, in tradition that we miss so many opportunities to win people to Christ. Our minds do not have any elastic in it. Our thinking is like it was the day we got saved. Listen. It should not be like that. Our minds should not be like that. Our minds should not be like that at all. Our minds and the way we think today should be a lot more compassionate than it used to be. Before we got saved, we probably were not a compassionate person. Amen! We probably were not a good person. We may have paid our bills and all of that but we were lost. Yet when Christ saved us, not only did He save our souls but He saves our mind also. Our way of thinking has to grow. Our way of thinking has to get larger and larger; just like elastic. It has to give.

I was talking to someone the other day. I know he meant well. He is a good guy and I love him to death. As I was talking to him, he was talking about an avenue of someone trying to reach the Lord. I said...he was concerned about that. I said, I do not understand. He said they are doing this and this. I just do not think that is right. I said you are missing something here that when we were younger and when we first got saved, and the way we thought then and the way we reached people then with the gospel; we thought that was the only way. However, the folks you are talking about here—do not try to deter that or stop that if these people are telling people about Jesus Christ; let us grow our thinking and help them some. Amen! It was not that they were telling something wrong. But their methods were different than what—this guy was older than I am, or something close to my age. It was not what they were doing. It was not that they were wrong. However, they were using different methods. They were using a method that I think—after I thought about it probably was as much as anything—was that he knew he needed to be involved in it too but he just did not want to. He did not want to let his mind grow. Instead of getting involved in it; he criticized it. do not be like that.

Our minds need to grow. In whatever avenue that we can teach people and tell people about Jesus Christ, we need to do that. We need to use every opportunity we can.

The Bible says...

Jesus just simply said, “Follow me.” That is all He said. He said, “Just Follow me.” A despised outcast. Everybody hates him. Nobody likes him. Nobody probably would

ever be around him, but other tax collectors. Now the Son of God, the son of Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the God that was going to die on a tree shortly; walks by and says, “Hey, I want you to be one of my disciples.”

Would our minds stretch that much? Will we look at someone that is despised and rejected and did all kinds of junk in life; will our minds stretch to the place that we can actually say, “Hey, you need to follow Jesus Christ.” We have to do that folks. We have to do that today.

Someone mentioned about people not coming to church. Do you know what? There are many reasons people do not come to church. Twenty-five years ago, do you know what you could do? You all know this. You can give kids a hot dog and a bag of chips; you could fill a parking lot up. However, you cannot do that anymore. That does not work anymore. Do you know what we should be doing? Our minds should be expanding. Our way of thinking should be expanding, not compromising the cardinal truth, not inviting the world in; I am not talking about that. We make all kinds of excuses as to why we do not do while all along, the reason we do not do is because we do not want to do. When we get to understand what we need to do it requires something out of us. amen! It takes some of our time, effort, money... amen!

He said, “Follow me.” Get this.

Luke 5:28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

Do you know what he did not do? He did not go down and say, I have got some stuff over here... He walked away from it all; a-I-I, walked away and left it all behind and he followed Jesus. Do you know what he heard? He heard a guy speak to him like nobody had ever spoken to him before. When Jesus said, “Come and follow me.” Not only was it words in his ears, but also, it was words in his heart. It touched him. He knew that this guy here could give him peace where he did not have any peace. He could give him joy, where there was no joy. He could give him happiness where there was no happiness. He could make him complete and full, where there was no complete fullness. He simply heard two words, “Follow me.” He left it all and he followed Him.

Our way of thinking has to grow, guys. The techniques and the things that we used 15 or 30 years ago, do not work anymore.

Listen. There are many reasons for that. We as a church—the church as a whole, everybody that is born again, when I mention the church here—I think we can bear a great big responsibility there because of what we do and what we do not do. I think it has a bearing on a many people who do not come to church. Our family, sometimes as to why they do not come to church.

I was talking to a young man the other day and he was talking about some different things. He was all torn up about some stuff. He was talking about getting people to come and things like that but when church time came, he was not at church. He was at an outing, and event. He spent more time at these events than he did at church. I said,

you are wasting your time. The people that you are trying to get to come to church and trying to get to get saved; you are telling them they need to get saved, yet when church time comes you are not even at church. You are at one of these events. You are wasting your time. That responsibility falls on us all. Our way of thinking has to change. It has to grow.

Look what happens here. He leaves it all. Levi leaves it all behind. He leaves his whole life of being tax collector behind. Do you know what he does? His way of thinking has changed so much in an instant. Do you know what he wants to do? He wants to have a supper for Jesus and invite all of his friends over to meet this guy that has changed his life. Not only was Jesus' way of thinking different than ours, but also, now Levi's way of thinking is growing. It is getting bigger. He looked at things now as being bigger than himself. Do you know what we do so many times? It is all about me and my family and everybody else is on their own.

Do you know what Levi does here? He invites. He fixes a feast. He invites Jesus. He invites His friends. Tax collectors; probably the only friends he had. Other tax collectors that everybody hated. There is no doubt he sat and talked and they had communicated. Do you know what Levi knew? He knew that his friends were just as bad off as he was. Do you know what he did? Instead of saying, hey, you are on your own. Do the best you can. He invites them over because he wants to introduce them to a fellow here that is absolutely with two words, changed his life. Amen!

The Bible says that he...

Luke 5:29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

It tells you that Levi was, no doubt, very wealthy. He has his own house here.

Luke 5:29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

There were a whole gang, a wad of publicans here and other people that sat down with him.

Luke 5:30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

Get this. The Son of God had just walked by and said two words to a guy that was an outcast. The guy forsakes all and follows Him. He goes home and prepares a great supper for Jesus. He invites all of his friends. When that happens you always get someone that is going to be murmuring. Amen!

The scribes and the Pharisees were the religious crowd. They were the ones that should have been jumping for joy because this guy, by the name of Levi that everybody hated, now, was following Jesus. They should have been so happy. However, their minds were so hardened. There was no elastic. There was no changing. Their thinking did not get any bigger. They had a preconceived idea about tax collectors—

once a tax collector, always a tax collector. I hate them now. I hate them next week. I hate them next year. I will hate them till I die no matter what they do. That was their thinking. The Pharisees and scribes looks at the disciples of Jesus and said, "Hey, what in the world are you guys doing eating and drinking with publicans and sinners?"

Do you see how their thinking was? Do you see how their minds thought? They were religious. They probably could quote more scripture than all of us together could have done, as far as the Old Testament goes. They could tell you about the day of atonement. They could tell you about the Feast of First Fruits. They could have told you about tabernacles. They could have told you about all of that. However, do you know what they did not know? They did not know that the God of heaven, which instituted all those sacrifices was standing right there in their midst. They could not see that. Do you know why? Because their way of thinking would not change.

There was no elastic in their brains. There was no giving in their thinking. They had made up their minds. This is how it is. Nothing is going to change it. That is it.

Here is the thing folks. Do you know what we have to do? Do you know what we should be doing? Again, I am not talking about changing our mind about sin, about faithfulness, and being devoted. I am not talking about changing our mind about that. I am talking about changing your mind about how that we look at people. What do we see when we see people that are hurting, people that are desperate. Levi was desperate. He had everything money could buy. However, what he did not have was what money could not buy. He found it on this day.

I have said all of that to say this. As we look at people, as we look at situations, as we look at people's lives; everyone of us knows and probably if we would all be honest, and most of us here, we would go back 20 to 50 years, we all lived lives that was not very good. We all have a past. Everybody has a past. Probably most everybody in here did some things that were not right. Things we should not have done. Maybe they were immoral. Maybe they were illegal, a lot of different things.

However, do you know what Jesus did one day? He came along and looked at us, with all of our sin and said, "Hey, I would like you to be my disciple." Isn't that great? Since He did that for us, our way of thinking should be the same when we look at other people. Our way of thinking needs to change guys. If we are going to have an impact on this community, on this world; the mind of the church has to change.

Do you know what I appreciate? I appreciate some of our young people today that is taking a different approach. Again, I do not always agree with it. I do not always agree with the approach they take sometimes. However, do you know what our young people, a lot of them are doing today? They are winning a lot of people to Christ. They are winning a lot of people to Christ. They are doing it with unconventional methods. They are doing it with ways that would have thought 10 to 20 years ago that we would have never agreed to. We may not even like it today. However, why in the world can we not allow our brain and our thinking to grow just a little bit. If someone is winning people to

the Lord, let us help them. Let us support them. Let us get behind them and push them. Let us do everything we can to help them. Because they are doing something that we should be doing.

Here is the story.

He was a guy that everybody hated. Nobody liked him. He was an outcast. He could not go to temple. He was not allowed to go to synagogue. He was unclean. Nobody would speak to him in a crowd. Probably could not go anywhere in public without someone cursing him and calling him all kinds of names. Yet, Jesus walked down one day and said, "Follow me." He leaves it all behind and he follows Jesus. When you read the first book of the New Testament, do you know who wrote it? An outcast. A publican. Someone that everybody hated. Nobody loved him. Yet, because Jesus' way of thinking was different than everybody else's was—do you know what we have today? We have 28 chapters that we read that this guy called Levi wrote. We are still yet reading it today. It is still yet blessing people today. It is still yet changing people today.

Will we allow the Lord to grow our minds? Will we get spiritual enough? Will we spend enough time reading, studying, and praying, and seeking God's face to allow Him to change our minds, and allow our minds to have some flexibility about things that are not cardinal truths, about things here and methods about getting people to the Lord.

I mentioned this person earlier. Just for a second, I got to speak to him. Do you know what it did? It brought a smile to their face. All I did was just spoke and patted them on the shoulder and said, hey, how are you doing. We said a few words. It brought a smile to this person's face that nobody else wanted to be around or appeared not to want to be around.

Listen. If we are going to win people that are lost, we cannot act like we are better than they are. Amen! We cannot act like and we cannot have a mind that we get so hardened that we will not allow the Lord to grow it. If we are going to win people to the Lord then our way of thinking has to change. It has to change. We need to do that now because we do not have much time. Jesus Christ is coming. Your kids, your grandkids, your co-workers, your husband, your wife, your sons, your daughters, the people you know are counting on you, not to condemn them.

Do you know what Jesus could have done? He could have brow beat him and said, you no good scoundrel what are you doing? He could have done all of that. What he would have said would have been truth. However, He did not do that. He saw his need. He saw that this guy needed help. He gave him the help that He did and because of that Levi is changing lives today, 2,000 year later.

As we sing, if you need to come and pray; come and pray. Come while God is speaking, while God is calling. Wherever you are at; in your own home, in a car, in a

hospital room, half way around the world; God is speaking, God is calling. Come. He loves you.

Do you know what He will never do? He will never...condemn you. Sin condemns you but Jesus Christ will not condemn you. He did not come to condemn people. People are already condemned. He came to save people. He came to change people's lives. Come this evening while God is calling. Come.

Come and pray.