

Luke 5:27-35; 7:31-39 “Jesus the real LIFE of the party”

Proposition: Jesus loved being with people and when he socialized He brought joy and transformation to those people.

²⁷Later, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector ^[a] named Levi sitting at the place for paying taxes. Jesus said to him, "Come with me." ²⁸Levi left everything and went with Jesus. ²⁹In his home Levi gave a big dinner for Jesus. Many tax collectors and other guests were also there.

³⁰The Pharisees and some of their teachers of the Law of Moses grumbled to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with those tax collectors and other sinners?"

³¹Jesus answered, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. ³²I didn't come to invite good people to turn to God. I came to invite sinners."

³³Some people said to Jesus, "John's followers often pray and go without eating, ^[b] and so do the followers of the Pharisees. But your disciples never go without eating or drinking." ³⁴Jesus told them, "The friends of a bridegroom don't go without eating while he is still with them. ³⁵But the time will come when he will be taken from them. Then they will go without eating."

Luke 7:31-39

³¹Jesus went on to say:

What are you people like? What kind of people are you? ³²You are like children sitting in the market and shouting to each other,

"We played the flute,

but you would not dance!

We sang a funeral song,

but you would not cry!"

³³John the Baptist did not go around eating and drinking, and you said, "John has a demon in him!" ³⁴But because the Son of Man goes around eating and drinking, you say, "Jesus eats and drinks too much! He is even a friend of tax collectors and sinners." ³⁵Yet Wisdom is shown to be right by what its followers do.

³⁶A Pharisee invited Jesus to have dinner with him. So Jesus went to the Pharisee's home and got ready to eat. ^[a] ³⁷When a sinful woman in that town found out that Jesus was there, she bought an expensive bottle of perfume. ³⁸Then she came and stood

behind Jesus. She cried and started washing his feet with her tears and drying them with her hair. The woman kissed his feet and poured the perfume on them.

³⁹The Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this and said to himself, "If this man really were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him! He would know that she is a sinner."

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a time traveller? And have you ever wondered if you were to back to any time in history and talk to anyone who and where would you go? Now if time travel was a real possibility and some one came to me and said I am going to travel to Israel in AD 35 and look for Jesus there where to you think I would find Him, I would suggest three places.

1. If its early in the morning look for a very **quiet place**, possibly on the top of a hill or some where like that, that is secluded and I think you will find Jesus listening for His Fathers voice.
2. Or if you are looking for him and it is during the daytime. Probably you will find him in an open area speaking to and praying for a large group of people, and so look for **open spaces** where a large crowd could be around Him.
3. Or if you were going around dinner time I suggest that you look for the most happening **party** going on in town. Where are the people meeting to celebrate and to socialize.

Now you would expect me to say look for the quiet place or the open space but do we notice just how much in the Scriptures Jesus is at the happening place, the party. And it doesn't matter whether it is a group of sinners meeting at the tax collectors house or a group of Pharisees meeting at Simon's house. It doesn't matter if it is a wedding celebration. Jesus was so often to be found at a party.

People loved being around Him irrespective of their social class or status. People were just attracted to him and then changed by him.

I have shown you before but I have this artistic impression of what Jesus looked like. I like this picture. Now I think that Jesus had olive coloured skin, so maybe darker than this picture and I suspect his nose was much bigger because he was a Jew but the thing that I like about this impression is that Jesus is laughing, full of Joy. And that I think is absolutely true. Children, religious leaders, hard core sinners were all attracted to Him and wanted to be around Him.

Jesus I believe was an abundantly happy man because of the time spent with the Father.

This week I found over two hundred scriptures that basically said when you are around God's presence you will receive a fullness of joy.

Acts 13 when the Holy Spirit came upon them they were filled with joy.

When I was in my late teens I was really zealous for the kingdom and I had this experience that has been repeated many times since. My mate Paul and I were spending an evening praying for the unsaved and 20 minutes into our prayer time together we felt the physical presence of the Lord and we started laughing, and we laughed for what may have been a couple of hours – just because the closeness of God had that effect on us. Jesus was and is fun to be around.

John 10:10 says that the thief comes to rob, kill and destroy but I have come that you might have life and life in all its fullness. Jesus was often at a party and was always the life of the party!

Do you remember where Jesus performed his first miracle of turning water into wine? At a wedding party. John 2. The wine has run out. Some one has not organized things well. Tradition suggests that John the disciple, the one Jesus loved was the groom on that day. Tradition could well be right. Not only was Mary Elizabeth's cousin, the mother of John the Baptist but another cousin of Mary's was also John the disciples mother and if this was John's wedding, tradition would mean that Mary would be one of those responsible for organizing the festivities. Which would make sense of her taking responsibility for the wine running out and saying to Jesus, son would you please help us out.

Now commentators have many different suggested reasons why Jesus and his disciples were invited guests at the wedding party:

Some say it was to illustrate that God takes meaningless lives, earthen jars as it were filled with water, and when His Spirit and His word comes into them they become like wine poured out for the benefit of the community.

Some scholars say that Jesus was at the party to affirm His conviction that the marriage institution was God's idea.

Some suggest that it was an illustration that miracles need to happen in marriages constantly.

And to be fair all of those suggestions are right I think but... why was Jesus at the wedding celebration.

Could it simply be that people just liked having Jesus at their do's and feasts and celebrations? Whoever they were, family, Pharisees, or hard core sinners – when they had a do they wanted Jesus there because he was the life of the party.

When Jesus is at Simon the Pharisees house for a party, this uninvited guest comes in, a prostitute and she cries all over Jesus' feet and pours expensive perfume on them and the religious guys begin to think, hang on a minute, if Jesus is a real prophet he would keep away from girls like this. And if he is a real man of God why then is he and his boys always pigging out at the feasts and parties they go to. Why do they enjoy themselves so much, shouldn't they be miserable if they are truly spiritual and at least denying self and fasting as John the Baptists' disciples do?

There has long been in Christianity this strain of thought that says Christians should isolate themselves from the world. They should build walls around themselves to protect themselves from the evil that goes on in peoples lives and if they are going to be truly spiritual, they will deny themselves lots of things and be miserable.

When the apostle Paul wrote to his intern Pastor Timothy Paul said that this perversion of the truth would be a sign of the last days.

1 Timothy 4

¹God's Spirit clearly says that in the last days many people will turn from their faith. They will be fooled by evil spirits and by teachings that come from demons.

²They will also be fooled by the false claims of liars whose consciences have lost all feeling. These liars ³will forbid people to marry or to eat certain foods. But God created these foods to be eaten with thankful hearts by his followers who know the truth. ⁴Everything God created is good. And if you give thanks, you may eat anything. ⁵What God has said and your prayer will make it fit to eat.

A sign of the last days will be when people start saying, don't bother getting married, don't go to the wedding celebrations and enjoy all the food.

I really enjoy studying the book of Revelation.

Do you know what the first thing that we will be doing when we are taken up to heaven to be with the Lord.

Will we be sitting quietly reflecting on our lives?

Will we be growling ourselves over our sins and missed opportunities in life?

As soon as we are snatched up to be with Him we are told that we will sit down to the wedding feast of the lamb. That's going to be a real party.

The sort of party where you laugh until the tears are streaming down your face.

I wonder, obviously I don't know, but I wonder if when Jesus was turning water into wine or partying with sinners or religious leaders, I wonder if in the back of his mind he is thinking; friends you might be enjoying this today but you aint seen nothing yet.

December is the party season of the year. We already have been to a neighbourhood do, Juliettes had a work do this week, I have been to a budget service do this week and there is plenty of other parties happening.

And I wonder if our workmates, our neighbours and our friends won't invite us to do's because they think that we are legalistic, boring, miserable and sad people who have built up social walls around us to keep the evil out or ... do they want us to come to their parties to bring life, to bring vibrancy, to bring joy just as Jesus did.

Not only would many pre-Christians not invite many of us to their parties because they think that we are too spiritual to be mixing with them but many Christians also feel it's wrong to mix with the sinner, the tax collectors and the prostitutes of this world as well.

Quite a few years ago when that amazing book whose title I can't remember was written which was based around the philosophy of 'what would Jesus do?' This man lived his life saying whenever he had to make a decision as to what to do, he would ask the question of himself, hmmm, what would Jesus do and then decide to do that.

Awesome principle because we carry the Holy Spirit in us, where we go we take the Holy Spirit who is intimately linked with Jesus Christ. And so where you and I go God is in reality taken into those situations as well. The problem is that many people say, hey I don't want to take Jesus to the work do or the neighbourhood do or to the rugby game where there is excessive drinking and swearing and stuff.

The shocking truth is however. If Jesus was invited to that do or that game where people were mixing and celebrating and eating together; I am very sure that He would go.

If you were to warp back to AD35 and were looking for Jesus a very sensible place to look for Him would be where ever there was a party going down. Now Jesus never drunk excessively, he never sinned.

But He believed and demonstrated that God in Him and on Him could change the atmosphere of any place and any group of people.

And He was right. Where ever He went, people (all kinds) loved him and enjoyed being around Him and were different people after He left the party.

Here's the thing friends. I would hope that you will get invited to heaps of parties and do's over the next four weeks. I would expect that because people enjoy being around you, the presence of God in you and on you brings joy. But how do you know whether you should accept an invitation or not?

The reality is that Jesus would probably accept all the invitations, but here's the crunch the deciding factor for you when you are invited to hang out with people who are celebrating.

When Jesus went into any party, He changed them, they were impacted by Him and they became better people.

When you look at an invitation you receive to some do over the next few weeks, ask yourself this question, *“if I go, can I go believing that God will work through me so that I can be a kingdom agent for change at that party, or at that do? Or if I go will they in fact influence me and will I start doing things that Jesus would never do?”*

If you have the faith and the self discipline to go and say a few appropriate words about the Lord to people, if you know that you can influence them for God and they are very unlikely to influence you then I say go and be like Jesus at that party. Go with the Lord's blessing.

If on the other hand you look at the do and you think, hey I think I would drink a bit too much with these guys, I think I will be drawn into their way of thinking and into their language and into their jokes etc then don't go. Hold back from that party, hold back from those friendships and get stronger in your faith so that next year you can go and be Jesus to that group of people.

Lets put to death the idea that misery and pain is a sign of real spirituality and believe that hilariously happy people are in fact the ones who are truly spiritual.

It's the party time of the year, and I would pray that because of the life and the love of God, the joy that comes out of your life that everyone would like you to be at their party this year.

Go prayed up, believing, go prepared to scatter seeds of truth, go and transform the do's and the parties in West Auckland this month. May many be changed because of Christ in you. May many leave those dinners and parties different because they met with Jesus there.