

Dinner with Jesus 1
The Call to the Table
Luke 5:27-32

Introduction: As we step into a new year, I would like our church to embrace a new vision called, **Strain to Love: Sharing the Table of Christ**

Vision 2026 – "Every Chair Filled, Every Heart Engaged"

1 Peter 4:8 – "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."

This new vision will challenge us to intentionally engage one another and our neighbors with Christ-like love a love that "goes the extra mile, welcomes all to the table, and makes room for those who need to see Jesus in us," as our vision statement declares.

In 2026, we want to see "*Every Chair Filled, Every Heart Engaged.*" In other words, no one should be left out or left behind. Let's see how Jesus did this for an outcast like Levi.

I. The calling of Levi – Jesus invites an outcast (Luke 5:27–28)

A. Levi's status: Levi (Matthew) was a tax collector for Rome – despised by his fellow Jews as a traitor and "sinner."

1. **Jesus' call:** Jesus saw Levi at his tax booth and said, "**Follow Me.**" (Luke 5:27)
2. **Levi's response:** Levi immediately got up, left **everything**, and followed Jesus. (Luke 5:28) – a life-changing decision.

B. Jesus extended grace to an outcast – no sin or shame disqualifies someone from His call. (*Romans 5:8 – "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*)

1. Jesus calls us as we are, but never leaves us as we are –
2. He will transform us. (Levi the outcast became Matthew the Apostle!)
3. **Jesus model – "Intentionally engage each other"** – Notice and reach out to those whom others overlook. (*In our church, in our community, no one eats alone.*)

II. The celebration at Levi's house – Grace shared at the table (Luke 5:29–30)

A. The background -

1. **Levi's banquet:** To honor Jesus, Levi hosted a great **banquet** at his house, inviting a large crowd of tax collectors and others. (Luke 5:29)
2. **Jesus at the table:** Jesus and His disciples dined with these outcasts – a joyful gathering where society's "sinners" could meet the Savior.

B. The bitterness -

1. **Pharisees' complaint:** The Pharisees and teachers of the law complained, "*Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?*" (Luke 5:30). They were offended that Jesus would befriend such people.

3. **Grace vs. grumbling:** Levi opened his table in love, while the religious leaders stood in judgment. Jesus welcomed those whom society had cast out.
4. **Hospitality as ministry:** Like Levi, use your home and table to help others encounter Jesus. The New Testament calls us to practice **hospitality**. (*Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9*)
5. **The model: "Intentionally engage our community"** – Practice open-hearted hospitality and make room for everyone. "**Pull up another chair**" so more people can experience Christ's love.

III. The criticism answered – Jesus' mission explained (Luke 5:31–32) *The Pharisees question gets a response from Jesus.*

- A. Jesus' purpose stated:** Jesus responded, "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*" (Luke 5:31–32)
- B. Jesus uses two metaphors:**
1. **The Great Physician:** Jesus is the **Great Physician** – He came to heal the spiritually sick (sinners), not those who think they're healthy. His mission is to call sinners to **repentance** (life change). (*"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* – Luke 19:10)
 2. **Mercy over sacrifice:** The self-righteous Pharisees missed God's heart of mercy. Jesus reminded them, "**I desire mercy, not sacrifice.**" (Matthew 9:13, cf. Hosea 6:6)
- C. Our commission:** As the Father sent Jesus, He now sends **us** to reach the lost. (John 20:21) The church is a spiritual **hospital**, not a club for the "righteous" – we welcome all who need Christ.
- D. Our action: "Love is our action word"** – We must strain to love people in practical ways (forgive, serve, include), even when it's hard, because Jesus loved us sacrificially.
- E. Our challenge:** Jesus has prepared a place at His table for **everyone** (John 6:37). Who will you invite? Let's fill every chair and engage every heart with His love!