

9-10-23 Summer Break (Breaking from Bad Theology)

Matthew 9:1-13, 11:28; Mark 2.

No One is Perfect. Even though we are born-again followers of God, that doesn't mean that we are no longer sinners, or have it all figured out. Until we are in the presence of God, in our transformed perfect state we will continue to be sinful. The more honest and aware of this we are the more pliable/teachable we will be while on earth. And the more truthful we are with this the more we will be able to be used of God.

In today's message/challenge we will see how Jesus interacted with sinful unbelievers and apply that to our lives today. We will be challenged to have friends that are not believers, how can we be a light unto the world unless we are in it. I didn't day of it. Also, let those of us that have lots of non-believing acquaintances be convicted, challenged to step out of our comfort zone and look for opportunities to share what and who Jesus is.

Read Matthew 9:1-8.

Jesus was returning to Capernaum, his ministry headquarters and when the people had heard they quickly gathered to see and hear Him. In Mark's account (**Mark 2**), Jesus was so sought out that the house was packed full of people, and no one could get in. According to Mark's account while Jesus was preaching the word, four men brought a paralytic man to Him by removing part of the roof of the house and lowering the paralyzed man down before Jesus.

Read Mark 2:1-4.

Can you imagine this place packed out to where no one could get in and someone removing a section of the roof to lower someone in. Man, some of you would shoot them, while others would call the cops.

But look what Jesus said in **Matthew 9:2**, **"Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."**

Mark 2:5, **"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."**

I. We should see ourselves in the "they, their".

- This could be a pronoun we hold as a badge of honor.
- What is our level of interest in seeing those around us come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior? More importantly, what are you doing to make sure those around you get a chance to hear the gospel?
- This paralytic man had four unnamed men that cared enough about him to bring him to Jesus.
- Remember, back in these times there weren't many, if any, government agencies for him to lean on. It would be on his family to take care of him or a life of begging.
- "They" didn't allow anything to stand in their way, no retreat, no surrender. Can the same be said about us?
- Can you see the desperation? "Their" faith was that if they got this paralytic man to Jesus, He would heal him.

- Matter of fact what moved Jesus in these verses? The situation? The man needing to be healed. The Word says, “when Jesus say their faith...” Now before we head down a path that leads to lots of misinterpretations let me finish. This man was ready to be healed and his sins forgiven, but he needed someone to be faithful enough to share Jesus with him. That’s what these four men did. They were faithful to make sure this meeting happened.
- Are we grabbing Jesus’ attention with our faithfulness in reaching non-believers? Would we be found faithful in our faithfulness to preaching the gospel?
- More on this later in the message.

Read Matthew 9:9-13.

II. We should remember how it was to be like the paralytic man or Matthew.

- Before we met Christ, where were we?
- If we hadn’t been brought to Him, where would we be?
- When Jesus asked/told you to “follow Me” what was your response? At first, my answer was, no way! To be honest sometimes it still is when He leads me in directions I don’t like.
- The paralytic man immediately got up, grabbed his bed, and walked off. And when Matthew was offered to follow Jesus, he did.
- What was the response from the crowd when the paralytic man got up and walked out in front of them?

Matthew 9:8, “Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.”

Mark 2:12, “Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

- Are you living in a way that you are causing others to marvel and glorify God?
- God’s desires that we have faith in Him and remain faithful through our obedience, and He will do marvelous things and be glorified through our life.
- What did Matthew do after he followed Jesus?
- **Read Matthew 9:10.**
- Matthew invited Jesus over for dinner with some of his sinful acquaintances. Can you picture it? Tax collectors, disciples, pharisees, and Jesus in the same room? Only one man in the room was sinless, being judged by the ones full of sin. Man being betrayed by man, betraying against God.
- What was the big deal with tax collectors? They were considered traitors to the other Jews because they were working for the Roman government.
- We are in an eternal war. Don’t we get so worked up about temporal battles and lose sight of the eternal war?
- All too often, even in the family of God, man is braying man, betraying against God.
- Remember who you are and who you are called to be?

III. We must avoid Pharisaical behaviors/attitudes.

- What were the responses of the “religious” elite? To all things King Jesus?
- **Matthew 9:3-6, 11, 23, 34. “This Man blasphemes!” “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” “...they ridiculed Him.” “But the Pharisees said, He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.”**
- Jesus came as a physician does for the sick: not for the righteous, but for the sinners.

David Guzik says, *“This was the principle that the criticizing Pharisees did not understand. The Pharisees were like doctors who wanted to avoid all contact with sick people. Of course, they wished that sick people would become healthy, but they wouldn’t risk getting infected themselves. We are fortunate that God calls sinners and not just saintly people.”*

- It’s telling when we read the Pharisees’ statement. They are just flabbergasted that Jesus would want at all to be around these “unclean” people, these lowlifes. This is not merely an academic question for them or a matter of mental curiosity. They deeply cannot conceive of why someone who claims to be a godly teacher would be in this crowd.
- It’s important for us to hear them because they’re a lot like a lot of churches and a lot of Christians. “Why would you want to be around them?” “I don’t like talking to him.”
- If we are not careful, we can become cynical, even prideful, we must be mindful that we are one step, one comment, or one thought away from having a pharisaical spirit/attitude.
- Is church supposed to be a spotless laboratory or a working hospital?

Application

We do need to acknowledge that many of the “sinners” eventually walked away from Jesus for various reasons, primary among which were the spiritual demands He made, their dislike for the truth, or a misunderstanding of who Jesus really was.

That’s important, but it doesn’t change the fact that there was something about Jesus that drew people to Him – people who thought little of the religious leaders of the day. Something was different about Him.

1. Don’t lose sight of grace.

- **Matthew 9:13.**
- Grace is important to keep in mind as an antidote to spiritual pride.
- Jesus prefaces His comment with **“Go and learn,”** which is a word of rebuke. Kind of like: “Seriously, you don’t understand this elementary stuff?”
- When Jesus speaks of the righteous here, He doesn’t mean those who are full of themselves and holier-than-thou. We know that righteousness through self-effort is impossible. Our only chance at righteousness comes through grace.
- Remember who you were before grace and who you are after grace. It’s sad that some can be worse to deal with after salvation because they forgot how grace works.

2. Quit being shocked that sinners act like sinners.

- We’ve got to embrace people where they are – in their mess.
- Jesus came for messed-up people, not people who have their act together.

- To be brutally honest here, part of the issue may also be that we don't want to deal with their mess. WE have it all figured out and it is easier to sit in our homes, our jobs and not get ourselves dirty dealing with the sins of others.
- We need to recognize that "sinners" are not the enemy – they're the hostages. You're not a very good rescue team if you shoot the hostages!

3. Ask the Father to help you see them as He does.

- **Matthew 9:9.**
- We need to confess our lack of love for people that God has said are important to Him and seek His forgiveness.
- Often, we evaluate people based on their usefulness to us, not on their value to God. The unsaved person who is far from God is likely to be a drag on your life for a long time before he is a source of joy or strength. Do I see that as something to avoid because he's not useful to me?
- We must be willing to accept someone as a work-in-progress (not unlike we are). Instead of being quick to judge where all they're falling short, we need to consider what God sees in them that's worthwhile.
- Part of interacting with non-Christians and growing to love them has to do with asking more questions rather than feeling like we always must have all the answers. We've often learned in evangelism seminars and sermons that we should be shoving the truth down their throats every time there's an opening.
- In truth, listening and caring usually makes more headway. That's not to say that we don't know the truth or share the truth, just that we must know them and care for them first.

Conclusion

Three questions to ponder:

- 1. How many non-believer friends/acquaintances do I have?**
 - We often circle the wagons and only have church friends.
 - This problem gets worse the longer we're Christians.
 - As you look at your life right now, can you name five unsaved friends you have?
 - Consider the statement in **v. 11** – they are dumbfounded that a holy man would want to be near these sinners. It's all-too-easy for our mission to slide from holiness-by-transformation to holiness-by-separation.
- 2. How many do I enjoy being around?**
 - Jesus obviously enjoyed being around these folks – it's evident in their response to Him. He genuinely loved them and enjoyed them.
 - We don't like them.
 - We get offended by their questionable behavior.
 - Rather than seeing the valuable person behind the action, we see only the sinful action.
 - We make it clear by our actions that we don't want to be around them.
 - Yancey talking to the prostitute: "Have you thought about going to church?" "Why would I go to church? I feel bad enough about myself already."

3. What in my life would they want?

- We want those away from God to become Christians. As they look at our lives, what about our lives is drawing them toward God?
- Do they see an attractive mercy?
- Do they see an attractive joy?
- Do they see an attractive peace?
- Or do they think of coming to God as something that you'd have to do as a concession to not wanting to go to hell rather than a joyful acceptance of abundant life?

To those that don't know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, will you change directions today?