

Matthew 9:9-13 June 29, 2014

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. **10** While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. **11** When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" **12** On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. **13** But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Invite Kids up to the front.

[Display a picture of a stethoscope.] Who uses one of these? A doctor does. And what is it called? A stethoscope. What does the doctor listen to with this stethoscope? He listens to things inside of us – our heart pumping, our lungs breathing, maybe our tummy gurgling.



When does a person usually go to see a doctor? When sick. What do we want the doctor to do? Make us better.

Every person, all of us, have something terribly wrong with us from when we were born. It is something wrong inside of us. A medical doctor can't do anything to make this better. It is called "sin." There is only one person who can heal us from sin. Who is that person? Jesus. He doesn't use a stethoscope like this [point to it].

What does Jesus use to heal us from our sin? Himself. [Hold up a picture collection of Jesus' life.]



Jesus came, Jesus lived, Jesus never sinned, Jesus was punished and died on a cross to take away all the sins of everybody who has ever lived. And Jesus is alive again.

Today we heard how Jesus knew Matthew and he came to Matthew. He did this for many others when he was teaching on earth. Jesus still comes to help us too. How does Jesus come to you and me as a doctor to heal our soul? [Show a Bible and open it.] He talks to us here. He tells us who he is and what he has done to take our sin away and save us. He says: "Trust in me." These words have the power to give us faith in Jesus. He heals us with the promises in his word.

So as you listen to the sermon, every time you hear words from the Bible, understand: Jesus is talking to you as your doctor to heal you and to make you strong in your faith in him. *[Adapted from a children's message by Pastor Tom Spiedel]*

Invite Kids to return to sit with their families.

It's amazing how little we know about him. Matthew writes about himself individually only this once. Mark and Luke also record Matthew's call and what unfolds in the wake. But the only other time Matthew's name is mentioned in the Bible is the lists of Jesus' 12 disciples (Matthew 10; Mark 3; Luke 6; Acts 1). By the way, who knows his other name? It is Levi. Though very little is written about Matthew in the Bible, I want you to find a wealth of benefit and encouragement from Matthew's personal story.

The first lesson to learn from Matthew's life story is... it is our life story too.

If you've spent some time in a church that has faithfully taught God's truth, I'm pretty sure you'll find no trouble identifying with Matthew. Let me put that another way: we're quick to celebrate God's grace to sinners!

You – I – know God's holy standard. You – I – have done everything to deserve God's just anger. You – I – can do nothing to deserve God's kindness and blessings. God came to you – me. He brought us to know and believe: *"Because of His great love for us, God who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our sins – it is by grace you have been saved" (Eph.2:5). In Jesus – through faith in his blood – we have the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace (Eph.1:7).*

We quickly arrive at a 2nd standout truth here. Matthew quickly acts in a way that expresses what grace is: If it is undeserved & offered to me, it must mean it is offered for all. And so the first thing we hear Matthew do: he prepares a feast, he invites those he knows, and there's a lot of people like him that gather.

And what does Jesus do? Does he pull Matthew aside and speak in a hushed voice: "Matthew, this is a little much. I've got a reputation to uphold. Isn't it enough that I've welcomed you, one tax collector? I mean grace is great and all, but there's got to be a limit!" No.

What Jesus did was striking! One little word got overlooked by the NIV in translation. It leads off the 2nd part of vs.10, and in contemporary English we might say: "Well, take a look at that!" So many tax collectors and sinners, and who is right in the midst of them? Jesus. He came to call sinners to repentance. He came to offer His healing to the sin sick souls. God our Savior wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2).

Now comes the tension in the story. Jesus' behavior on this day was strikingly "appalling" to some. Hear the hostility: "What's your teacher doing eating with the likes of them?" Really analyze the issue: the Pharisees are hostile, but to what? The answer is: to grace. Let's just unwrap that thought a little.

Everyone identified Matthew, and his acquaintances, as "sinners." Matthew did in vs.10. Jesus did in his words in vs.13. Sandwiched in between, the Pharisees did.

But there's an important distinction between how Jesus uses that term and the way the Pharisees do. The Pharisees are saying: "There is no place in our church for sinners like that." Jesus is saying: "My Church is the place for sinners to come, because only here – only from me – are sinners able to be healed of sin's burden and death."

Now you've got another doctrinal point to appreciate in Matthew's little autobiographical snippet. See the importance of preaching the law. The law must be spoken to identify sin – to convict people – to bring us to see our hopeless condition and need for a Savior from sin's curse.

The Pharisees thought all was well with them. In their warped thinking they lived upstanding lives, above the level of "sinners." They were in denial: they didn't think they needed God's mercy. They in arrogance and pride even thought God should withhold his mercy from those who truly felt sin's sickness and who were coming to hear/receive the cure (namely, Matthew and "the likes" of him).

Jesus directs them to an Old Testament section. It is a place where God speaks law to a group who thought they deserved God's favor. They thought God would be happy with them because of their sacrifices offered to Him. Well, God wasn't happy – he never will be happy – with such an attitude. If the Pharisees would only hear God's Word, they would be convicted by the law. The law must be spoken to those who are caught in the delusion that they are self-righteous. The Pharisees needed their eyes opened to their need for a Savior.

As a believer in Jesus, you know your sin and you know you cannot make things right with God. You appreciate that Jesus' grace means: your forgiveness, His gift of righteousness, spiritual healing and acceptance from God – this all through faith in Jesus.

Still, it is important for us to hear the law. Why? How many times – in weakness – do you show a pharisaical attitude? Do some honest soul-searching with me for a moment. How do you view people – how do you "size them up" when you cross paths? When you see a person covered in tattoos, sporting a nose ring, the man with hair half way down his back, or the woman with dyed jet black hair and a similar black shade covering her lips, have you treated them the same way as someone fitting your notion of ideal or normal? When you see a man or woman, all dressed up fine, stepping out of their ritzy automobile, have you ever thought they probably only care about money and things? When you see a person dressed in what you'd consider shabby, have you ever

thought they're just probably a punk or low-life? And when you "size up" people, whoever they are and however they look, do you see them as a soul whom Jesus loves, for whom he died? Is that the primary factor in the way we view them and the motivating factor by which our actions toward them are guided and moved?

You and I have to admit the times our actions, or lack of them, have been a perversion from God's mercy.

This is why we rejoice over the sight of Jesus dining with Matthew and the others with him whose eyes were open to their sins. Our eyes are open to our sins. And so we come here each week. And we confess our sins. We view our church as a hospital for sinners. Jesus is here to give us his news & healing: "I am your forgiveness – your life. Remain in me."

Oh, do we ever identify with Matthew! We rejoice in God's grace to us. We want others to know it too.

As I say "we want others to know God's grace too," let me give you this to chew on. Those outside the Christian church will often identify us in our churches with someone seen in this section of Matthew. Guess who? In many cases, the answer is: The Pharisees. Now before you get in a tizzy over this assessment, let me tell you: if you'll take the time to listen to people, they've often got reasons for feeling this way – reasons that can't simply be dismissed. That doesn't mean their conclusion is accurate about you and me. But, are you willing to understand: many have been misled?

There are those in Christian churches that give the impression that you've got to act a certain way or dress a certain way or have a certain status. If people have encountered Christianity and Christians where the image is: everyone has it together and lives are all pristine here, if there isn't an openness and honesty to exude "we're here because our church is a hospital for sinners," what kind of conclusion do you expect outsiders to draw? I read an article that gave the assessment: "Broader society often dismisses the [Christian] church today because it is perceived as fake."

Lord, keep us from giving any such impression.

See things from the outsider's view, and you have all the more reason to communicate – and repeat often – and live out the lessons we learn from Matthew's life story: we are sinners right alongside everyone else – God in grace has called & washed & made us his people – we want everyone to experience this same outcome God has brought us to enjoy. May the Holy Spirit increase our faith to hold to this and to give a clear, genuine witness to the same! Amen.