**JESUS CAME TO CALL SINNERS**

Mark 2:13-17

Key Verse 17

 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

**Introduction**



 Proverbs 29:28 reads, “Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction.” In today’s passage, Jesus calls Levi the tax collector to be one of his disciples. “As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth.” People saw Levi as a traitor and a very selfish sinner who had no hope to become even a normal human being. But Jesus saw him with the hope and vision of God and raised him as a great man of God. Let us learn from Jesus how we should see people with the hope of God. In chapter 1, Jesus clarified the reason why he had come to the world, that is to preach. Here in chapter 2, Jesus pointed out that he has come to call sinners. His life purpose is to restore sinners to be men and women of God once again to give render glory to God.

 Without Jesus we are all sinsick. But the good news is this: Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, faith in him and new life in him. When we come to him just as we are, he does not condemn us. He grants us the forgiveness of our sins and calls us to follow him. We must also see this nation America with the vision of Jesus. People talk about many negative aspects of life in America. But when we look at her, we can see a great vision of the Lord. She is filled with able yet individualistic young people. Jesus sees in each person great potential to become a great man and woman of God. Jesus wants to invite each of us to accept him as their Savior, follow him and grow to be influential men and women of God. Let us follow him. Let us call our lost friends to come and follow Jesus together with us.

1. Read verses 13-14a. What did Jesus do for a large crowd? (13) What does Levi’s occupation tell us about him? (14a)

1-1, Read verses 13-14a.

 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth.

1-2, What did Jesus do for a large crowd? (13)

 ***Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.***

* Jesus fulfilled the focus of His ministry as described in Mark 1:38 after His prayer. “Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” Jesus knew how to stay on focus.
* Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.

1-3, What does Levi’s occupation tell us about him? (14a)

 ***As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth.***

* Levi was a tax collector. In that day, tax collectors were despised as traitors, for they worked for the Roman government and had the force of Roman soldiers behind them to make people pay taxes.
* They could keep money after they over-collected. A tax collector bid among others for the tax collecting “contract.” For example, many tax collectors might want to have the “tax contract” for a city like Capernaum.
* The Romans awarded the contract to the highest bidder. The man collected the taxes, paid the Romans what he promised, and kept the remainder. Therefore, there was a lot of incentive for tax collectors to over-charge and cheat any way they could. It was pure profit for them.
* When a Jew entered the customs service he was regarded as an outcast from society. He was disqualified as a judge or a witness in a court session and was excommunicated from the synagogue, and his disgrace extended to his family.
* Levi might have thought that money would make him happy. But in the course of making money he became a person who was called as a public sinner.
* He knew that this would happen but he did not care as long as he could make money. In short, Levi became a selfish man.
* Levi had some money, but lost everything else – his national identity, his own people and his noble humanity for the sake of money. He became lonely.
* Now he was sitting in his tax collector booth all by himself. Nobody approached him. People took detours not to encounter with him even by chance.
* To people's eyes, Levi was too dirty to look at. He looked too selfish to be considered as a normal human being.
* But Jesus did not think so. Jesus went to his tax booth, saw Levi sitting there and invited him by saying, “Follow me.” Jesus called Levi, this able, selfish and despised sinner, to a new life with Jesus.
* Jesus had the hope of God that Levi could be changed from a selfish man to a great man of God.
* Jesus saw that Levi was a human being created in the image of God. Jesus saw Levi as a man of great ability, but he did not know how to use his God-given abilities. Jesus saw the greatness of God in him. Jesus saw him with God’s hope.
* Also in the Parable of the Lost Coin(Luke 15), the searcher is a woman who lost one of her ten silver coins. She lights a lamp, sweeps the whole house and search carefully until she finds.
* Finding a lost coin is not an easy task. The lost coin may be in a dusty area perhaps hidden underneath large furniture. Levi was like a lost coin.
1. Read verse 14b. What did Jesus’ words “follow me” mean to Levi? What might have led him to follow Jesus decisively?

2-1, Read verse 14b.

 “Follow me,” Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

2-2, What did Jesus’ words “follow me” mean to Levi?

***“Follow me,” Jesus told him,***

* “Follow me!” means to Levi that he was asked to turn his life direction from chasing after money to hoard it, into following Jesus as His disciple.
* As the hoarder of money, Levi might have had difficulties in making decision about how to spend money. Especially giving away money was not easy for him, even painful to do so. Jesus’ invitation must be a very practical challenge for him.
* When Jesus said to Levi, “follow me,” it was much more than the literal meaning of the two words: “follow me.” It was his formal invitation to His discipleship.
* In other words, it meant “Come! Join me as my disciple.” No prominent teacher would say this kind of remark to invite a stranger.
* Jesus already knew what kind of person Levi was and yet called him to one of His disciples.
* “Follow Me” - Jesus is urging Levi not to linger in his sinful lifestyle and its terrible consequences any more. Jesus is also promising him that He will be Levi’s personal teacher, his master and leader.
* Jesus wants to transform Levi into St. Matthew, His apostle and the writer of the Book of Matthew.
* Jesus invited him to change his life purpose from self-seeking to doing the fulfilling and meaningful work of God.
* This is a calling for all of us. We are called to believe in Jesus for our salvation. Moreover, we are called to follow Jesus.
* Our Christian life does not end with believing in Jesus. It begins with believing in Jesus. Our life as Christians do not end with receiving a baptism but it is much more.
* Jesus calls us to follow him personally one by one. This means, “Come and learn of me and be my disciple. I want to be your Savior, mentor and friend.”
* We are called to follow Jesus. Christianity is all about Jesus. He should be our focus and passion. We are not to follow the trends of this world blindly.
* The Bible says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)
* We are not to follow money, pleasure, fame blindly. We are called to follow Jesus. We are called to model our lives according to Jesus’ life on earth.
* We are to imitate him. We must let go of our natural self and be transformed to have the image of Jesus in our hearts.
* This is not possible with our human will or effort but it is possible when Christ lives in us by the Holy Spirit.

2-3, What might have led him to follow Jesus decisively?

***and Levi got up and followed him.***

* Levi must have been a wealthy young man. But material success could not make him happy. Rather he lived a life of guilt and shame with bad reputation.
* While everyone was heading to the lake to see Jesus, he alone remained in the tax collector’s booth.
* It was not because he loved his job so much that he didn’t go to see Jesus. Rather he thought that going there was an unfit action for a sinner like him.
* He was sitting inside the tax collector’s booth. He was lonely. He was stuck in sins without hope.
* But now thanks to Jesus’ personal visit and divine calling, Levi got up and followed him. He didn’t hesitate or look back whatever was behind him including the pleasures of his self-seeking and sinful lifestyle in the past.
* He instantly left the place. When he believed Jesus, his life was passed from death to life. What a great transaction!
* He knew that he didn’t deserve such a call from Jesus, and likely didn’t expect it at all. But when a change came, he readily followed Jesus.
1. Read verses 15-17. How did Levi celebrate his new life? (15) Why did the Pharisees criticize Jesus? (16) How did Jesus answer them? (17) What does this show about the purpose of His coming?

3-1, Read verses 15-17.

 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

3-2, How did Levi celebrate his new life? (15)

***15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.***

* Levi opened a big farewell party before following his master Jesus. It was a happy day that he could never forget. So he invited all of his tax collectors friends and other people considered as social outcasts or sinners.
* The presence of Jesus was the highlight in the celebration. How could these sinners have such an opportunity to eat with him?
* Jesus allowed himself to be with them. And it was his joy to be with them because of Levi’s repentance and new life.

3-3, Why did the Pharisees criticize Jesus? (16)

***16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”***

* However, the teachers of the law could not understand that Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners. They challenged his disciples with their legalistic view.

3-4, How did Jesus answer them? (17)

***17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”***

* A doctor is needed to the sick. If nobody is sick, we don’t need a doctor. But when people get sick, they become in great need of a doctor.
* Suppose that a doctor does not want to associate himself with the sick, but only with the healthy people. Such a doctor is useless.
* Jesus compared himself with a doctor and people of the world with the sick. Levi knew that he was sick and needed a doctor. He was aware of his needs.
* He knew that he was a sinner before God and was in great need for the Savior who could save him from his sinful life.
* So when Jesus called him, he accepted his invitation humbly. He was so happy to receive the forgiveness of his sins, the privilege to follow Jesus, learn of Jesus and grow in Jesus as a holy man of God.
* But the Pharisees were self-righteous and proud. They were sick, too. They were sinners, too, for they were not aware of their spiritual conditions.
* They were not aware of their desperate need for the Savior who came to save them. They thought they were healthy. They were righteous before God. They were ready to criticize Jesus, putting themselves higher than Jesus.
* What Jesus is saying this: Jesus came to call a person like Levi who knew himself as a sinner before God.
* But in this passage we find Jesus a spiritual physician who forgives, accepts, and heals a man with great sins.
* This spiritual physician is also for us. He came to heal our sin-sick souls. Today we have heard about him how he touched and healed Levi.
* Many of us have already received the healing touch of Jesus. I hope and pray that we may continue following Jesus, hearing from him and obeying his commands.
* Many young people may realize that Jesus is willing to heal you and is calling them to join him for a fulfilling work of God!
* Our lives may become living testimonies to reveal his transforming power to clearly tell the world that he came to call sinners!

3-5, What does this show about the purpose of His coming?

* The purpose of Jesus’ coming is to call sinners and heal the sick. Medical doctor works hard to heal the sick.
* Likewise Jesus wants to heal the sin sick people with the hope that they would be healed from sins.
* May the Lord help us to learn of Jesus’ purpose in serving campus students and our growing children with the same hope and vision. Amen.

**Conclusion**

Jesus did not try to change him overnight. Jesus showed Levi his sacrificial life of serving God and giving himself to others as the example. Jesus wanted Levi to learn of him and grow to be a sacrificial shepherd and friend for others. One of the greatness that Levi had was to record, especially, who paid tax and who did not. After following Jesus, Levi was changed into Matthew, the author of Matthew’s gospel, which begins with this, “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:” Uniquely he also recorded Jesus’ sermons on the mount in his gospel. We can see how God used his gift of recording greatly.

In the past, Levi’s motto was “Seek money first.” Later he was changed in Jesus and quoted Jesus’ word in Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.” Who could ever imagine that this Levi would be Matthew, one of the gospel writers? This is a good news for all those who are majoring in business. Here we learn the very important truth about how we must see others. It is easy to see others’ weaknesses, selfishness, all kinds of faults and criticize them and find no hope in them. Instead, we must learn from Jesus how we see others. Just as Jesus saw Levi with the great hope of God, we also must see people with the hope of God. With God’s shepherd heart, we may call sinners to Jesus and His life transforming words diligently. Amen.

**One word: Follow Me!**