

# Dinner with the Mob

10.29.17

Mark 2:13–17 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. <sup>14</sup> As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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?"

<sup>17</sup> 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."

## 1. It's true that we are known by the company that we keep.

A. Our friends have a tremendous influence on us.

1. That's why parents warn kids not to hangout with the wrong crowd.
2. Or why it's important for us as adults to be careful who we spend most of our time with.
3. Generally speaking, we don't change the crowd the crowd changes us.

B. This kind of thinking is what made Jesus' actions so scandalous.

1. The Jews understood from the Old Testament that the wrong people, the wrong places, and the wrong things could cause your holiness to "rub off".
  - a. We talked about this a little a few weeks ago with Jesus and the leper.
  - b. His uncleanness separated him from God and from community.

2. The same was said about tax collectors and sinners.

- a. Tax collectors were Jews who worked for the Roman government.
- b. They made their living by padding the amount of taxes they collected.
- c. They could charge as much as they wanted as long as Rome got their share.
- d. For this reason, tax-collectors were ostracized and treated as untouchable, unredeemable, and un-loveable.
- e. To have dinner with these tax-collectors was like Jesus having lunch with the mob.

## 2. Jesus is attracted to these people.

A. Have you noticed a pattern or purpose in Jesus life?

1. He attracts the:

- a. Hurting
- b. Broken
- c. The sinful
- d. The untouchable.

2. Jesus doesn't only attract them, he calls these people to follow him.

B. To be a follower of Jesus is to be a disciple of Jesus.

1. A disciple is someone who submits themselves to another person's ways, style, purpose and direction.

- a. If you are a disciple of Beethoven, you study all of his music and try to master his style.
- b. If you are a disciple of Warren Buffett, you invest and think about money like he does and you do all you can to learn from him.

c. If you are a disciple of Jesus, then you do all you can to be like him.

2. Jesus called Levi (Matthew) to follow him.

a. This was a call of discipleship.

b. Jesus was asking Levi to:

1. Stop robbing people with unfair taxes.

2. To stop working for himself and his own personal gain.

3. To give up everything and to become like Jesus.

3. Levi wasn't the only tax collector to follow Jesus.

a. Verse 15 says that many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

b. Jesus had a table full of the un-loveable, unredeemable, and untouchable.

C. Some of you may feel like this.

1. How can God ever love you?

a. Why would God ever want you?

b. Where could God even use you?

2. These questions are not questions God asks!

a. He came to earth to heal the broken, to redeem the oppressed, and to call the outcast.

b. Jesus declared in verse 17 "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

3. There is a lie going around that tells you that God can't love you.

a. Many of us believe it.

b. But that is a lie.

c. And Jesus' actions in the book of Mark prove it.

### 3. Jesus doesn't only call sinners to be disciples, he invites them to His table.

A. As soon as Levi chooses to follow Jesus, he invites Jesus over to his house for a meal.

1. This was a big deal.

2. The class of people you ate meant everything to the Jews and the religious leaders.

a. IF you were a self-respected Jew and Rabbi, there were certain people you didn't eat with.

b. And tax-collectors and other sinners were people you didn't eat with.

c. What's the big deal?

B. To share a meal with someone was to share life with them.

1. "Eating together was an offer of peace, trust, brotherhood and forgiveness: in short, sharing a table meant sharing life".<sup>i</sup>

2. When Jesus knowingly sat down and shared a meal with Levi and his friends, Jesus was declaring his purpose for coming.

a. His purpose was not to make good people great.

b. His purpose was to make sinners saved.

3. Jesus willingly shared life with people who had no life.

a. Jesus willingly shared peace with those who knew not peace.

b. Jesus willingly trusted those that no one else trusted.

c. Jesus willingly forgave those that no one could forgive.

C. Every time we share in communion, we celebrate Jesus willingness to come and call the sinners!

1. Communion is a reminder that none of us are righteous or perfect by ourselves.
2. We could never have cleaned ourselves up enough for Jesus to love us.
3. When Jesus first loved us we were a lot like Levi:
  - a. Committed to serving evil empires and mistreating those we were called to love.
  - b. But if Jesus can call a cheat like Levi to follow him, He can just as easily call you and I!
4. If today you feel unloved, unforgiveable and forgotten know that that is a lie from Satan and not a promise from God.

#### 4. This is why Our church should reflect the diversity of Jesus' table.

A. At Jesus' table that day were all kinds of people.

1. You had the super religious that no-one can make happy.
2. You had the disciples who were following Jesus and trying to figure out what he was doing.
3. And you have those who were just happy to be invited!

B. These are the people that the Kingdom of God focuses upon.

1. Jesus is not focused upon those you think they deserve to go to heaven.
2. Jesus does not focus upon those who earn their way to heaven.
3. Jesus focuses upon those who are simply happy to be invited.
  - a. Jesus illustrates this in a powerful parable found in Matthew 22:2-10

**Matthew 22:2-10** (NIV)

<sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. <sup>3</sup> He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

<sup>4</sup> “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

<sup>5</sup> “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. <sup>6</sup> The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

<sup>8</sup> “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. <sup>9</sup> So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ <sup>10</sup> So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

C. When I look around this church, I see a diversity of people.

1. Those who have served God all their lives.
2. And those who are new to following Jesus.
3. There are those who years ago gave up their habits and addictions and those that are still trying.
4. When I come on to the parking lot on Sundays and Mondays:
  1. I find cigarette butts and liquor bottles.
  2. My messages and calendar are full of conversations and appointments discussing God’s love and grace with those whose lives are not where they want to be or need to be.
  3. And what makes my heart happy is that our church looks a lot like Jesus’ table.
  4. Both this church and Jesus table are full of imperfect people being made perfect by Jesus!

5. Those that the world may consider untouchable, unredeemable, or un-loveable we are called to embrace with the full love of Jesus!

### Close:

A. This morning, are you a tax-collector or a Pharisee?

1. The tax-collector knew that he needed Jesus.
2. The Pharisees couldn't see their need because they were too concerned with what everyone else was doing wrong.

B. If you relate more with the sinners, you are in good company.

1. You are the kind of person Jesus came to save.
2. Jesus isn't afraid of your past.
3. He is afraid that your past will rob you of your future with him.
4. NO matter who you are and what you have done, there is room for you at Jesus' table.

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<sup>i</sup> Quote from Robert Guelich, Word Biblical Comm 34a, page 103.