

They that are sick

Matthew 9:9-13

- Matthew, the writer of the gospel we'll read from today, appears within the context of his own book
- He was sitting at the receipt of custom when Jesus said to him "follow me"
- Soon, Jesus was at his house, eating with other tax collectors and sinners
- This was a problem for some of the people nearby

- Jesus had something to say about their objection
- It has everything to do with the people Jesus came to save
- "They that are sick"
- And that is our theme on this edition

- Jesus' ministry is underway in this early part of Matthew
- He is calling disciples unto Himself
- One of the disciples He calls is Levi or Matthew
- This man was a publican, and is also the writer of our text today

- There is an issue that arises in the text that can be found throughout Jesus' ministry
- It has to do with the company He keeps
- Is He in the presence of well-known sinners?
- This is the question on the minds of some in this account

- Let's read all five verses, then take a closer look at each one...

Matthew 9:9-13

9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

- There are some well-known phrases in this account
- It's time to look at them in more detail...

Matthew 9:9

9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

- Just prior to this account, Jesus healed a paralyzed man
- As He was on His way from that house, he saw Matthew
- This is the same person called Levi in Mark and Luke
- He is called a publican (or tax collector) in Luke 5
- He was sitting at the custom house - or the place where customs taxes were collected
- Jesus said those famous words to him: follow me
- Matthew reacted
- He arose and followed Him
- This may have been the beginning of the irritation we see later in the account
- As the Pharisees, and most others in society, had a problem with tax collectors
- They were considered dishonest, almost always with good reason
- This was because they charged too much and took a little for themselves
- Whatever the case, Matthew followed
- And he arranged a gathering for a meal, which Jesus attended...

Matthew 9:10

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

- The people invited to this gathering were the people you would expect to be invited by a publican
- Other tax collectors, sinners
- People that were indeed sinners, like all of us, but also considered to be sinners by the wider society
- Keep in mind, Jesus is in the midst of His ministry at this point
- Remember Jesus' mission, relayed to us by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:15...

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

- This is the same word we find for sinners in our text
- Jesus is eating with sinners
- The people He came to save
- Some nearby have a problem with this...

Matthew 9:11

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

- Unlike publicans, Pharisees were seen by society in a very different way
- They were the pious - the ultra-religious

- And whether everyone else in society saw them this way or not, they certainly saw themselves this way
- They were the religious law-keepers
- Those holding others to account, too
- They would not have eaten with sinners
- And they didn't approve of Jesus (or His disciples) eating with sinners
- But there is a very large problem with this way of thinking
- They were sinners too, according to Romans 3:10-12...

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

- So, while they may have been keeping some of God's laws
- And some of the laws they created for themselves, beyond God's laws
- They were not without sin
- But Jesus makes a statement that takes into account their perspective...

Matthew 9:12

12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

- By this, Jesus is not confirming that the Pharisees are whole
- Or that they are the healthy ones
- The fact is, no one believing themselves to be whole, needs a physician
- But Jesus, the Great Physician, came only to save those who are sick
- These refuse to believe they are sick
- But Jesus will continue offering Himself to people who humbly admit reality
- Who reject their own pride and arrogance
- Who realize they are sinners by birth and sinners by choice
- And, instead of adopting false piety, throw themselves upon His mercy
- Trusting in Him alone
- This is what He has come to do...

Matthew 9:13

13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

- Jesus told these religious Jews to learn the meaning of Hosea 6:6...

"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

- This is not to say God had not required sacrifices, He had
- Essentially, this was a way of God saying "I prefer mercy to sacrifice"
- Or "I am more pleased with acts of benevolence and kindness than with a mere external compliance with the duties of religion"

- Jesus did not come to call those with perceived righteousness
- Or self-righteousness

- He only came to call sinners
- Those who could, because they acknowledged their sin, turn from it
- And turn to Him

- I wonder how we perceive ourselves?
- Are we among the sick who need a physician?
- Or, are we the healthy and the whole?
- And what is the truth?

- When we admit the truth
- We can come to Him
- He is ever-merciful, and ever-kind

Christopher Harper, Take Note 2023