

## Jesus The Friend Of All Sinners.

Text: Mark 2:13-17

Suggested Hymns:

426, 317, 335, 320, 165

1) Jesus Calls One Of Them To Be His Disciple

2) Jesus Dines With Other Sinners

3) Jesus Justifies His Actions

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 2:13–17, <sup>13</sup> *Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them.* <sup>14</sup> *As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him.*

<sup>15</sup> *Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi’s house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.*

<sup>16</sup> *And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, “How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?”*

<sup>17</sup> *When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Jesus was a popular Preacher. He attracted great crowds wherever He went, as we read in the first verse of our text: “<sup>13</sup> *Then [Jesus] went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them.*”

When Jesus wanted to preach at the seaside, they pressed upon Him so that He had to step into a fisherman’s boat. When He healed the paralytic, the crowd was so great that the four men uncovered the roof to let the sick man down.<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus went into the wilderness, He fed five thousand and at another time four thousand men. It must have delighted the hearts of the disciples to see the people come to their Master.

True, other leaders and preachers have gathered still greater crowds or have preached to more people at one time. However, they were not on that account the equals of Christ. Jesus was different.

Jesus could not only call masses to Himself, but He was also able to help them, whether they were physically ailing or whether they needed rest for their souls. Jesus is the real Physician, He is the Saviour of men. He taught as one having authority, the authority of the Son of God.

Jesus had a mission and a message. We read in Matthew 28:18, <sup>18</sup> *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* And in Matthew 18:11, <sup>11</sup> *For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.*

And in 1 John 3:8, *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*

Think of His dealings with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well in John 4, or with the man at Bethesda as we read in John 5:5-9.

<sup>5</sup> *Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.* <sup>6</sup> *When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"* <sup>7</sup> *The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."* <sup>8</sup> *Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."* <sup>9</sup> *And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.*

There is one blessed truth that stands out in all of Christ's work and dealings, and that is also brought out in our text. It is this, that Jesus is the Friend of sinners.

The hymnist wrote, *"Jesus sinners doth receive. O may all this saying ponder."*<sup>2</sup> Yes let us do that today. Jesus really came to save that which was lost. Our theme is: — *Jesus the Friend of All Sinners.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

## **1. Jesus the Friend of All Sinners**

### **Jesus Calls One Of Them To Be His Disciple.**

This story of the calling of Levi is recorded by three evangelists, by Mark, Matthew,<sup>3</sup> and Luke.<sup>4</sup> As an occurrence in Christ's public ministry it must have shocked the self-righteous enemies of Jesus terribly.

Disciples are pupils, or scholars. We know how the Saviour called His first followers at the Sea of Galilee. He found Simon and Andrew, James and John. He called them to come and follow Him, promising to make them fishers of men. They forsook all and followed Jesus. They were unlearned, uncultured men at the time. But they had an honourable occupation, that of fishing.

In our text, however, the case is different. Jesus passes a man who is sitting at the receipt of custom, a tax collector, Levi by name, and Jesus calls him to be a disciple.

Now, tax-collectors were despised because of their corrupt practises in collecting taxes from the Jews, and as we learn from the story of Zacchaeus. The Jews had reason to fear them.

The Tax-collectors were mentioned in the same breath with sinners, with the outcasts of society, with thieves and harlots. Such a person Jesus calls to be His disciple.

People try to select people of influence and honour when they start a movement, but Jesus chooses sinners. Men are cliquish, Jesus is not. He calls Levi, and Levi forsakes all and follows Jesus. He became a true disciple, later called Matthew, the writer of our first Gospel. We are told that he laboured fifteen years at Jerusalem and afterwards among the Ethiopians, Medes, and Persians.

Today Jesus also walks through the country, calling disciples and followers. He does so through the Gospel. Some people, by the grace of God, answer this call and become faithful followers, but others ignore it entirely. Not many are willing to leave all and follow Jesus, as did Levi.

How do we compare with Levi? Are we following Christ? Are we living the life of a disciple? Are we putting our faith into action? Do we love Jesus as

much as did Levi, to the extent of leaving all for Him? Jesus called Levi, and Jesus calls us.

## **2. Jesus The Friend Of All Sinners Jesus Dines With Other Sinners.**

We are told in our text that Jesus *was dining in Levi's house*, and *that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples*.

At Levi's table a crowd gathered. The invited ones were acquaintances of Levi, men of his own walk of life and who had lived the same kind of life as he. They were his friends and associates in the "business of tax and toll gathering." "*Many tax collectors and sinners*" were there. It was a table at which the Jewish leaders would dare not sit for fear of defilement.

Jesus, however, sat down with these "*tax collectors and sinners.*" He lowered Himself in order to raise others. No one was too lowly and despised for Him. This was in keeping with His state of humiliation, or emptiness, in which Jesus was made in the likeness of men and made Himself of no reputation and was found in the fashion of men.

We read in Philippians 2:5-8, *<sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

If we ask what kind of sinners were acceptable to Jesus, we find the answer in such stories as that of Zacchaeus, who shows himself truly penitent, or the tax-collector in the Temple.

The Scriptures teach us in Psalm 51:17, *<sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.* And in Psalm 32:5, *<sup>5</sup> I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.*

We also read in Isaiah 42:3, *<sup>3</sup> A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.* And in

John 6:37, <sup>37</sup> *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

Penitent, believing sinners are acceptable with God.

How thankful we ought to be that Jesus accepts sinners and not only people of wealth and such, as occupy a high station in life. How many of us would hope to be saved if Jesus had not humbled Himself by associating with tax-collector and sinners? — The Gospel appeals especially to the lowlier classes of people.

### **3. Jesus The Friend Of All Sinners.**

#### **Jesus Justifies His Actions.**

Our text says, <sup>16</sup> *And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, “How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?”*

They were, or at least pretended to be, offended by the action of Jesus, as we repeatedly read in the gospels. For example, the woman of whom we read Luke Chapter 7 had just washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, when the self-righteous Pharisees objected, saying in Luke 7:39, *“This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.”*

Likewise we read in Luke 15:1-2, <sup>1</sup> *Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.* <sup>2</sup> *And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”* It has always been that way.

For that reason St. Paul tells his readers in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, <sup>26</sup> *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.* <sup>27</sup> *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;* <sup>28</sup> *and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,* <sup>29</sup> *that no flesh should glory in His presence.*

Now, what did Jesus say in response to the comment of the Pharisees, ***“This Man receives sinners and eats with them?”*** Did Jesus agree to what His fault-finders said? Not for a moment. Jesus did not yield an inch.

Likewise Paul did not yield an inch when he faced false doctrine, nor did Luther in 1529 at Marburg, nor did our fathers in 1530 at Augsburg. There was no compromise.

On the contrary, Jesus pointed out the wrong attitude of His critics. Our text says, <sup>17</sup> ***When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”***

This passage, at first reading, seems to offer a difficulty. However, to the student of Scriptures, to the Bible Christian, there is no difficulty.

There are no people in this world who are ***“well,”*** that is, without sin, or entirely righteous of themselves. Scripture is very clear on this. We read in Psalm 14:3, <sup>3</sup> ***They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.***

And Ecclesiastes 7:20, <sup>20</sup> ***For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.*** Or Job 14:4, <sup>4</sup> ***Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!***

However, there are some people who imagine that they are better than others, and yes, even without sin, entirely healthy in a spiritual sense. These are the people who the Lord means here.

What a pity to think that one is well when one is seriously ill. Disaster follows. Self-righteousness is just as destructive to the soul. For those who persist in self-righteousness Jesus came in vain with the great riches of His blessings. For them the Gospel has no comfort. Such were the scribes and Pharisees of our text.

Compare to John 9:39–41, <sup>39</sup> ***And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”*** <sup>40</sup> ***Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “Are we blind also?”*** <sup>41</sup> ***Jesus said to them, “If you***

*were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.*

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. This, then, is our chance and our comfort. We are all sinners. Jesus calls us through His Word. The call is efficacious. His name indicates that He will save us as we read in Matthew 1:21, <sup>21</sup> *And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.*”

Although we still sin after Jesus has accepted us as His own and made us righteous before God, we know that He daily and richly forgives our sins and is our Advocate with the Father.

We read in 1 John 2:1-2, <sup>1</sup> *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* <sup>2</sup> *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

Let us therefore rejoice in the fact that Jesus is the Friend of sinners, as we have seen from this text. Let us come to Him, answering the call of the Gospel.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,<sup>5</sup>

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
Because Thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 2:1-4

<sup>2</sup> Hymn 317

<sup>3</sup> Chap. 9

<sup>4</sup> chap. 5

<sup>5</sup> Hymn 335 V 5