

Loving Not Judging Our Neighbour

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Preacher: Rev. Sam Thompson

[0 : 0 0] We continue today looking at the series The Art of Neighbouring and in this passage we encounter Levi who is a tax collector.

Levi would have been well known to the disciples and the wider area and not in a good way. He would have been harassing you for your money which would end up in the pockets of Rome.

When we pay tax we see the benefit through the provision of public services and we have come to value that this past year more than ever. But they would have seen nothing.

Further to this some Jews gave themselves and employment to Rome to collect money from their fellow Jews and they often added a surcharge which opened the gate to all sorts of abuse.

Tax collectors were wealthy and led a well-off lifestyle often with their own interests at heart above the interests of others and of God.

[1 : 0 6] Therefore tax collectors were considered up there with thieves and murderers. They were hated and despised. So you can imagine why the Pharisees questioned Jesus when he was eating with them.

When Jesus sees Levi in his booth he says follow me and Levi gets up and follows him and leaves everything. By that I don't mean he puts a sign on his booth saying just off to Father Messiah back in five minutes.

I mean he leaves everything. His lifestyle, money and his job. His life. So either Levi was bonkers making a hasty rash decision.

Or the power and the presence of Jesus was so overwhelming he had no choice but to go. We come from all sorts of different backgrounds and ideologies.

And what makes us feel passionate. And the lifestyles that we can and cannot relate to. I grew up in a small school that was attached to the church we went to.

[2 : 1 7] My mum and dad went to the same school as I did about 20 to 25 years previously. Everyone knew each other and everyone's families.

Therefore it was like growing up in a bubble. And if I was to describe my childhood in a few words, sheltered I'd be one of them. So as I got older and went out into the big bad world.

I encountered people whose lifestyles were very different from my own. And it did take an effort to not come across as judgmental or questioning. And if I'm being honest, it was something I didn't always get right.

But what Jesus is telling us here is that we all have our own histories. Our own baggage. Our own baggage. But we're brothers and sisters in Christ.

And we are often incredibly different. But there is a sense that we are one. When you make a decision to follow Jesus, there is always a level of cost which can present itself in many forms.

- [3 : 25] Your lifestyle. Aspects of your personality and character. And sometimes a financial sacrifice. But through that discipleship, there is so much to be gained.
- The fact that you are saved by God's unending love and grace. So you can imagine Levi is very keen to share the good news with his friends who don't know Jesus at this point.
- And he cooks up a feast for them. And Jesus is there. The Pharisees believed that to dine with someone was very intimate. You shared out of a common bowl.
- I don't think double dipping was as frowned upon then as it is now. And as a result, you kind of ingest the sin of that person. So when the Pharisees saw this, you can see why they might have been horrified and wanted to make their opinion known.
- When Jesus was challenged, he said that these are the people he came to reach. It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.
- [4 : 36] I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. But the interesting thing is the Pharisees were probably just as much sinners.
- Although it could be argued that the tax collectors sins more out loud. In Psalm 14 verses 2 and 3, it says, The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.
- All have turned away. All have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one. The message here is stark.
- We're all sinners. And this shouldn't really come as a surprise. But this was a passage the Pharisees had access to.
- But it didn't apply it to themselves. Certainly not robustly enough. In John chapter 8 verse 7, Jesus says, Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.
- [5 : 48] We are called as Christians to follow Jesus's example. To reach out in fellowship and in love. Not with judgment or criticism to our neighbor.
- We are to share the good news and be like Christ. We have all sinned. We have our own baggage. But by grace through faith, we are saved by the love Jesus has shared with all of us.
- Let's pray. As we look forward to this week, Lord, help us to share the same love you have given to us, to our neighbor.
- Help us to be like you in what we do and say. Amen. And as we go out into the world, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.
- Amen. Thank you. the love of God and the gospel and the love of God the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, them be with us all. Am Na. A. A. about on congregations are on the however you will need to understand. Now■■■■■ária can be reached out of the word He for your Clark Johnny.
- [7 : 03] And when we walk from our obedience to our■■ practicing that words ■■■■ ■■■■able if now for the church in heaven. But at night in time 2021, pray for the word of God and hazardogenesis that you believe marvel and other ■ading at all.