

Jesus On Mission

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Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] One of the ways of understanding this particular section of the Gospel of Mark, and we've mentioned a few times that the makeup of Mark's Gospel is not entirely chronological.

He's really painting somewhat of a mosaic of the life and the ministry and the purpose of Christ. And so he groups various elements of the life of Christ together. And one of the ways that we can kind of process chapter 2 and the first part of chapter 3 is as a series of conflicts that Jesus enters into with the religious establishment of first century Judaism, the scribes and the Pharisees, and eventually we would find the Sadducees and the Herodians and the chief priests and so on.

Jesus here in these verses is time after time entering into conflict. But the purpose of Mark recording these stories for us, or at least inserting them in this way, is it's not exactly to provide us an example on how we're to deal with conflict.

It's not so much just to introduce the fact that Jesus had opposition, although we can find from Jesus' example a tremendous way of dealing with doctrinal opposition especially, even in practice. But that's not really the purpose of these conflicts. The purpose of the conflicts is that each one of them reveals something new or emphasizes something that's already been presented about the identity and the purpose of Jesus.

[1 : 34] So when we look at the first 12 verses of chapter 2, what we finished studying last Sunday, as these four men bring the paralytic man and lower him into the house, and Jesus forgives his sin, and there's the conflict with the Pharisees there.

That's not so much just to introduce the fact that Jesus had opposition, but it's to highlight the fact in this conflict that Jesus is God and he has authority to forgive sin. And then we enter into this section that we just read, and the conflict is not just about the Pharisees and the scribes having issue with who Jesus chose to associate with, but it's to highlight the fact that Jesus is indeed the friend of sinners.

And as we study through these verses, two things really begin to emerge, two things that we want to track through these five verses. The first thing is Jesus' heart for sinners.

The fact that his heart gravitated to those who desperately need him, which in reality is all of us. But the issue with the Pharisees and the scribes is that they didn't see that need, but these other people knew exactly what their need was.

And Jesus gravitated. He has this heart for sinners, this heart for the gospel. And in addition to his heart for the gospel, what we see emerging here is a pattern and a model for gospel ministry.

[2 : 47] The way Jesus exercised this ministry is meant to be an example to us as his followers. It's meant to be an example to how we are to go about ministering the gospel as well.

In fact, it's actually his heart for sinners that produces this pattern for ministry as we go through these verses. It was because Jesus' heartbeat for the gospel and to save sinners that led him to minister the gospel in the way that he did.

And so as we look through these verses, we're not just concerning ourselves with the conflict. We're not just concerning ourselves with the fact that Jesus had opposition, but we're gazing at Jesus.

What was his heart? And how did he carry out the ministry in light of his heart for sinners? And what does that mean for us? If this is the heart that Jesus has, it's the heart that his people should have. If this is the pattern that he followed, it's the pattern that we should follow as well. And so as we go through these verses, I've got four headings that are just meant to kind of hang our thoughts on and help guide us as we go through the narrative here.

[3 : 52] But you can write them down if you'd like. The first thing is this. We see in verse 13, Jesus is accommodating crowds. Jesus is accommodating crowds. We see his ministry to the masses, so to speak.

Look with me again at verse 13. And he went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. Just as the four friends in the first 12 verses were determined to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus and went so far as to tear the roof apart to get him to Jesus, so is Jesus determined and active and intentional about getting to these people.

And what we see happening and unfolding here in this verse is really just a simple thought. It's not the main point. It's really just laying the groundwork for his calling of Matthew and his conflict with the scribes.

It's really just laying groundwork here, but there's something significant to it. Jesus is intentionally making his way, accommodating crowds, in order that he might minister the gospel to those crowds. Now, up to this point, we believe he's been in Peter's house. Well, Peter's house, though it was one of the larger homes in Capernaum, at least based on the excavations that you can study today in Israel, we believe it's one of the larger houses, but there's only so many people that could fit there.

[5 : 17] And it's not reasonable for Jesus to continue to carry out his ministry in town. It's just not possible. Too many people are coming. It's beginning to be destructive, as is evidenced, and Peter's roof being removed in order for people just to get to Jesus.

Where some of us might would see that and say, well, this is just, this is how it is. This is the cards we've been dealt. We'll just go with it the way we could. Jesus, of course, didn't do that.

What did he do? He's not resorting to the open spaces of the Sea of Galilee to get away from the people. He's resorting to the open spaces around the Sea of Galilee in order to accommodate the people.

He wants the crowds. His heart, we see it already beginning to come to the surface. He wants to get to these people. And what is he doing once he gets to these people or once these people get to him?

He's teaching them. And again, we see this pattern over and over and over. These people would come to Jesus. He would make way for them. They would gather around him. And what is he doing?

[6 : 18] He's preaching the gospel. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent and believe the good news over and over and over. That's his pattern. That's his purpose.

That's his goal. He was actively engaged in reaching people. And he did whatever he could do. He went wherever he could go to make that happen.

And our own pattern for gospel ministry should reflect this example. The gospel message should concern us to the point that we will go wherever we need to go.

We will do whatever we need to do in order to preach the gospel to lost. In fact, the gospel is the foundation of everything that we do.

It should inform everything that we are as a church. The gospel informs our worship. The gospel informs our evangelism. Why should we care about getting to know people?

[7 : 16] Why should we care about planting a church in Cornelius? It's not just because we want to do it. It's because we want to reach people with the gospel. It informs our evangelism.

It should inform everything we do as a church. Every way that we serve with and for one another is actually informed by the gospel. There will come a day where the acting out studio is not sufficient for Lakeside Bible Church.

It's sufficient right now. We were talking about it this morning. The Lord has blessed us with this place. It really has. The Lord willing, there's going to come a day where it's just, it's Peter's house. It's just not reasonable anymore. What are we going to do? Well, we're going to have to find an open space by the sea somewhere. We're going to have to continue on. Why? We could just stay here. But why would we do that?

Our heartbeat is to reach the masses. We want to teach the people. We want to share the gospel. And so we're going to find another place. We're going to find a place that can accommodate a larger crowd. We're going to start another church.

[8 : 15] We're going to do whatever we can do to multiply the effect and the impact of the gospel in our area. And it's just intentionality. It's activity. What's Jesus doing in verse 13?

It's just being intentional. It's activity. We need to follow that pattern. The second thing we see is he's calling disciples. He's accommodating crowds. So we see there his heart.

We also see a pattern. Now we see that he's calling disciples in verse 14. Look at it with me. As he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth.

And he said to him, follow me. Jesus did have a ministry to the masses. That's true. His call was extended, though, to individuals.

And this is an interesting call. There's a man named Levi. We know him as Matthew. In fact, as you study the gospel of Matthew, you find out that's exactly who this is.

[9 : 14] The man whom the Lord used to write that gospel is this man known here as Levi. Well, Matthew was a tax collector. And he was responsible for collecting fees from those that were traveling and trading on a specific route near Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee.

Well, let's talk about these tax collectors for just a minute. Because this is what makes this call so much more significant and helpful to us. The Romans collected taxes through a series of franchise opportunities is really kind of the best way to understand.

Roman tax system was set up that way. They were occupying Palestine at this particular time. And they would sell these tax franchises to the highest bidder. And so the franchisee would then be responsible for collecting various taxes.

There were three stated taxes that every person in Israel had to pay. It didn't matter who they were. They had to pay these. And they had specified amounts to what they had to pay.

The first one was a poll tax. That was just a tax for being alive. You exist. You breathe the air that is occupied by Rome. Therefore, you have to pay a fee for breathing the air that is in Palestine.

[10 : 27] Just a poll tax. We all pay that tax, right? Then there was a ground tax. This was equal to 10% of all the grain, 20% of all the wine and oil that was produced.

So if you were a farmer or you were involved in those kind of businesses, anything that you would produce in those three areas, you had to give a cut of it to Rome. And then there was an income tax. 1% of your annual income had to go to Rome.

So these franchisees, they were responsible for collecting those. And they would have a segment of their business that that's what they did. Then there was a second tier of taxes that wasn't as concrete as the first.

There were taxes on sales. There were taxes on trading. There were taxes on traveling. There were taxes on all kinds of things. And these franchisees would have people that would be set up at tax booths in order to charge these fees as people would travel into town.

Or as fishermen would come in from a long night of fishing, they would have to pay a particular tax for docking their boat in the harbor. Or they would pay a tax on the fish that they caught.

[11 : 32] Or if some have suggested that a cart that maybe would come through, Matthew would have had the opportunity to stop that person and not only tax their cart of goods, but he could actually tax the cart by how many wheels it had.

There was a percentage that was applied to each wheel, and that multiplied the amount of taxes that they had. Here's what Rome cared about. They cared about meeting certain quotas. Anything that came in above that quota just went into the pocket of the collector.

Matthew worked as one of the people collecting this second tier of taxes. He was one of the men that was so crooked, that was making up whatever numbers he wanted to make up in order to charge people as they came through and passed his booth.

Now, these men were hated for two main reasons. The first reason, obviously, is that they were crooked. They charged excessive amounts of tax. They charged more than they had to charge. There were no posted amounts, so they could literally charge you whatever it was that they wanted to charge you in that moment. And they were doing that in order that they could pocket the excess. But there was a second reason and a cause for a deeper hatred.

[12 : 44] It wasn't just that they were crooked. It was that they were traitors. These were Jewish men. They weren't Romans. These franchises weren't owned by the Romans.

They were owned by Jews. These people were the ultimate traitors. Not only were they crooked, but they were robbing their own people in order to benefit the Roman occupiers.

They were absolutely despised. Jesus not only showed kindness to Matthew, but he did something extreme. He called Matthew to be one of his own disciples.

And he called them in the same way that he called the good Jewish boys, Peter and Andrew and James and John. He said, follow me.

Follow me is the call issued to every person that would receive salvation and become a disciple of Christ. That's the call. It's an authoritative command.

[13 : 45] It demands a response to leave everything behind in order to follow Jesus in faith. This wasn't just a, hey, Matthew, follow me for a little while.

I want to talk to you. That's not what this is. This is, no, Matthew, leave everything behind and follow me. Believe me. Be my disciple now.

This is the call of salvation. And it demands a response from each and every one of us. Jesus, through his word, says, follow me.

And what he intends for that to mean is leave everything behind in order to follow me in faith and in discipleship. Matthew, impacted by the love of Jesus and the gospel message that he no doubt had heard Jesus preach at this point, left his lucrative career behind, and immediately obeyed the call. It's amazing, actually. This story doesn't fill in all those other gaps for us. We don't know when he first heard the gospel message. We don't know what, I mean, everybody knew who Jesus was in Capernaum at this point.

[14 : 56] He probably has taxed Jesus at some point. He knows who he is. He's impacted by his love. He's heard the gospel message. And now Jesus has issued the call.

And Luke tells us in his account, Luke 5, 28, he adds in the phrase, and leaving everything, he rose and followed him. Only Jesus has the power to affect such a radical change.

Matthew, the one that everybody hated, would eventually be used by God to write the most comprehensive of all the gospel books.

Think about that. At this point in his life, nobody likes Matthew. And the friends that he has, everybody hates them too. Nobody wants Matthew.

But Jesus shows kindness and love and he calls him and extends grace and extends mercy. And what does he do with his life? He trains him and he teaches him and then he empowers him by his spirit. So now he's used him to write the most comprehensive gospel about the life and the ministry of Jesus.

[16 : 03] That's who Levi is. That's how God used him. The one that nobody wanted. Church tradition tells us that Matthew's apostolic commission was to the country of Ethiopia.

And in AD 60, as he was faithful to the gospel, faithfully preaching Jesus, some of the people in Ethiopia that didn't appreciate it, they pinned him to the ground with four spears and beheaded him. This man that nobody wanted. Jesus affected such a radical change in his life that he literally gave his life up to the last breath, preaching Jesus.

So impacted was he by the love of Christ in this moment. So impacted by the gospel message that he literally gave his life to preach it. Only Jesus can affect that kind of change.

And he can affect that kind of change in your life. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what characterizes you at this point in your life. Everybody would have had a label for Matthew, and everybody's probably got a label for you.

[17 : 06] Jesus doesn't care about the label. He can do a change in you that no one else would even want to see exist in you. That's his love for sinners. And he extended that call to Matthew.

He extends it to you today. The stunning nature of this call is that obviously it was issued to a man that everyone despised.

The Jews, honestly, and probably Peter and Andrew and James and John would have fit this at this point. They would have been fine for Matthew to die in his sins. That wouldn't have bothered them. Not Jesus. He's willing to save and use the worst of us. Can I ask you, when you see people, you notice that their life is so wicked, that it is so against everything that you are and everything that you believe and everything that you stand for.

Would you be satisfied for them to die in their sins? Or would you have a heart that would hope that God would once again show his grace to save and use even who you would characterize as the worst of us?

[18 : 21] So we see Jesus' heart here. But there's something else we see here in this verse. And I'm going to move on from here. But there's something else we see here. It's amazing. We see Jesus' heart for Matthew.

But then we begin to see the formation of this new covenant community that Jesus was establishing. We call it the church.

What was the church meant to be? Jesus is showing us here people from all different backgrounds, people with all kinds of different sins, coming together in love and unity in a common faith in Jesus Christ.

That's what the church is. We have gotten used to an homogenous form of religion that says I can only worship with those who are like me.

We ignore the commonality that we have in the grace of Jesus and in the faith in Jesus Christ. And we look for those who are just like me. But what is Jesus doing here?

[19 : 33] Think about this for a second. Where was Matthew's tax booth? It was on the Sea of Galilee in Capernaum by the big promenade. Jesus only has four disciples at this point.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John. All four of them professional fishermen in Capernaum. They knew Matthew. They'd probably been robbed by Matthew.

Knowing Peter's personality, there's probably been some conflict between he and Matthew. All they had up to this point in this relationship was hate.

They were enemies. And what is Jesus doing with these four fishermen in tow? He stops by the tax booth and he looks at the man that they hate maybe more than anybody else in Capernaum.

And he says, hey, follow me. Follow me. Follow me. Same call I gave to these four guys. Same call I'm giving to you. And he starts to bring together these people that hated each other.

[20 : 33] And now we start to see this formation of the church come. These people from different viewpoints. These people from different backgrounds. All united together in love and in a common face with Jesus Christ.

That is the gospel and that is the church. That's what we're to be. Later on in chapter three, Mark's going to give us a whole list of Jesus's 12 disciples.

And there's another person in there. His name's Simon. And the designation that's given to him is the zealot. Which means he was a part of an extremist group. He was the alt-right group in Israel. He was a part of an extremist group that hated Rome and hated anybody that affiliated with Rome in any way. Only Jesus can take a man like Matthew and a man like Simon the zealot and bring them together in friendship and love and unity.

And it wasn't about them finding common ground in anything except for faith in Jesus Christ.

Because those who follow Christ, those who heed the call to follow me, God does this work of transformation and he puts his own spirit in them so that they don't look at other believers for what they used to be.

[21 : 48] They don't look at other believers for the differences that they have. They look at other believers for the fact that they are believers and we are brothers and sisters in Christ. Only Jesus can do that.

And even in this call of Matthew, we see Jesus's desire for that. What he desires for the church to be. What he desires for our church to be.

And so he's calling disciples. He's accommodating crowds. And then we see he's befriending sinners. He's befriending sinners.

Look at verse 15. It came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, Matthew's house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples.

Sometime after this call, after Matthew began following Jesus, he invited Jesus and the other disciples at the time to his house for dinner.

[22 : 49] Luke 5:29 describes it as a great feast held in Jesus's honor. And as they were holding this feast, Matthew invited many of his own friends to come.

There's something significant here. We've talked over and over about Jesus's healing works. When Jesus healed the leper, he was immediately healed of his disease. When he healed the paralytic, he immediately got up and walked.

When he healed Peter's mother-in-law, immediately the fever left her and she was good as new.

The same way that Jesus's healing works provide an immediate healing, so does his transformational work in salvation cause an immediate transformation.

How do we see that in Matthew's life? Already, immediately, he is beginning to pattern his own missional intent after what he had experienced and witnessed in Jesus.

He wanted others to meet Jesus. And Jesus was especially desirous in this passage to meet Matthew's friends. And we're told that this dinner was with an entire group of social outcasts.

[24 : 03] Publican, that is what Matthew was. And so some of the people that had gathered with him that day were just other people that were just as hated as he was. Just other publicans. But this term sinner is not just a generic form for people that sin.

It's a specific technical term that was used to describe those mainly who ignored the scribal traditions of the day. This is why the Pharisees considered Jesus to be a sinner. Not because he violated the law of God, but because he violated the law of man. He violated their law. And so they had put this designation. Now that doesn't mean that these people weren't really sinners.

In fact, it probably included social pariahs like prostitutes, drunks, thieves, other known criminals. This is the collection of people that Matthew has brought together and that Jesus willingly and openly befriended.

They were the type of sinners that didn't mind to flaunt their sin. They made no attempts at hiding their wickedness. We know those people. They're everywhere. They're everywhere around us. [25 : 11] They are empowered by our culture these days. These were the people Matthew wanted to meet Jesus. These are the people Jesus wanted to spend his time with. In fact, according to Matthew 11, 19 and Luke 7, 34, it was this part of Jesus's ministry that earned him the designation of friend of sinners, friend of publicans and sinners.

It was meant as an insult by the religious elite. That wasn't a good thing in their minds. They gave him that name, friend of sinners. He befriended them for the purpose of saving them. He loved those deemed unlovable. He saved those deemed unsavable. Why? Because that's the heart of Christ.

That's his heart. Dane Ortlund in that book I gave you on our anniversary Sunday, he said this in that book, time and time again, it is the morally disgusting and socially reviled, the inexcusable and undeserving who do not simply receive Christ's mercy, but to whom Christ most naturally gravitates. He is by his enemy's testimony, the friend of sinners. Think about that statement. It's such an awesome statement. They not only received his mercy, these were the people Jesus gravitated to. [26 : 37] This is who he spent his time with. It's amazing. We get this idea of Jesus because we know he's holy. We know his holiness of God. We know his judgment and his justice.

We get this idea sometimes that when Jesus saves somebody, he tries not to get too close. He kind of pinches his nose so he doesn't have to smell and maybe closes his eyes and he just keeps his distance and he touches them and then he moves away.

And we get this idea that Jesus doesn't really want us, but maybe there's some kind of obligation there that because we responded in some way to a service or we said a particular prayer that he reluctantly comes to us and he kind of does his work for us and then he backs away because he doesn't want to get too close.

We get this idea of Jesus that way. That is not who Jesus was. That's not at all who Jesus was. Not only did he want to give his mercy to these people, he gravitated to these people.

These are the people that ultimately gained him the designation. Yeah, Jesus, he's a friend of sinners. That's who he associates with. He never condoned their sin.

[27 : 39] He never participated in their sin, but he loved and befriended the people that nobody else wanted. He loved and befriended the people that everyone else criticized him for loving.

And what was the result? Look at the end of the verse. There were many of them and they followed him. There were many of them and they followed him.

Many of the people at Matthew's house became believers. How wonderful. How wonderful. Think about that for a moment. We assume that because Jesus healed so many people, that in Galilee, in this space of three years, Galilee especially, maybe even parts of Judea, that disease and illness was practically eradicated by Jesus because he heals everyone he comes by.

We see this ministry over and over. Now think about how this relates in a spiritual sense. At this point in Galilee, perhaps organized crime is beginning to be eradicated from Galilee.

Why? Because Jesus loved and associated with sinners in order that he could preach his gospel to them and he saved them. He saved them. He did the work that no one else could do.

[29 : 01] Social reforms will never really truly be effective. They can't be because they don't get at the heart of the problem. But imagine the transformation that God could introduce into the world if the church actually loved the unlovable, reached the unreachable, and intentionally befriended those who are otherwise despised.

Not by the world's standards, but by the church's standards. This was the heart of Christ, which means it should be the heart of his people. Now it's us that tries not to get too close.

It's us that tries to hold our nose and hold our breath when we hand them that invitation or whatever it is that we're doing. It's not what Jesus did. And so we see he befriend sinners.

Finally, we see that he confronted self-righteousness. He confronted self-righteousness. Look at verse 16. When the scribes and the Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

This blew their mind. This did not make sense. And so we see in these conflicts now a contrast constantly between the heart of Christ, the ministry of Christ, and then the heart and the ministry of the religious elite of the day.

[30 : 40] And what Mark is doing here and what Matthew and Luke do as well as they're telling this story, they are designating, they're drawing a clear line, the differences between who Jesus is and what he's doing and who the Pharisees and scribes are and what they're doing.

And so Jesus confronts it, but not at first. They confronted Jesus or at least Jesus' disciples. They couldn't believe that he was so willingly and openly associating with these people.

And this is partly why they grew to hate him. He loved the people that they despised. He embraced the people that they condemned. And though most of them wouldn't admit it, they knew there was some kind of significance to Jesus.

There was no denying that. They witnessed his healing power. They heard the authority in his teaching. There's no way to miss that. They would have never admitted that, most of them.

Some of them did. Some of them became believers. Most of them wouldn't have even admitted that. What they would have loved for Jesus to have done because they knew the significance that truly existed is that he would praise them for their moral efforts, but Jesus never did that.

[31 : 46] Instead, Jesus spent his time with all the people that they condemned and they grew to hate him. This was the point that Jesus was making about the brother in the parable of the prodigal son.

Luke chapter 15. It was all about self-righteousness. There's this brother who refused to celebrate with the family and the friends after his brother had come home.

He represented the scribes and the Pharisees. Though externally moral, they ultimately rejected the father. These men were isolationist at heart.

That's who they were. The term Pharisee actually literally means separatist and separatist in every extent is not a bad thing, but they took this to the extreme.

It's one thing to live in holiness. It's another thing to self-righteously snub everybody that you've determined is not as holy as you are. That's what they were guilty of doing.

[32 : 48] To have a meal with somebody just like today in that day was a sign of friendship. It was a sign of acceptance and approval. These men would have never been willing to stoop so low as to show that kind of kindness and friendship to this kind of people.

And unfortunately, many Christians have adopted that way of thinking. I was convicted by something I read.

Kent Hughes wrote this about this passage. This is what he said. We come to Christ and in our desire to be godly, we seek out people like us.

Ultimately, we arrange our lives so that we are with non-believers as little as possible. We attend Bible studies that are 100% Christian. A Sunday school that is 100% Christian.

Prayer meetings that are 100% Christian. None of those bad things in and of themselves. But we play tennis with Christians. We eat dinner with Christians. We have Christian doctors, Christian dentists, Christian plumbers, Christian veterinarians.

[33 : 53] The result is we pass by hundreds without ever noticing them or positively influencing them for Christ. And then he says, none of us are Pharisees philosophically, but we may be practically.

I was convicted by that actually. None of us would say that we have the philosophy that the Pharisees have.

None of us would actually admit that. None of us would ever say or even want that to be true of us. But in the way that we actually live our lives, we're practical Pharisees. We don't really want anything to do with the outside world.

We're so fearful of the outside world. We're afraid that if we go to dinner with a co-worker who's not a believer that all of a sudden we're going to be tainted and now we're going to fall into the slippery slope of idolatry ourselves.

And we're so scared. And we end up running from the very purpose that God has left us on this earth. The necessity of fellowship within Christianity and within the church cannot be overstated. [35 : 06] We talk about that all the time. Your involvement with your church family and the family of believers that you have covenanted with is invaluable.

You need it. You should desire it. But we must intentionally engage in mission with those outside of the church.

We have to. We need to have dinner with co-workers. We need to invite our neighbors over for coffee.

We need to volunteer in the community. We need to do anything we can to have a positive impact for the gospel on the people around us. And we can't do that when we hole up in our houses, when we only associate with those who are just like us.

Can't do that. Instead, we end up condemning the sick for being sick. But why don't we just help them? The unfortunate thing is that this type of self-righteousness has a way of even creeping its way into the church.

[36 : 19] The same isolationism that causes us to have no contact at all with the outside world eventually finds its way into our involvement even within the church body. When Jesus called Matthew, remember, he was promoting a love and a unity among those who were formerly enemies.

That's what he was doing. But when we embrace the pattern set by scribes and Pharisees, even if it's just practically, what we foster is an environment of judgmentalism and criticism and suspicion rather than committing to and loving and unifying with a church body that is faithful to the gospel, we end up floating around from body to body, church to church, always finding something wrong, always finding something to be suspicious about, always finding a reason to separate and isolate once again.

We would never say that's our goal. But it's inevitably what we do. But Jesus confronted them. Look at verse 17.

When Jesus heard it, he said unto them, they that are whole have no need for a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The scribes and Pharisees, either they were unwilling or they were unable to actually confront Jesus themselves. So they confronted his disciples instead. It could be here that the disciples didn't really know how to answer.

[38 : 05] This is new to them too. They're probably just as confused as the Pharisees are to an extent. And though they trusted Jesus, they may have had difficulty articulating a response to these men as to why they and Jesus were actually having dinner with prostitutes prostitutes and thieves and thugs.

Jesus overhears the conversation and he steps in and he responds. And the response that he gives has really two elements to it, I think. There's a common sense element and then there's just a piercing truth that he gives here.

Something he's doing to try to pierce the heart of these Pharisees. The first part is a proverbial statement of common sense. Look at it again. Verse 17. They that are whole have no need of a physician but they that are sick.

That just makes sense, right? The doctor doesn't come rushing to the well people. The doctor comes rushing to those who are in immediate need of medical attention. It's a simple illustration Jesus is giving.

It just made sense. Their question was why would he associate with sinners? And the common sense answer is because they needed him. Because they needed help. Why wouldn't he rush to meet their obvious need?

[39 : 18] It's what the Pharisees and the scribes should have been doing themselves. It's what the church should be doing. It only makes sense. But then the second part involved this piercing truth.

He's trying to pierce the heart of these Pharisees. And he says this isn't an illustration. He just plainly says I didn't come to call the righteous. I came to call sinners. Now when Jesus said this he wasn't insinuating that the scribes and Pharisees were without sin.

That's not what he was saying. We all have sin. The Pharisees and the scribes just refused to acknowledge that they had sin that needed to be forgiven. They had no need for Jesus.

There was no denying that on the part of the sinners. In fact there was probably even some of them in the hardness of their heart that flaunted the fact that they were full of sin. Pharisees are very different.

In a spiritual sense the sinners and the publicans were bleeding and lacerated and broken. They could have rejected the help and some of them did.

[40 : 24] But there was no denying the need. There was no denying on the sinners part that they needed Christ that they needed forgiveness. But the Pharisees were looked well on the outside.

All their externals is what they needed to be. But there was a sinful cancer eating them up on the inside. And they refused to acknowledge it. And what Jesus is saying is that for those that will not acknowledge their own sinfulness and their own need for forgiveness I've got nothing to say.

But for these people over here that are full of sin there's no denying it they know it. Those are the people that I'm calling. It's just clear. What was Jesus trying to do with that statement?

He's trying to remind the family Pharisees that you need this too. But until you admit it I can't do anything for you. What are we supposed to learn from all of this? First thing is this.

There is no one beyond the reach of Jesus' love and grace. No one. How encouraging is that to know? His love for you is not based on performance.

[41 : 37] There's no sin too great for him to forgive. There's no outcast too far gone. There's no sinner that he's unwilling to love.

The truth is if you will repent and believe like Matthew and his friends did Jesus will forgive you. He will give you eternal life.

He will turn you away. There's yet to be one person that he's ever turned away who came to him in faith and repentance. It's never happened.

It never will. It doesn't matter what characterizes you at this point in your life. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you've done. That's the grace of Jesus. That's his heart for you. But there's a lesson here, a missional lesson for believers, for us as a church.

God's always working in us to make us more like Christ. It's this sanctifying process.

[42 : 40] If this was Jesus' heart to save sinners and it is his heart, then it will be the heart of true believers to reach sinners with the gospel.

He set a clear pattern for us here. Love, and a pattern to actually reach those who need to be reached. The pattern is that we are neither to be isolated from nor are we to be assimilated with.

We're not to be like them, but we are to intentionally engage in mission with the lost around us. In John 17, Jesus had this high priestly prayer for his disciples.

Do you remember what he said at the end? He's praying to the Father and he says, I don't pray that you take them out of the world. I don't want you to remove them. I don't want you to isolate them.

He says, but what I pray for the Father to do is to guard them from the evil one and to sanctify them in truth. And then he says, thy word is truth.

[43 : 52] So what is Jesus' heart for his church now? How are we to balance this tension between identifying with sinfulness in the world but actually trying to intentionally reach the lost and befriend those the way that Jesus befriended them?

It's in Jesus' prayer. He doesn't want us to isolate and of course he doesn't want us to assimilate.

He doesn't want us to adopt their ideas and adopt their sins and adopt their philosophies. That's not what he wants either.

He didn't do that. But he wants us to befriend them and his prayer is that God through the power of the spirit will guard us from the evil one that he will help us not to fall into sin and that he would then sanctify us in his truth which means as we are going to the world as we are befriending the world an

absolute necessity to guard is to lean into the power of the spirit and the sanctifying power of God.

How do we do that? Through the word. Through the word. Daily in the word. Weekly in worship.

Immersing ourselves in God's truth so that the power of the Holy Spirit will continue this sanctifying work and he will guard us in those moments to help prevent us from falling into that sin.

That was Jesus' prayer. Not for us to isolate but to engage and to engage in the right way.

Remember in Matthew 5 Jesus says that we are the light of the world but what good is a lamp that's ignited in a room that's already lit?

[45 : 26] There's no impact there. But what can happen when that lamp that light of the gospel is taken to darkness? It has massive impact. This Christian life is not just meant for us to be together.

It's also meant for us to scatter on mission the way that Jesus was on mission. The way that he sent his disciples on mission. Not just the 12 either.

He sent the 72. What kind of gospel impact can we have if instead of waiting for the community to come to us we went to them?

What if we stopped looking at all the people who are different than us and who are involved in gross sins even? What if we stopped condemning them for being sick and actually went to them and loved them and befriended them in order that we could help them and share the gospel?

Jesus was the friend of sinners. The grace that we have experienced is because he's the friend of sinners. What about us?

[46 : 39] I think we can be friends of sinners too. We better for better