

Jesus - Friend of Sinners

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[0 : 00] Please be seated and also take out in your Bibles Mark chapter 2. Just to give you guys a little bit of a road map what's coming up this kind of, I always consider September kind of a new season.

We're actually going to be studying the book of Ephesians. So if you want to get ahead and start reading the book of Ephesians, we're going to be there at least a year, just breaking it down, having some good fun, understanding this incredible book that Paul has written to us.

One of the things that I'm kind of in the middle of doing right now is, have you guys ever heard of the analogy of faith? Does that word, sentence, phrase mean anything to you, the analogy of faith? The analogy of faith essentially means there's a consistency from Genesis to Revelation in God's eternal word, right? So sometimes you might hear something in one part of Scripture and sometimes there's a tension in another part of Scripture.

Okay, and some of these tensions we will resolve as we understand that each specific aspect of Scripture is indeed true.

[1 : 27] So every time I'm preaching this particular sermon or Dave is in this sermon, we believe this is absolute truth and it fits in to the rest of what God teaches.

So kind of last week, just as we were talking about the call of Nicodemus in John chapter 3, some of the questions involved, well, if God does the calling, are we involved in the evangelism process, right?

It's kind of a logical question, right? If we understand that God does the calling. But we're also going to learn that Scripture tells us that we are to sow the seed, right?

We are to evangelize. And there's these two tensions that exist there. And I'm hoping over the next couple of weeks to deal with those tensions that exist. So last week's sermon plus this week's and the next couple of sermons are all leading into Ephesians.

And what I mean by that, I want you to understand the truths that we have and that we're taking them into Ephesians with us. Because there's going to be some tough doctrinal issues that initially start in Ephesians chapter 1 that some people struggle with.

[2 : 42] But as we go deep in there, my prayer is that you are going to be encouraged. And all these teachings that we're doing beforehand are going to help you understand.

Is that kind of clear as mud? Are you guys with me so far? All right. Nobody's walking out. We're okay. All right. So that's kind of what we're going to be getting into the next couple of weeks. Today we are going to do a little bit of a character study on the disciple whose name was Matthew.

And I think it's a very important understanding of what happens to Matthew. Because I believe Matthew is quite similar to Nicodemus.

I believe they were men that had great expectations placed on them. And then once they were confronted with this man, Jesus Christ, they had to look at their lives and kind of wonder, wow, maybe I'm on the wrong track here.

And something else needs to happen. So please just turn with me in your Bibles to Mark chapter 2. And I'm going to read from verse 13 to 17.

[4 : 02] And this is, it says, And Jesus went out beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him. And he was teaching them. And the point of what Carl read to you this morning kind of gives you more color to the picture that's going around Jesus Christ.

All right. When Jesus was doing his thing, which was preaching, he's also healing and doing great miracles. So much so that crowds completely just enmeshed him.

They wanted to be a part of what Jesus is doing. They're excited. So there's this great amount of people around Jesus at all this time. And Jesus does what Jesus does best is preach. And as he

passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth.

And he said to him, follow me. And he being Matthew, rose and followed Jesus. And as he reclined at the table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

For there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

[5 : 15] And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician. But those who are sick, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

If you're familiar with the gospel of Mark, you will know that it is a very fast-paced gospel. Mark's whole purpose is that he kind of gives you these snippets, really fast snapshots of what Jesus is doing.

And his purpose is to express to you, he's writing this from Rome, that you would come to believe that Jesus is indeed the son of God. And the mission of Jesus is found in Mark chapter 1, verse 15, when Jesus Christ says, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel. All right? So this is Jesus' whole message. Repent and believe the gospel. The kingdom is near. Repent and believe the gospel.

So at this point, Jesus is traveling all over what we would know as northern Israel, near the Sea of Galilee. And during the times of festival, he goes down to Jerusalem.

[6 : 24] So last week when we learned about Nicodemus was during the Passover. Then he goes back up north and he's continuing his ministry there. And just as Carl read to us this morning, he's demonstrating that he is in fact of God by doing these great miracles.

He made paralytic walks. He made the blind see, the deaf hear, the unclean clean. And it's amazing what we see is that people were all in unison that they had never seen anyone do the things that Jesus did or heard anyone teach the things that Jesus did.

Consistently see they marveled at his teaching. All right? So here they are walking down. So we're going to take a look here.

So it appears as we come into this part of the text that Jesus is doing what he's always been doing and that is preaching. The time is fulfilled.

The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel. Verse 14. And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth and said to him, follow me.

[7 : 39] And he rose and follow him. On this surface, this verse is kind of thin. But we learn four things. First, the name.

The name is Levi, the son of Alphaeus. Two, he's a tax collector. That is his profession. Three, we know what Jesus' command is. It says, follow me.

And four, we read his response. Levi gets up and follows Jesus. First, I would like to focus on the call that Jesus gives here.

If you would turn back to Mark 1, 17, you don't have to do it. You can trust me on this. He says to Simon, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, the exact same thing Carl read to us this morning.

He said, guys, follow me and I will make you fishers of men. It's almost the exact same call. So like Peter, Andrew, James, and John, Levi knew who Jesus was and he responds to this call.

[8 : 42] I think Jesus was no secret anywhere in Capernaum. I believe his teaching went wide and as we read in Matthew, there was not one person who remained ill or needed healing.

It's not like Jesus denied anybody. It's not like modern day healers who say that you have to have enough faith. Jesus didn't care if you believed or not. In fact, we'll read in John, he heals people and they don't even know who he is.

He just sees and responds and he heals. That is our Savior. So Matthew or Levi sitting here in this tax booth, and we're going to learn a little bit about that in a second, has undoubtedly seen the result of Jesus' quote unquote handiwork.

Wherever Jesus went, healings happen. And when you lived in that type of culture, anytime you were by a near gate, if you had someone that was disabled, blind, deaf, you would bring your family members or your friends to the front and you would have them beg, right?

People have a soft heart. There was no social assistance. But all of a sudden, the front gates would be kind of empty because all those people who used to be there are no longer there.

[9 : 54] So you wouldn't notice if you were a stranger, foreigner, there's something weird in this city. There's something different. There's nobody begging. Nobody disabled.

Nobody sick. So wherever Jesus was, he left this very distinct path. Matthew or Levi would have seen that. So here he is when Jesus says, follow me.

I believe Matthew was so excited to follow Jesus that when he just looked at him, Matthew was already outside his tax booth lining up behind Jesus. Now I want you to understand something here. This call to follow. He wasn't asking him to believe. He wasn't asking Levi to just follow along with the crowd.

What Jesus asked him was a very distinct instruction. And it was, follow me. Let me be your teacher.

[10 : 56] Come under me as a disciple, as a pupil. In fact, one author states the word follow, which is used 19 times, is quote unquote a load bearing term that describes the proper response to faith.

It is a radical term because it means there's a risk and there's a cost. Note that nowhere in this discussion does Jesus actually ask Levi, hey, do you believe in me?

He just doesn't even ask him. He actually commands him, follow me. Levi immediately follows. With that term follow, he's asking Levi, will you follow me?

Will you leave everything behind? Will you give me all of you? This is clearly something you do not just believe.

Levi understood this and followed him. Now before we look at what following Jesus looked like for Matthew, one of the questions that I think about and possibly you have thought about is, why does the Gospels only record the calling of five of the apostles, right?

[12 : 19] One was a group of four good friends, all relatives. They're actually like cousins doing this whole fishing thing. And there's this tax collector, right?

It's kind of different. There's all these other apostles. We don't know their stories. I believe that these callings that Jesus gives represent the opposite extremes of men who would later become apostles.

They're opposite extremes on a spectrum. So let's get to know this man, Levi, a bit more. We know his name is Levi, the son of Alphaeus.

The Gospel of Matthew chapter 9 gives us the exact same event that happens here. But instead of calling him Levi, he calls him Matthew, who would later become one of the 12 apostles and the writer of the Gospel of Matthew.

In the list of apostles, Matthew calls himself Matthew, the tax collector. It makes reference to James, son of Alphaeus.

[13 : 29] However, we see there is no other connection to lead us to believe that they were brothers, but in fact, the same person. And perhaps you're thinking Alphaeus might be a unique name that might stand out.

We actually have censuses from that time. And we've been able to figure out that Alphaeus is actually one of the top baby names between 1 and 10 AD, right? So Matthew simply calls himself Matthew, the tax collector.

And that's what we're going to call him from here on in. So we find Matthew sitting at this tax booth. And this calling he will receive will create quite a stir and will go on to be one of the most wonderful calls in all of the Gospels.

Now to understand how incredible this call is, we need to understand who Matthew is. It says he's a tax collector.

In fact, we know through history, there's actually two type of tax collectors. He is what's called the transliteration little Mockels.

[14 : 37] And allow me to explain this. In Palestine, there was these two tax collectors. There was the tax collector. This is the person who collected the regular tax, such as property tax, income tax, and head tax, right?

And then there was this second type of guy. And this was a custom house official. This is the person who placed duty on imports, exports, tolls on roads, bridges, harbors, and any other thing that they could make money on.

Matthew was the second type of tax collector that we're understanding about. He was a custom house official. Now, there were two types of these guys.

There was the big guy and the little guy. And the way the tax system worked is, say, we have our Prime Minister Trudeau is in charge of his whole entire empire.

And there's this far off country named British Columbia, right? So what he would do is, people would say, I need money from your country to come to me because I conquered you.

[15 : 49] So what would happen is, someone would come from British Columbia and bid for their right to tax that nation, okay? And the way they would bid is they would actually give the money up front.

I will give you \$6 billion for all of British Columbia. And Prime Minister Trudeau would say, sold, it's yours. So in order to be a part of that bidding, you had to be pretty wealthy up front in order to do that, right?

So now that I've given my \$6 billion to Trudeau, I now have to come back to BC and I have to get my money from the people who live in BC. I have to make up that \$6 billion.

But the reason why I do that, guess what? I'm going to overcharge you the taxes that I'm paying Trudeau, right? I'm going to try to double. I'm going to try to get \$12 billion from these people in British Columbia.

So that's how their tax system works. So Rome is happy with it because they're getting their money up front, but the real pain is on the tax collector side.

[16 : 53] So what the guy does, so perhaps it's Horgan who's there, our current premier, he then sends out different people to different cities. And then he asked them. So it's kind of like this whole franchise that's developing.

And each person who's a part of the franchise, guess what? Has to pay money up front to get this tax booth. So Matthew, in order to get this position, had to bargain for this booth, had to pay up front.

So he now, you know he's a man of means, and now his role is to collect these taxes. Is that, you guys understanding that? If you don't understand it, it's just like the mafia, which I know you guys all understand, right?

That's just kind of how the system works, right? You pay up front and then you hope to get the money later. So we believe that Matthew is in the employ of Herod Antipas at this time.

And we know that if Herod Antipas doesn't get his money, he will replace that tax collector with someone who will get him that money.

[18 : 03] So these people know how to get money, all right? So scholars believe that Matthew's tax booth is actually near the border of a land called Golantinus, which is near present-day Golan, which is on the east of Galilee.

It's a major highway. And out of Capernaum, and if you know anything about Capernaum, when he called Peter, James, John, and Andrew, they were all fishermen.

It was quite a big fisherman empire, and all the fish would go all over Galilee. So guess what? Guess who's taxing them, right? Matthew. He's there.

He's taxing all the fish that's coming and going. So his role is to collect the tolls, tariffs, what is coming in and out of the region, and it's done under the power of Rome.

And what's interesting is there was no set tax rate. He would decide on the spot what you should be paying, right? And he would do.

[19 : 11] He wants money, so he's not going to charge you an over amount. So it's like a guy working at a toll booth on the highway. The guy who shows up in the Mercedes, you can probably squeeze him for a little bit more than the guy driving the Honda, right?

You just know the guy's got a little bit more means going on. So yeah, you know, I'm going to. So that's the way they used to operate. So we know that business was good for Matthew.

And how do we know this? He was able to host great banquets, and he had a home, and he had to be a person of wealth in order to do this. Matthew had means.

So if you're thinking of building a ministry, and Jesus is thinking of taking over the world with the gospel, this is kind of naturally the kind of guy you want working for you, right?

This guy knows how to organize, knows how to get things done, knows how to bring in the money, right? He's obviously a leader. So you'd think, hey, I can see why Jesus would lean in on this guy.

[20 : 15] He's going to be a good call. But if you understand anything about the culture of the day, Matthew is actually the last person you'd ever expect Jesus Christ to call to become a follower of him.

Why? Because the Roman system of taxation demanded enterprising, greedy individuals who are not averse to using underhanded means to get their money.

It's more like truly a mafia situation than it is a government taxation system. There would be no problem to beat up people to use physical threats in order to get your money.

In fact, the Jewish Mishnah, which is the rules added to the Bible, it stated clearly that it was okay to lie to a tax collector.

Right? To lie to him, it wasn't a sin. So you're free. It's not really a sin. So go ahead. In fact, it said a tax collector was like someone who is a murderer or a thief.

[21 : 35] Simply put, Matthew, as a person, would be absolutely hated by the people that he lived with.

Absolutely hated. And he just wasn't hated because he collected taxes, but he would certainly collect more than what was owed.

As one historian notes, Jews detested such people. Not only on account of the frequent abuses and tyrannical spirit, but because the very taxes they were forced to collect from the Roman government was a badge of servitude.

A constant reminder that God had forsaken his people and they were under judgment. Judgment. Matthew would have been classed by the people with harlots, gamblers, thieves, moneylenders. The Mishnah even says people who raced doves for sport. Right? It is just the outlayers of society. So if you're interested, if you're Jesus and you're interested in reaching the Jews, Matthew is the last guy you want doing it.

[23 : 00] And what's interesting, to be a Jew that is a tax collector, you actually gave up everything. You gave up your Jewish identity.

No longer would your parents even acknowledge that Levi was their son. It was so much shame. Like it's one thing for a Roman, an outside person to come and collect taxes, but now it's one of your own.

A person who grew up with you. You probably knew him from the temple or the synagogue who is now working for Rome. He would give up his social status.

If he had membership in the synagogue, it would no longer be there. He was disgraced in the eyes of his family. He was excluded from all sort of religious fellowship.

And so dirty, it was actually considered a sin to even take his money. All right? So even though he's got all this money, he has to find underhanded ways in which to spend it.

[24 : 04] Because you'd be told, don't take his money. What also was interesting, he was considered so deplorable and untrustworthy, he could not serve as a witness in court.

That's what the Jewish people thought of Jewish tax collectors. So the very thought of Jesus walking up to this tax booth and asking Matthew to follow him is scandalous.

This is scandalous. Now, remember the first person that Jesus called was Simon Peter the Zealot, right? This guy's all Jewish. This guy's whole mindset is that he considers submission to the Roman yoke of rule and its tax system as a complete act of treason to God.

So you have one guy collecting the taxes and I guarantee you, Peter's doing everything in his power to not pay taxes. Okay? So when Jesus calls out to Matthew, follow me, I'm guessing within half a second, Peter's saying, are you kidding me?

Like, don't you like the four of us? We're all good. And now you're taking someone that is completely opposite of us. So why was Matthew so willing to leave it all behind?

[25 : 35] The fact is, the cost in following Jesus was actually greater for Matthew than it was for the other apostles.

The other guys, if this Jesus guy doesn't work out, guess what they do? They go back to fishing, right? Everything's okay. You give up that tax booth? Herod's already got someone just waiting in line to get in there.

So as soon as he leaves that booth, the government's already got one other guy in there. So he doesn't have anything to go back to. In fact, he's got no family. He's got no social system.

He has nothing. But still, he's willing to follow Jesus. I believe that there was something more that Matthew wanted.

And I believe he found it in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I believe that in these two calls to the disciples, we see in the gospel two opposite extremes to who God calls to follow him.

[26 : 41] You see, in Simon Peter and Andrew, they're kind of like the good old Jewish boys, right? They're kind of the kids that you saw in the synagogue running around, later would start serving.

They were so good that they even responded to the call of John the Baptist. These were the kids that knew all their verses from Sunday school, were very expectant for the Messiah.

There was nothing that they would willingly do to break the law. We read that they were baptized into the baptism of repentance, which tells us that the Messiah was always on their mind.

I don't think it was like that for Matthew. But I believe, and I'm going to contend for you today, that Matthew started out more Jewish than any other apostle that followed Jesus Christ.

First off, his name is Levi. He was named from the priestly line. Remember Aaron, the brother of Moses, began the priestly line.

[27 : 48] These men would come down through genealogy, through members of their family, and their whole entire role was to represent the Jewish people in the temple, right?

So someone, he's born into this family, and his destiny is ultimately to be a mediator between God and his people.

That's what he started off as. He was the one who was supposed to represent them. I believe this is how Matthew was raised. And you might say, BK, you're stretching it a little bit.

I'll tell you why. Like I said before, in order to be a tax collector, you had to have financial means. You had to be good at collecting.

You had to be good at business. Guess what that meant? You had to have an education. And as we read from the Gospels of Matthew, we know that Matthew knows how to speak, read, and write both Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and scholars argue that he understood Latin as well.

[28 : 58] And especially if he worked for Rome. And Greek was seen as spoken by the elite of Rome. This means that he was given an early education.

This guy is not some troubled, tough guy who rose from across the tracks. He did grow up with the silver spoon, with all the pleasures of life before him to serve his people.

But he turns his back on that. If you know the Gospel of Matthew, which he wrote, you know that he's incredibly well educated. The Gospel of Matthew quotes the Old Testament 99 times, which is more than all the other Gospels combined.

This is a man who has an incredible working of the Old Testament. He knew the law of the people. Smart.

He's been raised in this. He quotes from the law, the Psalms, the prophets, the entire Old Testament. And he has this intimate knowledge with it.

[30 : 05] So Matthew not only knew what it was to be Jewish. I'm betting you he was raised to be the Jew of the Jews.

But something went wrong. He rejects it. Turns his back on it. In fact, he rejects his heritage.

Rejects his family. Rejects his future. And he uses his education and ability to make money some other ways.

How disappointing would that be for his parents, right? If you are one of those people who earlier rejected Christianity because you see or saw some form of hypocrisy in it and no longer wanted to be a part of it, Matthew is your patron saint.

Matthew gets where you're coming from. Maybe you grew up in that really great Christian home, but it's not sinking with you. It's not jiving with you. Perhaps you saw in your parents or your friends some sort of disconnect between what you would hear preach but how it was lived.

[31 : 29] But somewhere along the line, you decided to chuck it. If you're looking for someone to identify with, Matthew is your guy.

If you talk, hey, I like authentic people, you like Matthew. He's no fake. He's true to who he is.

When Jesus commands Matthew to follow me, Jesus knows that Matthew has had enough with the Jewish false religions. And he also knows that Matthew has had enough with the riches that this world offers.

Religion didn't fill his soul and the world is not filling his soul. But knowing his heart, Jesus calls Matthew. And when offered the opportunity to follow Jesus, Matthew responds.

And we read when Jesus calls him for the second time in his life, Matthew makes a decisive, definite break from his path.

[32 : 40] Now, this is where it really gets good. There's two types of people that I generally see when they come to Christ.

There's the one person rejects their world, their old world. They don't want anything to do with their old family. They don't want anything to do with their old friends. And for some of them, it's good reason, right?

Sometimes it's too strong of a reminder of what you used to be. You were desperately lost. Now that you're saved, you see that. But you don't want it.

And you're hesitant to go be a part of it. And there's this one guy I knew. He kind of fills that. He used to be a professional pool player. And used to travel all over making pool.

And once he got saved, he can't go anywhere near pool halls. He has a hard time being around people who smoke or drink. Because it reminds him of the life that he used to be, right?

[33 : 38] And he knows how broken and destitute he was in that life. And he just doesn't want to go anywhere near it. There's the second type of person who, once they're saved, want to go back in their life because they want to bring the good news to everybody else in there, right?

Now, I'm not faulting the first person. Everybody was created differently. And some things in our old life had a big hold on us. But Matthew is the guy who, once he hears Jesus, now wants everybody else to hear about Jesus.

Take a look at verse 15. It says, So the first thing what happened is, Luke 5.29 records it this way.

Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house. And a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. Amen? So the first thing he did is, hey, I'm saved.

I've been called by Jesus. I'm now having a party. I'm now going to have a banquet. And I'm going to bring every other sinner like me over to meet Jesus. Because he can give the longing of your soul.

[34 : 56] He can meet it. So Matthew immediately makes his identification with Jesus known to all his friends. That smoke killed my lungs this week.

I don't know about you guys. So Matthew instinctively understands that his friends have a need for Jesus too. He understands that they have sins they want to be forgiven for as well.

Now notice the word here, sinners. The translation from verse 15 means reprobate. They were reprobate.

Kind of an ugly word, right? It's one thing to call someone a sinner, but there's something else to say. That guy's a reprobate. And it means that this person is not a person who, in the Jewish mindset, occasionally transgresses against the Torah.

It actually means as someone who stands fundamentally outside of it, right? It's someone who hates the law and despises the law will do anything to disrespect the law.

[36 : 04] Those are the people that he's inviting to meet Jesus. So here is Matthew holding a banquet with Jesus as the honored guest.

He invites harlots, prostitutes, tax collectors, gamblers, thieves. Those we would call the morally contemptuous.

Those that are considered the ritually unclean. Those that live life hard and fast outside of normal social confines.

And Jesus, we find him reclining at the table. He just wasn't being polite. He was actually enjoying himself.

He was accepting. This feast becomes an event. And it's interesting, as we learned last week, when the Pharisees and the leaders of the religion started hearing that what Jesus was doing, Scripture tells us that Pharisees and scribes came from all over Israel, including Jerusalem, to inspect, to see this man.

[37 : 20] And we're going to learn something really important about them. Because they thought to themselves, who can forgive sins but God alone?

But they eventually speak. Verse 16. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that there was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, who were probably taking a breather outside the house, why does he, Jesus, eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Now, you need to understand it this time. As Nicodemus recognized that we learned last week, they knew Jesus was from God, okay? They knew it. As much as they fight it, they knew.

Because only God could do the things that he did. So, they're asking this question. Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Because if he's from God, why is he doing this? What's interesting is it reveals their heart. It says, those that who thought they should be on the inside, having dinner with Jesus.

[38 : 29] Guess what they wanted, right? When they heard there was this man from God, they thought, hey, we're going to go see him because he's going to acknowledge us in front of people, right? We've been keeping the law.

In fact, we've been keeping more and more laws. We believe that Jesus is going to love us. And all of a sudden, they're on the outside looking in.

Because guess what? To eat with a tax collector, guess what? Made you unclean. That's what the mission of the Jewish law said.

So, to actually have dinner with them, in their mind, would make them unclean as a religion, and therefore, for Jesus or for God. And what's interesting, this picture that we're reading of Jesus in this house, reclining with people, sharing the gospel, loving on these people, hearing them for the first time in their lives, would ultimately become the great insult of Jesus Christ.

You know what that was? Jesus Christ, friend of sinners. This is where that picture comes from. A friend of tax collectors and sinners.

[39 : 46] The rabbinic tradition actually stated, let not a man associate with sinners, even to bring them near to the Torah. Get that? You can't even go near the sinners, even to bring them what you thought or considered was the good news.

In fact, the Mishnah is quoted as saying, he that occupies himself in the study of the law is deserving of the whole world.

He is called a friend, beloved of God, lover of mankind, and it clothes him with humility and reverence and fits him to become righteous, saintly, upright, and faithful.

And it keeps him from sin and brings him near to virtue. And from him men enjoy counsel and sound knowledge, understanding, and might.

And those who do not study the Torah belong on the outside. This is the religion that Matthew rejected.

[40 : 58] And we know what Jesus' response is. When Jesus heard it, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

You see, the Pharisees, the religious rulers, what's interesting is they based their purity on not just what they ate, but who they ate it with, right?

Even that mattered. In what drew the Pharisees to see Jesus, they saw Jesus preach with authority. They saw Jesus have authority over demons.

They saw Jesus have authority over disease, authority over infirmity, authority to make clean what was once unclean. But in their minds, if Jesus was the one who he claimed to be, he would have sought out our company rather than their company.

They thought it was their time. My friends, this is what is called the scandal of grace.

[42 : 15] This is the scandal of the ministry of Jesus Christ. The one who claimed to be the Lord of heaven and the Messiah was comfortable with sinners.

In fact, he was friends with sinners. This is the glory of the gospel. Romans 3, 23 to 26 says, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 4 tells us, For what does Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due.

And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works.

[43 : 54] Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.

I conclude with this quote. The glory of the gospel is not that God gives salvation to people who earn it or he gives salvation to the people who achieve it or the people who are good enough or righteous enough or holy enough.

But he gives salvation to the ungodly and the unholy and the unrighteous who believe in Christ and repent. This is the scandal of grace and it scandalizes every works righteousness system in existence.

It is the difference between the true gospel and other religions. This is the gospel that Matthew experienced so many centuries ago along with the rest of his reprobate friends.

For those of you who may have grown up in a religious home and left thinking that this wasn't for you, that there was some conflict with what you saw in Jesus, that there is no way anyone can understand you, let me tell you right here, right now, Matthew knows and understands you and that's why he follows Jesus.

[45 : 24] Please pray with me.