

**Matthew 9:9-13 (NIV)**

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

40-09-01-Jesus, Friend of Sinners  
discipleship, friendship, criticism, witnessing  
Mat 9:9-13

The call of the cross is to care for the lost.

**INTRODUCTION:** (Text as *Scripture Reading* - Matthew's account)

–Though born with the honorable Jewish name “*Levi*,” Matthew [which means “*gift of Jehovah*”] was *known and despised* as “the publican.”

–Matthew reports this meal as just a “dinner,” humbly omitting his role in it, but Luke says Matthew hosted “a great banquet.” Maybe his humility was from being *hated and distrusted by his countrymen.* *Not so with*

*Jesus!* [**E. Stanley Jones**: “Jesus has been called ‘the great believer in man.’ The common people heard him gladly because he did not treat them as common people. Three words were constantly upon his lips: the least, the last, and the lost. These words were upon his lips for these people were in his heart.”]

–Jesus was seeking “the least, the last, and the lost” all the way to Calvary, and for us who are His followers, **HOM.idea**. First, we’ll look at...

**I. The Call of Christ****A. How does Christ call and how should we respond:**

1. **v.9a**, *As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. “Follow me,” he told him* - The call of Christ may be very *simple*, but it is also an *imperative*:
  - a. He sees us with eyes of faith in our future (not just *optimism!*)
  - b. He calls us while we’re *busy* (Satan tempts us while we’re idle)
  - c. His call includes the power to follow it (*prevenient grace*).
2. **v.9b**, *Matthew got up and followed him* - left place & *preoccupation*
3. He might have already considered what the call would mean:
  - a. He was leaving *income* and *ease* for *honor* and *adventure*.
  - b. Leaving his desk but keeping his pen. (Our skills go with us.)

**B. What does Christ’s call “Follow Me” mean for a disciple?**

1. It’s not just, “*Do as I say!*” but “*Do as I do!*” – **1 John 2:6**, “Whoever claims to live in him [*in Christ*] must walk as Jesus did.”
2. ***Christ calls us to care for the lost: Matthew’s life changed:***
  - a. He got concerned for the salvation of friends. (A love for silver became a love for souls– **2 Co 5:14**, For Christ’s love compels us...
  - b. Then he threw a banquet, v.10– *many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples.* - **Bringing friends to Christ**

also brings together *two potential problems*:

- (1) Invite Christ and you get his disciples (Some may not like or want to have anything to do with *the Church*).
- (2) Disciples must go where Jesus goes (even to *old enemies*, like *tax-collectors* were to Christ's disciples).

**TRANS:** Christ is "*the great believer in man... the least, the last, and the lost*" To follow Him means caring for the lost, as He does. But it also means hearing the world criticize Him, as his disciples heard Him criticized by the Pharisees. When it happens, when Jesus is maligned in our hearing, we may feel at a loss for words, as the disciples evidently were at...

## II. The Criticism of Christ, v.11 (by the Pharisees)

- A. Criticism is unavoidable [Eleanor Roosevelt: "You'll be damned if you do, and damned if you don't."] Today Christ is *too narrow*; back then, He was *too nice*— Luke 15:2, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."
- B. What was the reasoning of the Pharisees?
  1. Holy prophets shouldn't mingle with unholy people— Psa 119:115, Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God!
  2. (Maybe they were jealous...) "*We work hard to be holy! Why do sinners get his attention?*" [Matthew Henry: "*they have not the grace of God themselves, who grudge others a share in that grace.*"]
- C. Although *blind* to them, the Pharisees had their own problems:
  1. The self-righteous may strictly avoid sinners, but they can't avoid sin— Rom 3:23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
  2. They were zealous for godliness in appearance but not in power. (Prejudice blinds people into practicing a powerless religiosity.)
    - a. **God wants:** separation unto Christ, not separation from people.
    - b. He wants separation as a result of a holy life, not a means to it.
    - c. God calls us to be separated unto love, not unto contempt.

**TRANS:** The Pharisees criticized Jesus to the disciples, but they didn't answer. *He did*. Believers can get in trouble wrangling with His critics. We must wait for Christ to speak to them—*maybe* it will be through us, maybe not. But we should never stop caring for them, as Christ does.

## III. The Commitment of Christ (describes His mission)

- A. His program was healthcare for the sick— v.12, *Jesus said*, "*It is not the*

*healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.* [Diogenes, a great teacher in ancient Greece, called Athens to reform by comparing its decadence with the virtues of Sparta. When asked, if he liked Sparta so much, "why not leave Athens and go there?" His answer was "*Whatever I may wish to do, I must stay where men need me most.*"] Jesus came to earth to move among sinners, where He could touch and transform those *who needed Him the most!*

- B. God's priority is costly love, not careful legalism— v.13a, *But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice. 'Go first and learn God's Word*— (from Hos.6:6), "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."
  1. The selfish Pharisees were meeting the selfless Physician:
    - a. Their concern was to stay pure, not to help heal the impure. (*Good doctors tend the sick without fear of getting infected.*)
    - b. They criticized rather than encouraged. (*Good doctors don't look with disgust at a disease, but with a desire to defeat it.*)
    - c. Pharisees focus on the sinner's sin instead of working for the sinner's salvation. (*Good doctors search for a diagnosis only so they can provide a remedy to cure the condition.*)
- C. v.13b, *For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*" - Why does God go after *sinners*, and not the *righteous*?
  - a. Only those who see their need for it seek salvation. (Only those who agree with the doctor's diagnosis will submit to therapy.)
  - b. Those who think they are without sin are deaf to God's call. (They cling to a self-righteousness that prevents the cure.)

## CONCLUSION:

—**The call of the Cross is to care for the lost.** *Jesus exemplified that call by coming to earth to die for us. He lived out that call by moving among those who needed Him the most, those who needed His soul-healing touch.* He still moves among us, not calling the righteous (or those who think they are), but sinners to repentance and saving faith. —Matthew accepted Christ's invitation, "Follow Me," and he knew what it meant: he was to love others enough to bring them to Christ, also. And God had him write that into his Gospel, so that we would answer the Lord's "Follow Me" and learn, like Matthew, to have this same care for the lost.