

MARK: Jesus The Controversial Teacher

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Mark 2:13-17

Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The New International Version. (2011). (Mk 2:13–17). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Calling People Who Do Not Want Unity

Does Jesus call people who look alike and think alike together?

Does Jesus find all the like-minded people to come together to be Christians?

- Same social economic status?
- Same political party?

Or does Jesus call people together who disagree with each other and who rub each other the wrong way?

| When we pray for unity, are we actually praying for uniformity?

But that is not what we see in this passage.



For both sides of the aisle, each of the people that Jesus calls can say "*It's too hard, and those other people do not like me, and I don't like those other people.*"

This Time, Jesus Calls a Tax Collector

"Tax collectors & sinners" are referred to three times in this passage. And they're always referred to in the same clause and represent people who are ostracized/Cancelled from their community.

Given the proximity of people around the lake that Jesus was teaching, we can pretty accurately guess that Levi the Tax Collector probably collected taxes from Jesus' disciples and the fishermen that Jesus taught.

| "Why did Jesus call him to follow beside me?"

- "*I can barely pay my bills because of him*"

Why Jesus?

Eating with these tax collectors and sinners is the God-Man incarnate giving value and status to those that the world cancelled.

And the religious leaders could not comprehend why a teacher of the law would ever do that.

To you, the tax collector and sinner, you have a place at the table.

But to the person whom you hate that Jesus calls, they have a place at the table too.



Jesus doesn't negotiate people's issues with one another, and doesn't entertain cancelling, but calls us to follow side by side. Fishing for people means eating dinner with the people you hate.

The Sick

The fisherman he called were sick sinners.

The tax-collector he called was also a sick sinner.

The playing field is level. We're all sick with sin, and Jesus called them to sit at the same table and receive healing together. And then we'll go fishing for others who are sick.

We can't ever be around people symptom free from sin or from whatever reminds us of something we hate.

The gospel is only good news if it's good news for everyone. If it's not good news for the tax collectors, it's not good news for you.

"It is in light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations — these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit. ... **Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.**" — CS Lewis

In light of Mark 2:13-17, do you see Jesus? Do you see who he is calling us to be? Who he is calling you to be?

Do you see that you're a sick sinner, and so is the person you hate?



We are most likely someone else's Levi.

Challenging Us To Follow

Christians are really great at finding the moral faults of others while ignoring our own. But we routinely ignore gossip, slander, murder in our hearts, and quarreling and ignore the massive implications of those so that we can justify our own self righteousness.

Where you have you excused yourself from eating at the table with sinners because you either see a dirty Levi in others or in yourself?



Where will you lay down your self-righteous measurements and your insecurities — look at Jesus, look at his “authority to forgive sin” — his forgiveness is for us and for “them.”