

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 9:14-17 | Losing My Religion
Sunday, August 27, 2023

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 9.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we learned about the testimony of our Gospel writer, Matthew.

I pray that Matt's story of coming to Christ was an encouragement to you.

Many times, when we first hear the Gospel, we think that we're too far gone—that there is no hope because we've sinned too much or too great.

We often live out of the shame and the guilt of our worst decision.

We tend to believe the lie that I am my worst mistake.

And that's not true.

Many of you know my testimony—that I was an addict for 20 years of my life.

So, I'm familiar with the Twelve Steps.

As good as that program is—there is one foundational flaw—and that is they took Almighty God out of it and replaced the One True Living God with a 'higher-power.'

And when you do that, you end up believing a foundational lie, which is this—

"Hi, my name is Dustin and I am an alcoholic, drug addict, or sex addict."

But when you answer the effectual call unto salvation, like Matthew did last week, your identity changes—

It's not, "Hi my name is Dustin and I am..."

"Hi my name is Dustin, and I struggle with alcohol, drugs, or pornography."

See the difference? It's foundational.

Last Sunday, we learned that Jesus came to call sinners—not people who think they are good.

The effectual call of the Holy Spirit is— only to sinners.

In other words, God's call for you to repent is effective.

Good people think they don't need Jesus because they are a good person.

However, Jesus tells us that "Good" people don't go to Heaven—forgiven sinners do.

The Gospel is not for "good" people—it's for people who struggle with sin, know that they are sinners, hear the call, and respond.

And that's what Matthew did—the worst sinner in town.

He heard the call from Jesus and left everything he'd ever known behind.

So please don't believe the lie that you have to fix yourself up—that's impossible.

God is not in the business of fixing you up—He's in the business of giving you a new heart, life, and destiny—through Jesus Christ and the bloody cross and empty grave.

Now, our two key points from last Sunday have to do with us as the Church.

The same day Matthew got saved is the same day he started to witness to his friends.

LW KEYPOINT 1:

There is a right way to fellowship with unbelievers and share the Gospel.

Jesus eats with sinners because He *accepts* them where they are; however, He does not want them to *remain* there.

This is a witnessing key point for us as the Church. We are called to 'share Jesus day-by-day.'

How can we not want to share the Gospel?!

Jesus saved our lives. He saved us from ourselves, marriages, finances, relationships—

He saved us from Hell...of course, we want to share the Gospel with others.

LW KEYPOINT 2:

Religious people love the knowledge of God, but lack the mercy of God.

Religious people love learning about the Scriptures, theology, and doctrines.

However, the problem is that they want to beat people down with God's Word instead of lifting them up and setting them free.

The Gospel is freedom—

It is for freedom that Christ set us free!!! (Galatians 5:1).

“Religious people”— meaning that they have a set of rules and/or rituals that they believe they must do to make God happy.

And not only must they obey them—they inflict their rules and rituals on everyone around them.

And Jesus exposes this lie today—because Jesus hates religion.

He hates that you think you must do something to earn His approval.

If you're a child of God, Christian—please know this—God called you because he called you—you had nothing to do with it.

God chose you because He chose you—God chooses to love you because He chooses to love you.

And here's the thing—God chooses to love you—even on your worst day.

INTRODUCTION:

Last Sunday, we witnessed the Pharisees having a problem with Jesus eating and drinking with sinners—not a big surprise.

Today, however, we're meeting some faithful men of God who have the same problem with Jesus.

These faithful men are disciples of John the Baptizer.

These guys are the real deal.

Do you think John put up with fakes, frauds, or christianettes?

John told these men that Jesus was the Lamb of God who would take away their sin (John 1:29).

So John's disciples watched Jesus and His disciples very carefully.

And evidently, Jesus forgiving a tax collector and partying with him and his tax collecting buddies—pushed them over a religious and moral boundary that they set up for themselves.

~~Their~~ Their offense leads to a question about fasting—but it's not really about fasting.

Their question is about religion—human works to please a Holy God.

Jesus' answer to their question will transform your life today.

How? Let's find out together.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 9:14— Then John's disciples came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

Matthew 9:15— Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests be sad while the groom is with them? The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Matthew 9:16— No one patches an old garment with unshrunk cloth, because the patch pulls away from the garment and makes the tear worse.

Matthew 9:17— And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. No, they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions. (Psalm 119:18)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 9:14— Then John's disciples came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

After Jesus has the conversation about mercy and sacrifice with the Pharisees from last week--John's Disciples move in and ask their question.

Matthew moves us from a question about feasting from last week to one about fasting today.

Fasting: Abstaining from food or drink for a limited time.

Why? When done correctly, it's a form of submission to God.

It's a way to draw closer to Him. *→ deeper your prayer life : stronger faith*

When your stomach starts to grumble, it's a reminder to pray and thank God for His goodness and provisions.

Fasting is also a physical expression of repentance—a turning away from sin and a turning to Jesus.

This question from John's disciples is similar to the Pharisee's question from last week.

Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Matt. 9:11).

Today, John's disciples ask this:

Luke 5:33 NLT—Why are your disciples always eating and drinking?"

This question kind of insinuates that if Jesus wants to be taken seriously, you'd better pay greater attention to the rules.

The healings, miracles, and the forgiveness of sin are all great, but at the end of the day, Jesus, you'd better get in line with our traditions. That's how You climb the corporate religious ladder around here.

Really? Israel's been waiting for the Messiah for 2,000 years, and now that He's here, they're complaining because Jesus is not fasting? Are you kidding me?

Unfortunately, John's disciples ask the wrong question.

And when you ask the wrong question like that, you'll always get the wrong answer.

A better question should have been to the Pharisees.

If Scripture says to fast once per year on the Day of Atonement, why are we fasting twice per week? Are we sad twice a week? No. Then why are we fasting? Why are we doing this? It makes no sense!

The difference between the two questions, however, is the tone.

The Pharisees were coming at Jesus while John's disciples asked out of sincerity.

The Pharisees want to be right, while John's disciples are simply confused.

John's disciples seem to come to Jesus with a sense of humility.

This is why Jesus doesn't rebuke them like the Pharisees and Scribes.

So, let's back up a bit and see the question behind the question.

The Old Testament prescribed only one fast per year for the Jews—the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 31).

But over time, Jewish tradition had come to require fasting twice a week (Luke 18:12).

So, John's disciples carefully followed that practice.

They believed that the more you fast, the more acceptable you are in God's sight—not true.

Regardless, the Pharisees fasted not because they were praying and not because they were grieving or repenting—

They were fasting to be seen by people.

Their fasting was an exterior religious exercise—it was a show for the world to see.

We can probably take an educated guess that John's disciples were a bit more discreet than the Pharisees, but they still have a problem.

They don't know why they are fasting.

John's disciples evidently feel that this absence of fasting from Jesus and His disciples is inconsistent with their loyalty and obedience to God.

And this is the perfect picture of dead cold religion—

“Religion”—continuing to do something because we've always done it that way.

ILLUSTRATION: Thanksgiving Meal.

KEYPOINT 1:

Religious rituals and routines will always impact your relationship with Jesus.

Why? Because any religious activity is absolutely meaningless if it's not connected to a spiritual need.

Whenever you divorce the activity from spiritual need, you'll find yourself carrying a burden you never intended to carry.

Matthew 11:28—Come to me, all of you who are [weary and burdened], and I will give you rest.

why?
Relig. —

Matthew 11:29—Take my yoke (grace and mercy) upon you and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Apply
- charge

Matthew 11:30—For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Let me give you some inside baseball on why I do some of the things that I do—

- There is a reason I preach behind a wooden pulpit.
- There is a reason I stand when I preach and sit when I teach.
- There is a reason I pray using the Psalms.
- There is a reason why I facilitate the Lord's Supper as I do.
- There's a reason why I baptize people as I do.

None of those things are done haphazardly or perfectly—they're all done Biblically.

We don't do things around here without knowing why we do them.

Jesus now answers their question with His own.

Matthew 9:15— "Can the wedding guests be sad while the groom is with them? The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Jesus teaches that there is a wedding in town!

And His disciples are taking a *fast from fasting* because of it.

In other words, would you not eat, drink, and celebrate if you were at a wedding?"

Your best friend is getting married, and you're telling me you wouldn't celebrate with him? *- in the wedding party*

Can you imagine saying, "oh not thanks, I can't have any filet minion, I can't drink wine, I can't eat any cake, I can't even dance—I'm fasting—so none of this is fun for me!"

Nobody in their right mind would do that.

Not only does Jesus provide the wedding analogy, but He also points John's disciples back to something John said ...

John 3:28—You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.'

John 3:29— He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice. So this joy of mine is complete.

John 3:30— He must increase, but I must decrease."

John saw himself as the "best man" and Jesus as the groom.

Even John said that it was time to feast, not fast.

The problem is that John's disciples forgot— and John is now in jail.

Why would John be the first to equate Jesus with a groom?

Last week, I showed you how the Prophet Hosea's marriage to a prostitute named Gomer was a metaphor for God's relationship with Israel. (Hos 2:16–23).

Let me show you another wedding metaphor from Isaiah.

^{NLT}
Isaiah 54:5—For your Creator will be your husband;
the Lord of Heaven's Armies is his name!
He is your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,
the God of all the earth.

Isaiah 54:6— For the Lord has called you back from your grief— as though you were a young wife abandoned by her husband," says your God.

Isaiah 54:7— "For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great compassion I will take you back.

Isaiah 54:8— In a burst of anger I turned my face away for a little while. But with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the Lord, your Redeemer.

—Why? Israel's spiritual adultery

All that to say this—Preparation for Jesus' first coming required fasting and repentance, but now that He's finally here—it's time to rejoice and feast.

We see this wedding feast continue with Jesus' second coming.

Revelation 19:7 NLT—*Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself.*

Amen! That is going to be some party!

Jesus continues

Matthew 9:15—*The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.*

Taken away paints the picture of sudden removal, or being snatched away violently.

Jesus is referring to his crucifixion.

The death, burial, resurrection, and ascension will have many emotions attached to it for the disciples.

However, Jesus' main point is this—when I'm gone—that will be a time for mourning.

And mourning is connected to fasting.

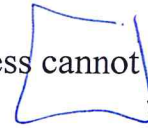
Jesus now provides two more illustrations to make his point.

Matthew 9:16—*No one patches an old garment with unshrunk cloth, because the patch pulls away from the garment and makes the tear worse.*

Cloth of that day was mainly wool or linen— and both would shrink when washed.

If a patch of new, unshrunk, cloth is sewn on an old shirt, the new patch would shrink and worsen the tear.

Jesus' point was this—The Gospel of His grace, mercy, and forgiveness cannot be attached to their rituals and rules.



Jesus came to bring spiritual wholeness— He did not come to "patch us up" so we could later fall apart again.

Jesus tells John's disciples, "I'm not here to patch up ^{The Pharisees} their mess. I'm not plugging holes in this man-made fence."

Patchwork is not foundational.

Patchwork is temporary.

Illustration: Tire Shop.

We need a supernatural change in our spiritual lives—The Gospel.

And the reason we need supernatural change is because, apart from Christ, we are spiritually dead—

Ephesians 2:1 NLT—Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.

Alive physically - dead spiritually

What good does it do to patch up a dead person?

Jesus provides one last illustration.

Matthew 9:17— And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. No, they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

Old wineskins would eventually dry out and become brittle.

If someone put new wine in an old wineskin, it would crack and burst due to the fermentation process, spilling the wine.

Fermentation is the process of how grapes are turned into an alcoholic beverage.

Today, wines are usually aged in wooden containers.

These containers allow the oxygen to enter and water and alcohol to escape—so they don't burst.

Not so in the first century.

If you wanted to keep new wine, you had to put it in a flexible, fresh, and new wineskin.

So Jesus illustrates a powerful truth:

KEYPOINT 2:

The Gospel cannot be contained through religious rules and rituals.

It's important to know that The old wineskins were not the teachings of the Old Testament.

The old wineskins were the burdens of the rituals, rules, and traditions that the Pharisees made up.

Matthew 9:17— No, they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."

"Both" refers to the new wine and the new wineskins, not the old wineskins of religion, rituals and rules.

In other words,

Put the new wine of the Gospel into the new wineskins of Scripture— and it will hold.

BTW, Is it any surprise that Matthew explicitly mentions the Church (16:18; 18:17)?

That's not a surprise at all— *the local church is a part of the new wineskin*

The Church is plan A for the Gospel to be communicated—there is no plan B.

It's up to me and you!

Now, Luke's Gospel adds an interesting detail from Jesus.

Luke 5:39 NLT— *But no one who drinks the old wine seems to want the new wine. 'The old is just fine,' they say."*

never about new wine

Jesus is talking about change—~~an attitude that the Church has suffered poorly for two thousand years.~~

The Jews didn't want to change; honestly, many of us don't either.

God is the only one who doesn't change — but is always changing us.

PREACH: — *"Losing My Religion"*

In what ways do we need to lose our religion to gain a relationship with Jesus?

It's interesting to see how we, as the New Testament Church, didn't learn our lesson from the Pharisees.

Because what happened in Jewish history has also happened in Church history.

The Church has done the same thing with additional rules and regulations in addition to Scripture.

Think about all the different rules and regulations that vary from denomination to denomination.

Think of the different rules and regulations that vary from Church to Church in the same denomination!

And yet, many of us treat these man-made rules as Biblically inspired by God Himself.

That's where many of our problems come in. — from Religion

When we first met the Lord Jesus, we were so on fire.

We were like a sponge—going to every Bible study and every Church service we could. — going, serving

Reading our Bible, taking notes, and asking questions. We couldn't get enough.

And then, one day, something demonic happens.

Somebody in the Church tells you to conform to their man-made rules.

For example:

Larry the Legalist has a drinking problem— and tells Johnny Christian that he must abstain from drinking because it's a sin.

When, in fact, that's not what Scripture says. Ephesians 5:18 says, "not to get drunk."

Larry the Legalist has a lust problem— and tells Johnny Christian that he can't watch R-rated movies anymore.

Because if Johnny Christian watches a sex scene--that may lead to dancing...and we certainly can't have any dancing!

But yet, Johnny Christian doesn't struggle with lust either.

What Larry the Legalist is missing is that he's not the Holy Spirit—and it's the Holy Spirit who does the convicting.

Everybody's got something.

And we deal with whatever those issues may be—and we put up our own fencing laws for ourselves... *COULD RAILS* ~~just like the Pharisees~~...to protect us.

And that's good...for us.

God wants us to be wise in setting up guard rails for ourselves—so we don't drive off the cliff into sin.

The problem is that we tend to think that whatever we struggle with—

Whatever sin issue I'm dealing with must be the same for everyone else.

So Larry the Legalist imposes his man-made rules on you.

Just like the Pharisees.

And then we judge Johnny Christian on how well he conforms to the Church culture and performs with these man-made, non-Biblical rules, regulations, and traditions.

And over time, Johnny loses his fire for the Lord - loses his passion for the Gospel.

Church history has shown the same thing.

Many churches

We've done the same thing with baptism and the Lord's Supper, and you must know the secret handshake to even walk in the front door!

What's the point?

+ **KEYPOINT 3:**

The Church has no more authority to issue rules and regulations than the Pharisees.

Not Biblical

+ **John 8:32**—You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Question: where is the truth found? BIBLE!

+ **Galatians 5:1 NLT**—So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.

Because of the person and the work of Jesus Christ, you are now free.

When people confess Christ, they usually come out of a legalistic and ritualistic mindset.

This is difficult and usually takes a lifetime to unlearn the lies and embrace the truth.

And that's one of the many reasons that Jesus instituted the local church in Matthew 16.

We need one another to encourage the freedom and the grace that Christ has given.

So Church, go share that freedom with someone this week!

+ **PRAYER**

Forgive us for our religion—our patchwork Christianity.

BENEDICTION

"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:22)

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