

Discipleship Moment

Sermon Text: Matthew 9:9-13

Whenever we read Scripture it is easy to forget that these writings come to us from two to four thousand years ago and half way across the world. Because the Bible is so much a part of our lives, and we are so familiar with some of its words and themes, it is easy to forget that we approach with a particular pair of glasses. I call these glasses our “21st-Century-American” glasses. When we hear the phrase “many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples” we aren’t shocked. It is a well-worn phrase in our society. We must take off our “21st-Century American” glasses and put on our “first-century-Jew” glasses; and when we do that, we are appalled by this idea. *Sinners*, as Pastor Ben taught us, indicates that these people were not only doing wrong things, but were *intentionally choosing to continue in sin*. Think of it this way: if Jesus came today, he would go and spend time at a house party that was thrown by strippers, prostitutes, Harvey Weinsteins, playboys, pornographers, and drug dealers. These are the kinds of people that we’re talking about: individuals who are choosing to be part of a sinful culture, and not feeling bad about it.

Let that sink in for a moment—Jesus didn’t just call someone like this to follow him, but he was willing to draw close to that community. He was willing to scandalize the religious, he was willing to risk rumors, and he was willing to risk losing credibility; willing to risk all of this to see transformation in the lives of those hurting the most. “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” Jesus said the Pharisees. Not only did he say this to the Pharisees, but he said to his disciples later, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. *Therefore*, go and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matthew 28:18-19a). Because Jesus has authority, he can give his disciples authority to into all the nations. We, as disciples, are extensions of Jesus. Where Jesus went, we are to go, what Jesus said, we are to say; we are the hands and feet of Jesus. That means that when Jesus was willing to give up his credibility, risk rumors, and willing to upset religious people—we should, too. This is not a call to go find trouble and dive in. I’m sure you know people and groups that you regularly interact with: family friends, neighborhood bars, or coworkers that match this description.

You know people like this. Jesus loved these people. Jesus spent time with these people. You should, too.

Going Deeper

1. Who are the people in your life that you would call “sinners?”
2. Why do you think of them as “sinner?”
3. When was the last time you spoke or interacted with them? Was it a long time ago? Or recently?
4. What would it look like for you to accept them into your home or go to their home for a meal? Would you feel comfortable? Why or why not?
5. If Jesus came to the Sauk Valley today, who would he spend time with that would be like the “tax collectors and sinners?”
6. Ask God to help you love those people in your life, and spend more time with them.