

## **“I Have Come to Call Sinners”; Mark 2:13-17**

### **0306-0308**

Our text comes from Mark chapter two. This morning, we'll be looking at verses 13 through 17. (I'm sorry), 13 through 17 of chapter two. But in looking at these verses, we really are going to begin by reading the entirety of chapter two, and then a little bit of chapter three, because that much of the text is really needed in order to set a context for us. Because all of this gospel is really tightly woven together. But in particular, chapter two and the first story of chapter three are very tightly woven together. And as you'll see, as we read these, and as we begin to look at the story this morning, you'll see how it is that we need to have in mind all of these passages in order to understand any of them because they are so, tightly woven together.

So, our passage verses 13 through 17. But let's just begin by reading from verse one down through the end of chapter two, and then chapter three, down through verse six.

Now as I read, I want to go ahead and alert you to be on the lookout for a few things. And as I say that, and then you have that in your mind, while I read, you will see these things, and then you will immediately begin to see just how it is that Mark has connected these together. And how it is that all of these are going to apply to each of the texts found in chapter two and chapter three.

So, beginning from chapter one. (I'm sorry), let me let me let it let you know what it is that you're looking for. So, as we're reading through this, be on the lookout; there's five episodes here, there's five interactions, five disputes, five arguments, so, to speak, five disputes that are brought to Jesus. All five of them follow the same pattern. They are disputes that are brought to Jesus over the ritual Law, the ceremonial Law, and Jesus's apparent or supposed violation of the ceremonial Law.

So, the first dispute and the last dispute of the five, the first one and the last one aren't spoken—they're thought they're in the people's hearts, but Jesus knows their thoughts. And he responds. The center three, the middle three, they are all spoken—spoken objections to Jesus. And all five of those he's going to answer with the same type of formula. He's going to answer each objection with this proverbial type of statement, this truism, this proverb, so, to speak. And each time, the point is going to be essentially the same. And we'll see how all this fits together. So, be on the watch out for that as we read from verse one.

Chapter two and verse one.

<sup>1</sup> And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. <sup>2</sup> And many were gathered together, so, that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. <sup>3</sup> And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. <sup>4</sup> And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” <sup>6</sup> Now some of the scribes were sitting there,

questioning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup> “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” <sup>8</sup> And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’ <sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —he said to the paralytic— <sup>11</sup> “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” <sup>12</sup> And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so, that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!” <sup>13</sup> He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. <sup>14</sup> 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 rose and followed him. <sup>15</sup> And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. <sup>16</sup> 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?” <sup>17</sup> 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.” <sup>18</sup> Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” <sup>19</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. <sup>20</sup> The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. <sup>21</sup> No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. <sup>22</sup> And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so, are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.” <sup>23</sup> One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” <sup>25</sup> And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: <sup>26</sup> how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?” <sup>27</sup> And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So, the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.” <sup>1</sup> Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. <sup>2</sup> And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so, that they might accuse him. <sup>3</sup> And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” <sup>4</sup> And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. <sup>5</sup> And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. <sup>6</sup> The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

So, as we read all those passages together like that, and as you were on the lookout for those things that we talked about—the confrontations, the disputes with Jesus—you plainly saw how all that fits together, how the same pattern is repeated five times.

From last week, we looked at the story—the paralytic—and then from that story, the objection that they had to Jesus is when Jesus says, your sins are forgiven, and they're thinking in their hearts; how can he say this? He's blaspheming. Jesus hears, and he answers with that statement that he makes; the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, which is easier to say, stand up and walk out, your sins are forgiven? So, now you see that I have authority on earth to forgive sins.

And then it goes from that to the passage before us today in which Jesus is reclining at the table and eating with the sinners and tax collectors. And they say, why is he eating with sinners and tax collectors? And then Jesus responds with that same sort of pithy, sort of proverb type of statement, when he says that only the physicians are here for the sick, not for the well. And the Son of Man has come not for the righteous, but for the sinners.

And then it goes from that to then the following episode when Jesus is confronted about his disciples and how they're not fasting. And the disciples of John are fasting, the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, and they say; How come your your disciples aren't fasting? And then Jesus responds with that story about the Bridegroom. They can't they can't fast when the Bridegroom is here, the day will come when they will fast.

And then he follows it up with those two proverbs. The proverb about the old garment and the new patch, and then the proverb about the new wine and the old wineskins.

And then after that, Jesus is confronted with his disciples about his disciples plucking grain, and eating some grain on the Sabbath. And they say; why are they doing what's not lawful to do on the Sabbath. And the Jesus responds with that story from the life of David. And then he responds, then he follows that up with yet again, another proverbial type saying, which is to say that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and oh, by the way, the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

And then finally, the final episode, is when he's in the synagogue there, and the man with the withered hand is there and they're watching him, they say nothing this time, but they're watching him to see if he'll heal on the Sabbath. Jesus knows their hearts, He hears their thoughts. And then he then says to them; Is it lawful to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath? And then he heals his hand.

And then after all that, that culminates with them then leaving, and going and conspiring with the Herodians to destroy him. So, you see how all five episodes are stacked up. All of them follow the same pattern. The first one in the last one are objections against Jesus that are thought in people's hearts. The second, third, and fourth one are objections against Jesus that are spoken. All of them are answered in a similar sort of way with Jesus responding with a proverb, or a truism, or a pithy kind of a statement, followed by a statement about the person or the authority

of the Son of Man. And then all of that concludes with Jesus' enemies going and conspiring with the Herodians to kill him, or to destroy him.

And so, that's the section that we're in. So, clearly, Mark has put all this together for a purpose. Clearly, all of these episodes didn't happen chronologically. But instead, they are put together in order for this theme to be coherent. These episodes could have happened at any point in Jesus's life. But Mark, as well as the other gospel writers, have put them together for the purpose of teaching what is before us here this morning.

So, we look last week at the episode of the paralytic, and the healing of the paralytic, and the forgiving of the paralytic sins. And Jesus's statement that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. And from that we then go to this episode of the calling of Levi to be his follower, to be His disciple. And then the party at Levi's house that is to follow. So, So, we'll look at this morning. And as we normally do, what we'll do is just sort of walk through the passage, just step-by-step to make sure that we first understand what's happening, what Mark is saying to us, and then we'll back up, and then we'll look at it from the perspective of understanding the spiritual meaning. What is the spiritual meaning that Mark has for us in this passage?

So, beginning here from verse 13; he went out again by the sea. So, I want to just pause right there and just do a little bit of just an 'aside' kind-of note, because I like to do this. Because, we live in a society that just won't give up on this nonsense about the 'lost gospels,' the false gospels, the Gnostic Gospels, I've heard it till I'm sick of it, I know that you've heard it, too, you're sick of it. But every time I come across something in the Scriptures that says to me, this idea of lost gospels and false gospels is nonsense, I want to just pause briefly and pointed out to you.

And here we see something else that tells us that, once again, we are dealing with the authentic gospel of the life of Jesus Christ> Because we're told in verse 13, he went out again by the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him. So, the picture that were shown of Jesus and all four Gospels is a picture of a man who was constantly on the move.

Probably none of us have taken the time—I hope you haven't taken the time, because it would be a waste of time—to read any of the 'lost gospels' or Gnostic Gospels. But in those, you're given a completely different picture of Jesus. You're not given a picture of Jesus, who goes to people. Instead, you're given a picture, almost a uniform picture, of a man who is sedentary, sits under a tree, sort of this religious guru kind of thing. And people come to him and ask him questions. And he gives these wise sorts of answers. That's how the false gospels portray Jesus—almost uniformly.

But all four of the authentic gospels tell us that Jesus was a man constantly on the move. He was here going by the sea. And Mark says 'again,' so, he's been by the sea—this is not the first time this is, of course, the Sea of Galilee, the lake of Tiberius. He is again going by the sea, he's teaching by the sea. He's going to be on the sea, in boats, by the sea—he's always constantly on the move.

And we're told that people are coming to him, the crowd is coming to him. As we've talked about this crowd that has grown in size, and grown in fervency. And so, from chapter one, verse 38

through the end of Jesus' life, he's never going to be left alone, unless he loses sleep, forsakes sleep, and gets off alone, by himself, or something like that. He's going to have crowds following him, crowds around him all the time.

And so, here he is, once again beside the sea, the sea of Galilee, and the crowd was coming to him, again. And we're told; And he was teaching them. So, once again, I we'll just point out what Mark is showing us repeatedly through his Gospel, is that this is what Jesus was consumed with. This is what consumed Jesus' energy. This is what consumed his focus, and his time—not the miracles, not the crowds. But he is focused on teaching those who come to him, preaching the truth—that is his central focus up until the point that he's going to offer his life as the Lamb of God, the sacrifice for sin.

So, they come to him. He's teaching them, now verse 14; And he passed by (I'm sorry), 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 arose and followed him.

So, now we encounter this fella Levi, and then Jesus issues this call to follow him. And we're told that he immediately follows him. So, this parallel is, of course, the chapter one episode of the call of the for fishermen, where Jesus again there said to them; follow me and they immediately followed him, and became his followers. This is the parallel to that episode.

However, this is a little bit different, in the sense that Jesus here is not, of course, calling fisherman, he's calling a tax collector. So, we'll talk in just a moment about tax collectors, and we'll talk about how this fits into the story and why this is here. And then after that, we'll talk about this fella Levi, and who he was.

But as we see Jesus issue this call, the first thing for us to just make note of is that this call to follow him—he says, follow me and Levi gets up and immediately begins following him—we should understand Jesus is not placing Levi into some kind of a trance. Jesus is not hypnotizing Levi, and he just walks by and says; Follow me, and Levi just stands up and just follows him in some sort of hypnotic trance.

This is almost certainly—not almost—this is certainly not Levi's first encounter with Jesus. Levi has experienced Jesus before. He's heard his teaching. He's likely witnessed miracles from Jesus. He also has likely had conversations with Jesus prior to this. So, this is not just Levi—Jesus passing by, and passing some sort of magic wand over Levi, and he just, rising up and following mindlessly like that in. Instead, this is the moment in Levi's life when Jesus says to him; This is it. This is time for you to leave everything behind, and follow me. Which he then does and follows him.

So, this man Levi, we we consider him to be the same man, as the one that we know of as Matthew. Now, we'll talk about that a little bit later. First when we talk about tax collectors. But after we talk about tax collectors, we'll talk about Levi, and Matthew, and are they the same person. But for just, for our purposes, right now, we'll just consider Levi to be the same person as the gospel writer, Matthew.

So, Levi is this—at this point—he's this tax collector. And we'll just talk for just a few minutes about tax collectors, just to kind of get into our mind what it is, or who it is that Jesus just called to follow him. So, as we're probably familiar, at least somewhat with tax collectors in the Roman Empire, we are necessarily familiar with the detested, the despised aspect of these tax collectors. Tax collectors in Jesus' day, were—bar none—the most despised people in the entire society. They were despised because they were tax collectors in a system that was designed to promote corruption and greed.

The Roman system of collecting taxes was designed to provide the maximum income to Rome, and to do so, through exploitation, by exploiting people's greed and corruption. And so, tax collectors were necessarily very corrupt, very dishonest people.

And here's why. Rome, of course, collected a lot of taxes. We live in a society today in which we often feel like that we're overtaxed and we are. We're just—it seems like we're taxed on everything that comes along. I always get aggravated multiple times a year at the fact that our government thinks that it's okay to tax me once a year on a vehicle that I already own. I didn't buy it, I didn't sell it, I just have continued owning it, yet the government thinks—another year, let's tax him on something that he still owns. So, we kind of can relate to this aspect of being taxed in all kinds of creative ways, not just maybe a single property tax, or a single income tax. But we also are taxed in all sorts of ways, a myriad of ways.

But the ways in which we are taxed probably could not compare to the ways of taxation to those who lived in the Roman Empire. So, Rome collected a lot of taxes. And it would collect taxes on many things that Rome would just take care of itself, such as taxing the land. Rome taxed the land. So, if you own land, you pay tax to Rome, but the Romans just sort of took care of that themselves.

But there were a myriad of other ways that the Roman government came up with, to extract money from the people that were oftentimes, quite frankly, very creative. They would tax on livestock, they would tax on people traveling on roads, they would tax by the number of axles in the cart, or the number of wheels on the cart, or the number of passengers on the cart. Or they would tax based on the goods that were in the cart.

Levi, we're told here, that Jesus sees him as he's passing by the sea. Levi is sitting in this, what's called a tax booth. So, in your mind, you're kind of thinking of maybe like a privy, something like an outhouse kind of thing, just a small little booth with a window. That would be something like what Matthew was sitting—or Levi—was sitting in here.

And Jesus sees him as he's by the sea. So, Levi likely was also by the Sea of Galilee, collecting tax on the fishing industry. Remember how he talked about Capernaum was a wealthy city. And its wealth was built upon the fishing industry, which was incredibly profitable there in Capernaum. So, Levi is likely taxing here, maybe the boats going, out the boats going in, the cash that they bring, in the number of fishermen on the boat, something of that nature, or all the above, he's taxing on everything they can possibly tax upon, because that's how tax collectors were.

They got the job of being a tax collector by submitting a bid to Rome. And the highest bidder won. So, they would submit a bid. If somebody wanted to be a tax collector, they would say, you know, if you give me this territory and this type of tax collecting, then I can collect this much. And the one who bid the highest amount, got the job. And then once you got the job, you had a certain amount of time before you then owed that amount of money to Rome. And then you could go about collecting it, and everything you collected above what you bid was yours.

And so, you see how the system is founded upon corruption. It's based—it's not as though tax collectors could become corrupt. It's as though the system itself is based upon corruption. The system itself is based upon extortion, because that's how the money was made.

And so, Levi here would have had this job, he would have been the high bidder for this type of tax collecting job. And so, he would owe this money to Rome. And so, now he's collecting as much as he possibly can collect from the fishermen here at the Sea of Galilee. We're told Luke chapter three, verse 12, and 13, these are the words of John the Baptizer, when John the Baptizer, says to tax collectors collect no more than you are authorized to do. So, we see here it was commonplace for the tax collectors to try to extract as much money as they can, as creatively as they can from the people.

And so, here is this man Levi collecting these taxes, as one of the most hated people in the society of Rome. In the Roman, in the Israelite society, the tax collector was more hated than even the leper. Here's why; the tax collector extracted money, or extorted money, not only from his own people, not only for his own gain, but the tax collector extracted money to give to Rome. And that made the whole thing that much worse.

So, here are these tax collectors that are extorting and extracting money—think of them like the tough guy, the arm-twister sort of guy, the 'make you an offer you can't refuse' kind of person. And they're extracting maximum money from the people who are their friends, and neighbors. And not only are they doing that, they're doing that to make themselves wealthy, but then also to give that money, not just to anybody, but to the pagans, to the Gentiles, to the hated Romans. So, you can see just the amount of animosity that would already be building up within the society there. So, these tax collectors, they were extraordinarily hated. In fact, Rome protected all their tax collectors with the penalty of death. If you touch the tax collector, you would die. They had to do that, because they were so, hated.

So, these tax collectors, they stood to gain quite a lot of money, they stood to make quite a bit of money. It was very profitable. If you were able to be a hard-hearted, cold-hearted, sort of tough-nosed kind of person, then you could make a lot of money being a tax collector, if you were willing to pay the price. Because the job of tax collector came with quite a high cost. And the cost was; Your family, your friends, and your faith. It would cost you those three things. If you could be tough, if you could be cold, if you could be cold-hearted and hard-hearted, and you are willing to give up your family, your friends and your faith, you stood to make a lot of money.

So, you would give up, first of all your family, because your family would immediately disown you. The tax collectors were so hated that everyone who was a tax collector, they were immediately disowned from their family. Their family would stop speaking, they would, in fact, oftentimes they would hold a funeral for the son who became a tax collector, because that son was then to them as one dead.

So, you lost your family, you also lost your friends. All your friends, your network of friends, the stable, whatever stable network of friends you had was lost when you became a tax collector, because your friends, the ones that you used to have, then became the ones that you were extorting for money. So, you'd have to make a whole new set of friends, people have the same type of work.

So, you would lose immediately your family, you'd lose your friends, and then you'd also lose your faith. Because the tax collector was barred from coming into the assembly of God's people. Once you became a tax collector, that was the last time you ever entered the assembly of God's people. You could not offer sacrifices in Jerusalem, you couldn't enter the synagogue for any of the synagogue services.

Furthermore, it was against the Law—it was unlawful—for anyone to accept alms from a tax collector. And we've talked before about what a big role was played in the Jewish faith of the giving of alms. That was extremely important to the Jewish faith—the giving of alms to the poor. Well, if you're a tax collector, it was unlawful for anyone to take your money as alms. So, you're unable to, even if you want it to give money to the poor, you are unable to do it because they couldn't take it.

So, you were cut off from all connection to God's people. You were cut off from all of the means of God's grace to his people. So, you lost your network of friends. You lost your support from your family, and you lost the people of God. So, you lost all of the stabilizing influences in your life, which is why tax collectors were notoriously immoral. They were notoriously promiscuous people. They were notoriously immoral people why?

We can easily see why. Because when they became a tax collector, two things happen; they lost all the stabilizing forces in their life, and then they put a lot of money in their pocket. And those two things together meant bad news every time.

So, tax collectors were notoriously immoral people. Kind of like the proverbial college freshmen, that goes off for the first time to a new city far away from his parents, and he's got money in his pocket, and guess what—no longer are people watching him, no longer does he have that sort of network of stabilizing people in his life. And sometimes, you can lead sort of an immoral life in that way. So, take that a ramp it up. And that was the tax collector. And that's what Jesus called to follow him.

Now, these tax collectors, as I said a moment ago, were hated people. In fact, they were more hated than even the leper. Two weeks ago, we talked about the leper. And we talked about just how hated lepers were in that society, because the leper was a person upon whom the judgment



of God had been cast for their sin. But the tax collector was even more hated, because the tax collector was a tax collector completely by choice. Now, sure, the leper's sins were—that was his choice, or her choice—but the judgment of God upon them was not their choice. The profession of tax collector was their choice.

And furthermore, there was at least reason to be sympathetic to the leper. I mean, the leper, after all, had this hideous disease. The tax collector, not only did he not have this hideous disease, he had loads of money in his pocket. In fact, loads of your money in his pocket.

Are you kind of starting to get a feel for just how hated the tax collector was? It was lawful, the Jewish Law said; it is not a sin to lie to a tax collector. That's just how far the Jewish system went to say—we hate these people. They are the scum of the earth. This is who Jesus called to follow him.

Now, if we were correct in saying that this man Levi is the same one that the scripture is also know as Matthew, then not only did Jesus call Levi to be a disciple of his, but he called him to eventually become one of his 12 apostles.

So, let's talk about that for just a minute. Levi, who is this man, Levi? Is he the same one as Matthew? The best understanding is that it is, but it's not exactly quite so, straightforward. Probably all of us. If we've been around the church for any amount of time, we probably have heard, Levi and Matthew are the same person, the one who wrote the first gospel and Levi were the same person. And most likely, that's the case. But again, it's not quite that straightforward. And here's why.

So, we hear this man, Levi, the son of Alphaeus, we're told, and this is the last time that we'll ever hear of Levi. We hear from here, and we hear them in Luke's gospel in the in the same account, the same instance in Luke's gospel, we hear of the calling of Levi. In Matthew's Gospel, this incident is known as Matthew's calling—it's the calling of Matthew.

But in Luke and in Mark, we have the calling of Levi, and this is the last time we'll ever see that name. In either Luke's gospel or Mark's gospel. We're going to hear Matthew's name one time, in Luke's, in Mark's gospel, and that's with the list of the twelve apostles, the same thing in Luke's gospel.

So, we never hear of Levi again, we only hear of Matthew one time, and that's in the list of the apostles. Now, Matthew's account of this same incident—Matthew lists the name 'Matthew,' the calling Matthew. Jesus tells Matthew to follow him. But here's the difficult part. The difficult part is when we come to those lists of the apostles, there's four lists of the apostles in the Scriptures. There's one coming up in Mark chapter three. There's one in Luke chapter six. There's one in Matthew chapter 10, and Acts chapter one. Those are the four lists of the twelve apostles. All four lists include the name Matthew, none of them include the name Levi. So, all four lists include the name Matthew as one of the apostles. But here's the odd thing. All four lists also include another fella by the name of James the son of (guess who) Alpheus, which is odd. So, there's two James's that are apostles. There's James the son of Zebedee, and there's James the son of

Alphaeus. Here we're told that Levi is the son of Alphaeus. So, it seems highly unlikely that there's two people named Alpheus, and both of them have a son who became an apostle to Jesus, that's highly unlikely—much more likely that the Alpheus, who is the father of Levi, is the same man, who here is said to be the father of—he's the father of James, he said to be the father of Levi, most likely is the same Alpheus.

So, the question then arises, well, then how do we make sense of that? Because in all four lists of apostles, we have Matthew listed, and we have James, the son of Alphaeus listed. So, some have speculated maybe Levi also has another name James that he goes by. But that doesn't make sense, because then there's also Matthew included in that list. And that doesn't explain why it is that Matthew use the name 'Matthew' for the same instance here.

So, the most likely explanation is that Levi and Matthew are the same person. But then if that's the case—and we believe it is—if that's the case, then here's what that means. That means that there are three sets of brothers that are apostles, not just two; Peter and Andrew, James and John, sons of Zebedee. And now, Matthew, or Levi, and James, the son of Alphaeus, three sets of brothers, who are apostles.

.Now, here's the interesting part, if that is true, and this is just something to think about, something to sort of ponder on for the next few days. If that's true, if James, the son of Alphaeus, and Levi, or Matthew, are brothers, and they're both apostles—remember what we said earlier; when you became a tax collector, your family disowned you. Wouldn't that be interesting? That there are two apostles who are brothers, who prior to Jesus's calling, didn't speak to each other? In fact, the one, James, considered his brother, Levi to be dead? Wouldn't that be interesting, now that they are apostles? So, that's just again, just some speculation of, of who this man James the son of Alphaeus is, and how he connects together with Levi the son of Alphaeus.

So, why is it that he's called Levi here and never called Levi again? Instead, he's called Matthew. I think, and again, this is just speculation, I think that Levi was given a name change. Some of thought, well, maybe Levi was his Hebrew name, and Matthew was his Greek name. The only problem with that is they're both Hebrew names. So, we also know that people often went by two names. But I think it's much more likely here, that Levi was given a name change, because he was given a new identity.

You see, the man who Jesus calls by the Sea of Galilee to be his follower, is not the same man who wrote the gospel. I don't mean they're different people—I mean, that Levi is a new creation. Levi was given a new identity, a new creation in Christ. He was given a new heart. He was given a new spirit. And so, it would make sense from a man coming from such immorality, for Jesus to perhaps say to him, in an account that's not given to us in the Gospels, Levi, you are now Matthew. And from that point on, Matthew called himself 'Matthew.' Even in his own gospel, he called himself, Matthew, because that's who he is.

So, this is most likely the one who wrote the first gospel, Matthew. And I know this become sort of popular in the last 20 years or so, to consider Mark's gospel to be the first, but I believe that Matthew's gospel was the first gospel written by this man Levi whom Jesus called.

Now, put in your mind this, just a real, accurate understanding of who this is that Jesus called to be an apostle. And just think for just a moment, at just how much at odds this is, with the gospel that we all love—the Gospel of Matthew. Everybody likes the Gospel of Matthew, right? I mean, Matthew, such a great guy when he writes his Gospel. Who doesn't like the Gospel of Matthew? It's just a wonderful Gospel. We all like the story of the wise man coming, the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes. We like the Great Commission, and all that. And then all those other wonderful parts that are unique to Matthew's Gospel, like when Jesus says in chapter 11; Come unto me, all ye who are weak and heavy laden, I will give you rest Take my yoke upon upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. We love those passages. Those passages were written by this man, who was such a vile, immoral person prior to encountering Jesus by the Sea of Galilee. So, what a radical change has taken place.

Do you realize Matthew's gospel—we don't often think about this, but Matthew's Gospel is probably the most humble gospel. Matthew's gospel was written by a humble man. Do you know that nowhere in Scripture are we ever given a single word that Matthew spoke? Nowhere in all scripture is one word recorded that Matthew spoke. And he wrote one of the Gospels himself. And he was a character in all of them. And yet, even in the Gospel that he writes, he records nothing that he said.

In this incident, where Jesus calls him to follow him, Luke says this, in Luke chapter five; that Jesus said; Follow me, and Luke says Matthew left everything and followed him. Matthew doesn't even say that. In Matthew's account, all he says is; Jesus said, Follow me, and Matthew did.

But Matthew left everything for Jesus. In fact, Matthew left more than the fisherman, because the fishermen could always go back to being fishermen. In fact, they did, you remember in John 21? They did. Matthew left everything with a bridge burning behind him, because there was no going back once he left that tax booth. Matthew truly forsook everything to follow this man, Jesus. And he writes this gospel to us that is just such a humble, lowly Gospel, that seeks in no way to shine any sort of attention upon himself. That's the change that was made in Levi's life, in this man that we now know of as Matthew.

So, again, verse 14, and he passed by and he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, Follow me. Matthew's life changed at that moment. Follow me, and Matthew had to do it. He rose, and he followed him.

Now verse 15; and as he reclined that table in his house.

Now, the scene just radically changed right there. We go from beside the Sea of Galilee, to now they're in a house, at a festival, at a feast. So, the scene radically changed. And we're in somebody's house for a festival.

Now, the way Mark writes it here, it almost sounds like that we are in Jesus' house, and the feast is in Jesus's house. Again, from verse 15, as he reclined, and 'he' is Jesus, as Jesus reclined a table in his house. Doesn't that sound like they're in Jesus' house?

But fortunately, we have Luke to clear this up for us, to tell us that, no, this is in Levi's house. Because Luke, chapter five, and verse 29, Luke makes it clear; and Levi's made him (Jesus), a great feast, literally a mega-feast. They made him a great feast in his house. And there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with him.

So, Luke, thanks to Luke, we're cleared up on that—that this was not Jesus' house, it was the house of Levi, which would have been a large house because we're told there's a large company of tax collectors there. Literally a mega-feast with mega-people there.

And so, large house, large feast, we don't know if it was that night, we don't know if it was a few nights later, maybe weeks later. But at some point, there's this great big party at Levi's house. Maybe it was something that Levi did on a regular basis. Or maybe this was a special occasion. But Levi is taking opportunity to throw this great feast, because, you know, the, the greatest opportunity for evangelism is a short time after an adult conversion. You know, that's the greatest time for evangelism? Because the brand-new follower of Christ still has all their old friends. And all their old friends still want to come over, and trust him enough to come over, and that sort of thing.

So, here's the moment in Levi's life where he has this moment, this opportunity, all of his tax collector friends still like him. So, he throws this big party and they all come over, and Jesus is the guest of honor. So, as he reclined a table in his house with many tax collectors and sinners. They were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

So, here they are reclining a table, this word that Mark uses for 'reclining,' it's the same word that he used in chapter one to describe Peter's mother-in-Law, who was sick in bed. So, this is prone, this is prostrate, this is this is lying down, reclining at table. And so, what that tells us is that this wasn't just a meal for the sake of eating. This was a long, drawn out, sort of engaged affair, a long type of meal, a meal for enjoyment, a meal with multiple courses, that sort of thing.

So, they're reclining a table. What would happen in this culture when they want to eat a meal in such a way as that, then they would have to short table, and around the table, they would have cushions, and they would all rest on their right elbow, with their face toward the table, and their feet away from the table. And that's how they would recline at table and eat the meal. That's what they considered to be the most comfortable way to eat a meal. Now, quite honestly, I can't possibly think of a more uncomfortable way to eat a meal than leaning on an elbow, with my feet sticking out from a table—that's just seems to me just incredibly awkward. But in this culture, that's what was considered to be very comfortable.

So, there reclining a table, this is this long sort of drawn out meal. And, the house is full of, what we're told, is tax collectors and sinners. So, tax collectors, we talked about them, 'sinners', if you're reading in NIV, then, or maybe another translation, you will notice that 'sinners' is in

quotation marks. It's not because it's a different sort of word. There's the typical word for sinner, which comes from the typical word for sin—hamartia. But it's in quotation marks in the NIV, and some others because the word is being used in an unusual sense. It's being used, not as a moral statement, or an ethical statement, it's being used as a social statement.

So, when these who were reclining at table with Jesus—they're called sinners—is not making a statement so, much about their morality, or their lack of it, as so, much their status in life, their place in life. Because what was known as the 'sinners' by the Pharisees were those who, due to their occupation, or their life, or just their lack of funds or resources, they were unable to pursue the following of the Law, like the Pharisees.

Maybe they had to work on a lot of Sabbaths, maybe they were ritually unclean, because of their work, maybe they were worked with animals, or livestock or, or they were a tanner, or taxidermist, or something like that. And so, they were rendered, sometimes unclean. They're like shepherds, they were, they were known as 'sinners,' not so, much because they were immoral, but because their work, or their life, would not let them follow the Law as rigorously as the Pharisees. So, they were called 'sinners.'

So, Jesus here is reclining a table and eating with these tax collectors and sinners. And make no mistake about this—because this is easy to be lost on us—make no mistake about the fact that Jesus is encountering these tax collectors and sinners within a context that shows a very intimate connection, which shows a very significant connection. Because in this culture, in Jesus's culture, to share a meal with someone was significant, and intimate.

We don't always understand that today, because we can share meals with people that we don't necessarily like. You can go eat lunch with your boss—no big deal. You can go eat lunch with coworkers that you don't particularly like or whatever—not a big deal, right? Some of you are nodding your heads.

But in this culture, it was very different. To share a meal with people, particularly this kind of meal, was very significant, and it showed an intimacy between them. And so, herein lies the whole problem of the passage. Jesus isn't just talking to the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus is engaged in a significant and an intimate fellowship with tax collectors, and what's known of as 'sinners.'

So, we're reminded of the passage in Revelation chapter three, verse 20, where we are told this; Jesus says, not not to last people—Jesus isn't knocking at the door of the of last people's hearts—but in Revelation three, verse 20, says; Behold, I stand at the door and knock of my church. I stand at my church's door and knock. My wayward church, the church that has been disfellowshipped, the church that is out of fellowship with me, Jesus says, I stand at the door knock, and if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and, in the King James language, sup with him, or dine with him, or eat with him.

So, you see the significance there? That Jesus says; We are out of fellowship with one another. You are my wayward church, you are the church that has forsaken me. But I stand at the door of

your church and knock, and if you will turn and you will open the door, then I will come in, and there will be this fellowship again.

So, you see there the significance of sitting down to table in this culture? It was a significant thing. And so, Jesus is here eating with these tax collectors, these sinners, and this appears to be something that this incident either began a reputation for him, or perhaps Jesus did this more than once. Because Jesus definitely developed a reputation for eating with people such as this.

Take a look with me in Matthew chapter 11, verse 19. Here we read that the Son of Man—this is the incident in what Jesus says; you know, the John the Baptizer, he was this ascetic, he lived out in the desert, he ate grasshoppers, and honey. And y'all called him—y'all had nothing to do with him either. But then the Son of Man comes, and the Son of Man, Jesus says, comes eating and drinking and look at what they say about me. "Look at him, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners."

So, Jesus seems to have developed this reputation of sharing table with tax collectors and sinners, so much so, that people started to call him a lush. He's a drunkard. He's eating with tax collectors and sinners, seems like all the time. Luke chapter 15, verses one and two; Now the tax collectors and the sinners were all drawn near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying; This man receives sinners and eats with them.

So, Jesus here seems to have developed this reputation, he seems to be known of as someone who will willingly, and perhaps regularly, eat and share table with tax collectors and sinners of the sort. And so, here we're told of just something about Jesus's heart. Whereas other people in this culture would look away from the tax collector, would look away from those of that type of a moral class, or social class, Jesus, instead of looking away, he looked to them.

Remember course, the story that we're told in Luke chapter 18, Jesus tells the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee that go into the temple courtyard to pray. And the Pharisee says; Lord, I just thank you that I'm not like that guy over there. I don't even want to look at him. I just thank you that I'm not like him. Whereas Jesus will say to us, in Luke 19, verse 10; the Son of Man came to seek and to save sinners.

Or there's another tax collector in Scripture. We remember his name, he was even more hated than Matthew. He was Zacchaeus. And to Zacchaeus, Jesus says; I must go to your house. Jesus not only received these tax collectors, he sought them out. Whereas everyone else sought to avoid them or to be far from them.

So, here we read, once again, from verse 15; And he reclined t table in his house, in Levis' house, with many tax collectors and sinners, and they were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him Now, verse 16; And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors—so, that doesn't mean that they were there, sharing the same meal with them. It just means perhaps they heard about it. Or perhaps they saw Jesus going into this house of the well-known Levi tax collector.

When they heard of it, they said to his disciples; Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? So, there is the see once again, the same pattern, where these objections are raised against Jesus. Why does he with tax collectors and sinners?

Now notice they go to the disciples and not to Jesus. Why did they go to the disciples and not to Jesus? We're not told. But there's three possible reasons that I can see; first of all, perhaps they went to the disciples and not to Jesus, because they were intimidated by Jesus, Perhaps they had heard his authoritative teaching, Perhaps they had heard, just the words that come out of his mouth, and perhaps they're intimidated now. And so, they know that they can't match wits with Jesus. So, maybe they go to the disciples instead. Or maybe they've seen the miracles, and they're intimidated by Jesus. That's not that's possible.

Or perhaps it's because of the crowds. Remember, the story of the paralytic tells us that people were having a hard time getting to Jesus now. So, maybe they can't get to Jesus because the crowds, and so, they instead go to the disciples. There's not the same crowds around the disciples, maybe they go to the disciples instead?

Or perhaps—and this is probably the most likely—is perhaps, they go to the disciples, because at this point, they see the disciples as probably more willing to listen to Jesus. Like maybe Jesus is so, far gone—what's the point of even talking to him anymore? Maybe his disciples still have some sense—will talk to them.

Maybe that, or maybe a combination, but in any case, they go to the disciples, and they say; why does it eat with tax collectors and sinners? And if I was them, I would have said; Why don't you ask him?

Verse 17; And when Jesus heard it—so, maybe he overheard it, or maybe he knew their thoughts, or maybe the disciples came and told him—but 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.

So, here we have Jesus' answer; those who are will have no need of a physician. Physicians don't go to well people, they go to sick people—of which, I mean, who has anything to argue with about that, who has any, what do the Pharisees, who have the Pharisees would say; No, Jesus, that's wrong? Everybody would agree. Well, yeah, of course. Physicians go to sick people. Not even the Pharisees would say; that's crazy, Jesus. Whoever heard of a physician going to sick people?

No. They would, as well, say; Well, yeah, we have to agree with that. Yeah, physicians do go to sick people. So, you see the connection Jesus is making? He's making the connection between a physician and a sick person, and himself and a sinner, or tax collector.

So, physicians go to sick people. I'm here as a physician, and I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. So, here we have sort of a follow up to the story of the paralytic. In the story of the paralytic, the point of that story was—the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins. In this

story, what we see is, now that we know that Jesus has the authority to forgive, now, we're told who it is that Jesus will forgive.

So, we're told he has the authority to forgive. In the paralytics, in the home of the paralytic, the paralytic is there. Here, we're told who it is that the Son of Man will forgive. And the one he will forgive, is not the righteous, but the sinner.

And so, that's sort of a play on words, sort of a tongue in cheek way of Jesus saying—we could even substitute 'self-righteous,' I didn't come for the self-righteous, I didn't come for those who have no awareness of their need for forgiveness. I came for the sinner. That's Jesus's meaning here.

So, what he's saying is that the one to which he came, the one to whom he will forgive, his forgiveness, is only for those who are aware of their sinfulness. The ones who have, sort of this moral awareness. The ones who have a spiritual awareness of their need for redemption, of their need for forgiveness, Jesus, those are the ones that I came to.

So, it's kind of like, you know, to use Jesus's analogy of the physician coming to the sick person. It's sort of like, if you could imagine, maybe you've got some sort of illness going on, maybe something's going on with your heart. And you've been to a couple of cardiologists, and they can't figure it out. But there's this one cardiologist, who is the most brilliant cardiologist in the nation. But he lives in another part of the country. And being so, brilliant, of course, he's booked up for two years in advance. So, you can't go see him. But he's the most brilliant cardiologist in the nation.

But somehow, you have a friend who knows somebody that just happens to be able to get you an appointment with this particular cardiologist. So, they arranged this appointment, and the cardiologist, who lives three states away actually flies here to see you, because you've got this appointment on a certain day, and he flies, he drops what he's doing, and he flies here. And you sit down in this office with him, and he sits down in front of you and says; now tell me what your symptoms are.

And you say to him; Well, Doc, how have any. I feel great. Nothing wrong with my ticker. To which he says; you fool. Why did I come here? Because I came for a sick person.

So, you see the connection Jesus is making? I'm here for sick people. Now, the person who has the problem with the heart, still has that problem. But unless they're willing to tell the cardiologist; this is my problem, this is what I'm experiencing, he can't do anything. Until the person says, Yes, I'm sick.

This is like the leper. Remember two weeks ago, we talked about the leper, and how the leper could not come to Jesus, and say; if you're willing, you can cleanse me from this really bad case of dry skin. I'm not a leper, Jesus. Don't think I'm a leper, but I just got some really bad skin things going on, just some really bad dry skin. Wonder if you could help me with that?



To which Jesus would say; No, I can't. I can cleanse lepers. But I can't cleanse lepers who deny that they're lepers.

In the same way, Jesus is saying the same thing here. I didn't come for those who have no perception of a need for me. I came for those who have a deep perception of their need for me. And they're the ones that I'm eating dinner with. Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

So, this moral self-awareness is what's required for Jesus to do his healing work of the soul. And what's interesting is, even that moral awareness, that spiritual awareness, even that is God's work. John 16 and verse 8 us it is the Spirit's work to convict of sin. So, even that moral awareness, of our need, even that comes from God. So, salvation is all of God.

But let's not misunderstand Jesus' meaning here. What Jesus is not saying is that you have to be this outcast, lowly sort of social pariah person in order for me to call you unto myself. Jesus is not saying I only came for the lowly and for the outcasts. We know this because there were many who became followers of Jesus who weren't social outcasts.

Take a look with me in your handout, Acts chapter 17, verse 12. Many of them therefore believed, with not only a few Greek women of high standing.

Or John 11, verse 45; many of the Jews therefore believed in him.

Acts 18, and verse eight; Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue believed in the Lord.

Acts six and verse seven; a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

And let us not, of course, forget Nicodemus, or Joseph of Arimathea or Lydia, the seller of purple goods in Philippi. And so, the Scriptures tell us that Jesus didn't just come for lowly, social outcast people. Jesus came for people who know of their need for him, who had this spiritual moral awareness of their deep need for God.

And so, Jesus said, I came not to call the righteous, but sinner. So, let's talk for just a moment about this call. Jesus said, I came to call sinners. What does Jesus mean when he says, I came to call sinners? Does he mean that all those people that he ate dinner with at the home of the tax collector, that all of them are followers of Jesus now?

We're told many of them were because that's what Mark says; many of them were followers of Jesus. But when Jesus says, I came to call sinners, what he doesn't mean is—I'm going to this dinner at Levi's house, because all of them have been called to be my followers.

Do you remember, this is almost exactly a year ago, but back when we were in Ephesians, chapter one, verse 18. And we were talking about that phrase; that you may know the hope of your calling, the hope to which you were called? And if you remember, it was March of 2022, if you remember, we spent a great deal of time talking about the call of God. And we spent a lot of time

looking through the Scriptures to see that the Scriptures explicitly tell us that there are two calls of God.

There is the one call of God, that's the generic, general call that God sends to all people. And that call is; repent, turn from your sin, believe, and be saved, and all who come to me, none will be cast out. Come unto me, and drink from the living waters. Come and buy wine and food without payment, all who come will have living waters, remember that? That's the general call given to all people: repent, believe, and turn and you will be saved.

But we said that that call is rejected. But there is a second call. And we talked about that as more like a summons from a sovereign, a Sovereign King who summons his people to come into His presence. Do you remember that? And that's the call that comes to the heart of the chosen. It comes to the heart of God's people. And as Jesus says; my sheep, hear my voice. And that's the call of the Master saying; You are mine, come to me.

So, Jesus sits and reclines with a roomful of people, all of which he calls to follow him. But only some of which does he summon to be his followers. So, if you want to go back and listen to that, again, we did a great deal of work in the Scriptures to see how it is that the Scriptures clearly show that. And so, I would recommend that you do that if you're interested in that.

But Jesus is here to say, I am here to call all people to follow me. I'm here to call all of these sinners, all these tax collectors to follow me. But as Jesus himself will say, many were called few are chosen.

So, this call is given to them to, call the righteous, not the righteous, but this the sinners. Which brings up an interesting question for us. So, the Levi, remember Levi, who was sitting in this tax collector booth, Jesus says; Follow me and he follows. The summons is placed upon leave Levi's heart, follow me. Levi hears the voice of his Master, and Levi obeys the voice of his Master, and he gets up, and he follows.

So, the question that we would ask ourselves is a question that's often—we often sort of use this language in the church—and that's this question: Does Jesus accept us the way we are? Did Jesus accept Levi the way he was?

Jesus calls these tax collectors to follow him. If they choose to follow Him, if they obey his voice, if they hear his voice and follow, does Jesus accept them the way they are?

He does not. God does not accept us the way we are. God calls us the way we are. But for him to accept us, he must change us. He must give us a new heart. That's why Jesus had to die. Because, God calls us just as we are. Just as Levi sat in that tax collector—just as he was. Jesus would say to him; just like you are, I'm calling to you. But for you to be mine, I have to change you. I have to give you a new heart.

Ezekiel 36, verse 26, I've got to take from you that heart of stone, and I've got to give you that new heart. I've got to give you that new birth, that Jesus talks to Nicodemus about in John

chapter three; you must be born again Nicodemus. So, he calls as they are, but if they come, if they hear His voice, they will be changed.

And so, he says to them, when Jesus heard this, he says; Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick, I came not to call the righteous but sinners. Now, it's at this point in the story, that, what I want to ask you all to do is something that perhaps you've never tried to do. But let's try to do this right now. And it may not be easy, let's try to empathize with the Pharisees.

You may have never tried to empathize with the Pharisee. You may have never tried to think like a Pharisee. But it'll be helpful, if we try to put ourselves in the position of these Pharisees, who have witnessed Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners.

They've witnessed Jesus calling the most hated man in society, the most immoral man in society. And now they're struggling with this. And they asked him; Why is your master doing this? And the answer they're given is; I didn't come to call the righteous, I came to call the sinner.

So, the quandary that Jesus forces them into, the quagmire, the situation in their minds that Jesus forces them into—let's think about this for just a minute. Because the Pharisees, they have witnessed two things that are a collision with one another. They have witnessed Jesus saying things that no one else has ever said. They've witnessed Jesus doing things that no one can do, unless he is sent from God. Remember the words of Nicodemus, John chapter three, verse two; Rabbi, nobody can do these things that you're doing unless they're sent from God.

So, the Pharisees have seen very clearly, and they believe their theology tells them: nobody can do these things, and nobody can say these things unless they are sent from God.

But then, on the other hand, they've also witnessed Jesus doing things that their scriptures have told them over and over, are sinful—namely, the mixing together with sinful people.

That's what the Scriptures have taught them. The very first verse of the very first Psalm. Psalm chapter one and verse one, blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

Now, from that we could jump to a myriad of Old Testament Scriptures that tell us essentially the same thing. And that's that God told his people to separate themselves from sinners. That's what was behind the whole story of the Moabite women, that they had intermarried, and Ezra makes them separate.

That's the whole story behind the Passover. That's what the Passover was about—the leaven, get the leaven out of the house. And a whole host of other Scriptures.

One place in scripture where this really becomes prominent is in the prophet Haggai. Haggai chapter two, this is in your handout, verses 13 and 14. Haggai is sort of having this little discussion about this very topic, and his question is; If you have an unclean thing and a clean

thing, an unholy thing and a holy thing. And the the two of them come together and they come into contact. Does the unholy thing become holy by the holy thing? Or is it the other way around? Does the holy thing become corrupted by the unholy thing?

Here's what Haggai says. Well, he says, we won't read that whole passage, but here's what he says; No, the unholy thing isn't made holy by coming in contact with something clean. It's the other way around. That's what the Jew was taught. And so, now, here's what the Pharisees are wrestling with. Can you see what the wrestling with? They're wrestling with two things that don't seem to agree in their mind. One is this man who speaks like he's from God. And all of his words are backed up with miracles from God.

On the other hand, at every turn, he seems to be violating what the Scriptures have said, not just once, not just twice, but dozens, and dozens, and dozens of times over.

So, they're not sure what to make of him. That's why they're asking him these questions. And so, on the one hand, the miracles and the words he's speaking seem to say, accept this man as someone from God. But on the other hand, these actions that he's doing this, this mingling with unholy people, seem to say to them, no reject this man. So, they're going to take the route of rejection. But you see what the rest when.

And this is the whole point of the whole section. That's why we read the whole text together. Because that's the point of this entire section. The point of the whole section is this: Everything's changed, now. Everything is different, now. The new wine is here. The new patch is here. And it doesn't fit on the old garment. The new wine doesn't fit the old wineskins. The Son of Man has authority over the Sabbath. The Son of Man has authority to forgive sins. Everything is different now, because the Son of Man is here, now.

That's the whole point of the extended section; That you Pharisees, you got to now radically rethink how you have been taught to understand the Law. Because their understanding of the Law, or I should say their misunderstanding of the Law, is what has created this unsolvable problem for them. Because their understanding of the Law is not as the Law should have been understood for the unregenerate person, which they are.

So, what is the purpose of the Law? The Law has multiple purposes. But the two I would call the two main dual purposes of the Law, the Law of God is what I mean. I would classify it as the purpose of the Law for the unregenerate person, and the purpose of the Law for the regenerate person.

So, the Law for the unregenerate person, the unconverted person, the lost person, what is the purpose of the Law for the lost person? The purpose of the Law for the lost person is to break them of their sinful pride and drive them to the cross. To show them that there is no way that you can please God in your sinful condition, you cannot—of yourself—be perfect. And so, that's the purpose of the Law is to take the sinner and drive them to the grace of God, drive them to the mercy of God to say; this is a standard you cannot meet.

Now, once a person becomes regenerate, then the Law sort of takes on another purpose. The Law still serves the same purpose—to guard against pride, to constantly say to us; you will never, of yourself, meet God's standard. And so, you must daily fall at the feet of the God of grace.

But the Law takes on an additional purpose for the converted person. And that's the purpose of being a guide, a director so, to speak, to take our love for God, our appreciation, our gratitude, and to give it direction, to give it focus. That's what the Law does for the regenerate person. The regenerate person who now has love for God needs to be shown how to live that out in such a way that pleases God, so, that we don't have a whole bunch of people that love Jesus, and are just showing their love for Jesus any old way that they want. You know, and having—I don't know—parties of illicit drugs because we love Jesus so, much—let's get high for Jesus, you know? And just have this crazy way of thinking, well, let's just show our love for God in this way, or that sort of crazy way, or whatever way we come up with. God says no. In your zeal and your love for me, here is how you show it, as Jesus says; If you love me, do what? Keep my commands.

Now, the Pharisees looked at the Law of God, and they totally missed the whole first part, the whole first part that was to say to them; this is intended to drive you to the cross. Instead, they looked at the Law of God as though they're the regenerate person, when they weren't, and they're keeping up the Law was, somehow, pleasing of God.

So, in that misunderstanding of the Law, that's why they looked at what Jesus is doing and said, we can't figure this out. This makes no sense to us. Because Jesus is showing them, the Bridegroom, the New Wine, the New Patch, the Son of Man, he is the only one who is not corrupted by coming in contact with sin. Because he has in and of himself, his own holiness, his own light, his own goodness. And if he has his own holiness, then he is not corrupted to come in contact with sinners and tax collectors, as you are.

It's like, imagine just the most vile, stinking, rotted pile of garbage you can imagine. The smelliest pile of nasty garbage, with a ray of sunlight shining onto it. Now, I don't care how stinky that garbage is, that ray of sunlight is not affected by that garbage, is it? Because that ray of sunlight has its own light. It is its own source of goodness, so, to speak. And so,, the Bridegroom comes, and he says; you, you are not holy in and of yourself. That's what this Law was to teach you, that you cannot isolate yourself from sin. No matter how hard you try, you cannot segregate yourself from sin and be holy by so, doing that.

But everything's different with me. Because I'm the Bridegroom. I'm the new wine. I'm not corrupted to come into contact with sinners, because I have my own wholeness. My own essence is holy. And so, what you should have learned from the Law is that you cannot possibly isolate yourself enough. And that your only hope is the Patch, is the New Wine, is the Bridegroom—that's your only hope. And they didn't get it.

But that's Jesus's whole point. That's why Mark is hammering this point, over and over again. Salvation is only found by casting yourself upon the Holy One himself. The one whose holiness is not corrupted, to eat with tax collectors and sinners, the ones who, the one whose holiness is not corrupted to talk with a Samaritan woman at the well. Because you, in your own efforts, you

could go and live on Mars if you want. But if you did, you would still take your heart with you. And you would still fail to separate yourself from sin.

And so, in their misunderstanding, they saying, well, we don't understand how this this man can be so, powerful, and the signs from God, yet he mixes with the unclean. Doesn't that make him unclean? Haggai would say; it does, if your cleanness is not your own.

But if you're cleanness if your holiness is yours, as it is the Bridegroom's, that's the part they missed. Jesus is turning everything on its head. Jesus is upsetting everything about this entire applectart.

So, this fundamental misunderstanding of who Jesus is, of how the Law interacts with them, this is would lead them to reject the New Wine. Look at what Jesus will say in Luke chapter 18, and verse nine. He also told this parable, the parable that follows is the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee, who go into the temple courtyard and pray. Remember, the whole point of that parable is the Pharisee, saying, I'm not like that guy over there. I've separated myself from Him. Jesus told this parable where we read in verse nine; he told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. And because they trusted in themselves and in their own righteousness, well, then they've got to protect that righteousness by distancing themselves from the unrighteous, or those who were less righteous than themselves.

Look, finally at Romans, chapter nine, verse 30, and 31. Speaking almost directly, it seems, of these Pharisees who are critical of Jesus, here's what Paul says; What shall we say then that Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is a righteous righteousness that is by faith, but that Israel who pursued a Law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that Law.

This is truly a scandal that Jesus brings upon Capernaum. And it is the scandal of grace. Because true kingdom grace is scandalous. When we see it, when we see true grace lived out like this, when we see the true grace of the Savior, who will come to the most despicable man in Capernaum. And say; Follow me. I'll change you. When we see that grace, that is scandalous, and it scandalized those who rested upon their own righteousness. And in so, doing, they saw the frailty. They saw the sham that was their own righteousness, and they lashed out at Jesus.