

Be A Light: Invite Warmly

02.06.2022

Our text this morning

Is from Matthew 9

You can turn in your Bibles

Or just follow along on the screen

Matthew 9:9-13 - As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow Me," He told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with Him and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

One quick note:

Matthew calls himself... Matthew

Shocker

But Mark & Luke call him Levi

Same guy

Same story

It's a longer explanation than I have time to give today

You can go listen to a message I gave at the end of last August

I lay it all out there

But for today

Levi = Matthew

And Matthew = Levi

Got it?

Ok – I want to boil this down real simple

This account

Can be summarized

Like this:

MATTHEW INVITED MANY FRIENDS TO DINNER WITH JESUS.

Let's just break that down into parts:

Matthew:

Subject

Us

Regular guy

Invited:

Needs an adjective

Matthew excitedly invited

Matthew thoughtfully invited

Matthew meticulously invited

Matthew urgently invited

No Gospel gives us an adjective

Personality

Many Friends:

Matthew – “Many tax collectors and sinners”

Mark – “Many tax collectors and sinners”

Luke – “A great banquet... a large crowd of tax collectors...”

Let me stop a second

Does it seem weird to anyone else

That Matthew and Mark

Matthew being autobiographical here

That Matthew and Mark

Both labeled his friends as “sinners”

Why is that?

The Bible says that all of us have sinned and fallen short of God’s standard

But would any of you like being labeled

In the bestselling book of all time

As a sinner

When a buddy invited you over to his house?

I don't think the Scriptures are dissing Matthew's friends

It's merely pointing out that Matthew had some friends

That weren't the church-going type

They weren't people that typically cared about Jesus

And yet

We know that his "sinner friends"

Who didn't care about Jesus

Were desperately loved by Jesus

And we know that his "sinner friends"

Who didn't think much about Jesus

Were constantly on Jesus' mind

All these years later

That part hasn't changed

There are friends in our lives

Who do not currently care about Jesus

Who are not currently thinking about Jesus

But their souls are on His mind & heart

Right.Now.

And if we are going to be followers of Jesus

Their souls must be on our heart & mind

Right.Now.Too.

One other point here

I think there are a few key points to consider

These passages make it clear that Matthew had many “sinner friends”

Matthew & Mark – “Many tax collectors and sinners”

Luke – “A great banquet” with “a large crowd”

So Matthew had many “sinner friends”

Both Matthew & Jesus appear to *like* his “sinner friends”

All of the religious folks appear to *not like* his “sinner friends”

And yet Jesus bucked tradition

He risked reputation

He violated societal expectation

Honestly – He chose them

He chose the “sinner friends”

And He was willing to pay a price for it

Do I think Jesus calls us to uphold the righteousness of God?

Certainly – He told us that the Truth would set us free

Do I think He would defend the faith against moral relativism and postmodern heresy?

Absolutely

But I also know that He would fight to defend the space between Himself

And men & women who are often rejected in today’s church

Men like Matthew & his “sinner friends”
Women like the one at the well
Or the one caught in adultery
Jesus often confused and offended religious folks
Because of His staunch determination
To love broken people
And invite them, warmly, into His life

And if we’re going to follow Him
We probably need more sinner friends in our life
And we probably need to warmly invite them
To share life with us

Matthew invited many friends to dinner with Jesus
Notice that his invitation

Was to dinner

He didn’t invite them to an evangelistic crusade
Or even a church service
He didn’t invite them to read a tract
Or to listen to a Bible-thumping sermon
Matthew – invited many friends – to dinner

One of the most damaging things in our culture
Is the disconnection that is rampant in today’s world

Harvard University recently conducted a study on loneliness in America

And the results are alarming

36% of respondents reported serious loneliness—feeling lonely almost all the time

36% - more than 1 out of 3

That's a big number

But that number – as big as it is

Jumps to 51% when surveying mothers with young children

Over half

And all the way to 61%

Almost two-thirds

When surveying young people aged 18-25

By the way

Young adults and mothers of young children

That's almost all of Spring Hill

Look at this quote from Harvard

These are not Christian sociologists

This is not a Christian think tank

This is Harvard:

“We need to return to an idea that was central to our founding and is at the heart of many great religious traditions: We have commitments to ourselves, but we also have vital commitments to each other, including to those who are vulnerable.” — LONELINESS IN AMERICA

Harvard University is calling on the church

Do you see that?

Harvard is calling on the church

To return to its roots

Because it sees the devastating impact

That has come

From the church losing its way

This reminds me of an event from the life of Jesus

Jesus was cutting through Sychar

On the way to Galilee

And He talks with a lonely, Samaritan woman

Who had come out by herself

To draw water at a well

The disciples had gone into town to get food

And so the two of them talked together

He let her know that He knew her

He was aware of the dead ends in her journey

But He also let her know that He loved her

Accepted her, for who she is

And had so many plans and dreams of what her life could yet become

His brief conversation was so inspiring to her

That she ran into town

To the people that she was awkwardly trying to avoid

She ran into town

To get them to all come meet Jesus

She leaves about the time

The disciples get back

They hand Jesus His burger and fries

But He doesn't eat it

He's emotional

He's wrapped up in thought

He's still thinking about her

They beckon Him to eat

John 4:32 - But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

I love it

He's consumed with the conversation

That He just had

They're consumed with

Eating their Happy Meal

He says, I have food you know nothing about

And they say to each other

Maybe somebody else brought Him food

They're looking around for a sandwich wrapper

Or Chick-fil-A sauce

John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work."

My food

What's true about food?

You have to eat a time or two or three each day

If you don't

You're whole body will revolt

Jesus said

My food – the thing I have to do a time or two or three each day

Is to do the will of Him who sent Me

Is to connect with people

Like this dear, lonely, rejected woman

And then He says the line for us

John 4:35 - Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

Jesus is saying

If you don't see people

That you can love in My Name

You're just not looking

Open your eyes!

Look at this quote from Harvard's research:

"About half of lonely young adults in our survey reported that no one in the past few weeks had 'taken more than just a few minutes' to ask how they are doing in a way that made them feel like the person 'genuinely cared.'"

Open your eyes

That person lives in your neighborhood

She works in the cubicle next to yours

He's the quiet student in your Algebra class

Or staring at her phone while her kids play baseball

We've got to open our eyes

Because the Gospel is for everyone

I want you to notice the commonalities

Between Jesus' interaction
And Matthew's party

One had food

One didn't

That doesn't matter

One was a large crowd

One was two people

That doesn't matter

One was planned out

One was spontaneous

Those things don't matter

But what things are in common?

No one's rushing off

No one's in a hurry

There was time for discussion

And listening

And care

There was no agenda

No hard sale

Just love

Matthew invited many friends to dinner with Jesus

I think Matthew's a genius

He had just recently been following Jesus

Now he's been called by Jesus to be an apostle

And he has all these friends

Who need to meet Jesus like he has

That's a lot of pressure

I wonder if maybe he was nervous about what to say

Or insecure that he didn't know enough

So he says

I know what I'll do

I'll invite all of my friends over

They like a good party

And then I'll invite Jesus

And the fellas

They like to eat

And we'll just see what happens

So what did happen?

We don't know

But by the end of Matthew 9

That same chapter

Matthew writes this:

Matthew 9:36 - When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

We don't know

But I would care to wager that some of that crowd

First met Jesus at Levi's house

First met Jesus at a party

There at the end of chapter 9

Jesus looking at the crowds

Says to His disciples

Matthew 9:37-38 - Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field."

Just like in John 4

Open your eyes

There are so, so many people

Looking frantically

For what they'll only find in Jesus

They don't know they're looking for Jesus

They think they're looking for a better job

Or a better house

Or a better partner

They're sometimes gaining the whole world

And yet losing their soul
But they are looking frantically
For what they'll only find in Jesus

You know, some of you have the ability to teach
And you are so creative
In telling Bible stories to kids or teens
We need you

Some of you are prayer warriors
And when you pray
You lose all sense of time
Next thing you know
45 minutes has passed
That has never happened to me
We need you

Some of you are great musicians
Or organizers
Or your just handy
We need all of you

But some of you are sitting here saying
I can't do any of that
All I know how to do
Is have people over to my house for burgers

We need you

And some of you are saying

I'm a terrible event planner

But I like to eat and hang out with people

We need you too

Matthew

Invited

Many Friends

To Dinner

With Jesus

Last week

I asked you to get four people in mind

Four people who are not connected to God or a local church

And to pray for them every day

We'll talk more about that

Over the next couple weeks

Today I want you to consider inviting them

Maybe to church

But maybe just to your house for burgers

And invite a couple of non-weird church friends over

Not the weird ones

At least not yet

Or invite them to your lifegroup

Maybe have a social night

And several families invite friends

Don't bait and switch it

Don't make it weird or sales like

Just love people

And invite them into your life

Listen to me

Several of us

Several of us

Have not responded to that invitation

From God Himself

He has invited you

Just as He has me

He has invited you

To a dinner

The Bible calls it the great wedding feast

And one day

When our life is over

God will host a big party in Heaven

Where Jesus will be wed
To the church
His bride
And He will pledge again
To love us
And we will pledge
With newly cleansed hearts
To love Him
And those who have made Jesus their Lord & Savior
Will celebrate that day
Together
With Him

If you have never given your life to the Lord
You won't be invited on that day
And that will break my heart
And it will break His

I don't want you to miss that

Mark 2:13-17 - Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to Him, and He began to teach them. As He walked along, He saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi

got up and followed Him. While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with Him and His disciples, for there were many who followed Him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw Him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked His disciples: "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Luke 5:27-32 - After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow Me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed Him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to His disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."