

## Introduction

In 1981, even though I still had my PGA Tour card, I took a few months off from playing golf. I took a job in Dallas selling Savin copiers during the week and giving golf lessons in the evenings and on Saturdays. At Savin, I went through the Xerox sales course, a fantastic and intense six-week course. We learned how to recognize when a prospective client was genuinely interested. People that are interested in a product will give non-verbal clues that an astute salesman will pick up on. For example, when people begin to touch something, it shows an interest. As a salesman, the more that you can get someone to touch your product, the greater the chance you have of selling it. That is one reason that car salesmen try and get you to test drive a car. A potential buyer who test-drives a car is far more likely to buy the car. In addition to knowing if someone was interested, we learned how to sell. We learned a FAB method, which stands for Feature, Advantage, and Benefit. We learned twenty-nine different ways to close the sale. I don't have time to do a full summary of what we learned, but one important thing was to identify who your customer is. It is extremely important to know who your customer is.

When I attended the Goldman Sachs 10KSB class a few years ago, we spent a lot of time focusing on who are customers are. We learned the importance of identifying what their needs were and how we could tailor our presentation to show how our product met their needs. As a result of that, I identified three different categories of clients in our business, and I began to focus our marketing collateral to address these different clients and their needs.

I don't think that Jesus went to the Xerox Sales course, and I don't think He attended the Goldman Sachs 10KSB class, but Jesus knew his target audience. He knew who He was going to reach out to. He knew who He was not going to go after. Jesus knew their needs. Jesus knew that what He offered would meet their needs. Jesus focused His ministry on the people who recognized their need for what Jesus was offering.

This morning, we are covering Mark 2:14-17, which is the account of Jesus calling Levi (Matthew), the tax collector. Levi throws a party for his fellow tax collectors and sinners, and the Pharisees and scribes get pretty worked up about it. They asked why Jesus was eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus told them that He did not come to call the righteous. Instead, Jesus called sinners, those that recognized their need for God's forgiveness.

## 12 Who Does Jesus Call (Mark 2:14-17)

1. He does not call the righteous
2. He calls sinners
  - a. He called Levi, a tax collector
  - b. He called Levi's friends, tax collectors and sinners

(Mark 2:14-17) "As He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. {15} And it happened that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. {16} When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" {17} And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, "*It is* not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

## 1. Jesus did not call the righteous.

This passage is about who Jesus calls. Jesus ends the passage by saying that He did not come to call the righteous. He said that those who are healthy do not need a physician. Jesus is right. Most of us do not go to the doctor for well visits. It is expensive to go to the doctor today. If you go to an urgent care or emergency room, you are doing well to get out for under a \$1,000.00. In addition to that, my experience is that you may wait a long time to see the doctor. When Chad had his wisdom teeth out, his mouth kept bleeding and it got worse. The doctor would not return calls and we ended up taking him to the emergency room. He bled all night in the waiting room and finally got in about six in the morning. The medical procedure took about ten minutes and we were released. We were exhausted. Furthermore, it cost us a couple thousand dollars. Why would you spend all night at the emergency room and spend a lot of money if you were healthy? Unless you have a need, like Chad did, you won't do that. The healthy do not need a physician.

Jesus was not talking about healthy or sick people. Jesus is talking about the spiritual condition of people and He was using the healthy and sick as an illustration to communicate who really needs a Savior. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). All of us have been separated from God by our iniquities (Isaiah 59:2). All of us have a spiritual sickness called sin, and the prognosis is not good – death. We are all going to die because of our sin. That is the reality. We are all sinners and face death. In Hebrews 9:27, we find that it was appointed for all men to die, and after this comes judgment.

There are two problems. The first problem is that we are all spiritually sick. We have all sinned. The second problem is that some people do not recognize that they are sick. Some people do not recognize their spiritual condition. In April 2000, our family was doing well. We had a couple of foster children and Karen was pregnant with Chad. Things seemed to be going well. Karen was homeschooling, and because of this, she had to get a physical from our doctor to satisfy the state homeschooling requirements. Kathleen was six years old and she needed a school physical. So, on Friday, April 14, 2000, Karen took her in to Kaiser Permanente to get her physical. Kathleen looked fine. Her color looked good. She had lots of energy. She did not have any colds or other symptoms of being sick. She appeared to be a very healthy six year old girl. But, when they took her blood work and analyzed it, they called Karen back and said they needed to see us immediately. Karen and I were scheduled to go on a date that Friday night, but we went to the Kaiser Permanente medical center to see what the urgency was. They told us that Kathleen's bloodwork showed that she had leukemia. They did not know what kind of leukemia, but they could see the leukemia blasts in her blood. They wanted us to take her to the hospital that night. We said we would take her the next day. We went home and shared the news with our children. We prayed for Kathleen and did a lot of crying. Kathleen did not appear to be sick, but the reality was that she had a very serious medical problem. In fact, two days later we got the final diagnosis; she had Acute Myeloma Leukemia (AML). They had no cure for AML at the time and they gave our daughter 3-8 weeks to live. Our daughter was very sick, and none of us were even aware that she had this deadly cancer.

Jesus said He did not come for the healthy, but those who were sick. The reality was and is that everyone has this deadly sickness. The reality is that we all need what Jesus has to offer. The problem is that many people are like we were; they have this sickness but they do not realize that they have a terminal illness. Because they see themselves as healthy and righteous, they do not admit themselves to the hospital for treatment. Jesus, our Jehovah Ropha, our God who heals, does not force anyone to check themselves in. He is available to all who see their need for Him.

There are a number of reasons why people may see themselves as righteous. One reason is that they compare themselves to others. Turn to Luke 18:9-14. Here we have two men going to the temple to pray. The first was a Pharisee, and the other was a tax collector, like Levi in our text today. The Pharisee stood and prayed, “God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.” This Pharisee saw himself as righteous because he compared himself to other people. In regard to these other people, he saw himself as righteous. He was self-righteous. He was not righteous in God’s sight, but righteous in his own eyes. The problem with this is that God does not grade on a curve. If we have ever committed just one sin, that sin has separated us from God and we have need of God’s mercy and forgiveness.

(Luke 18:9-14) “And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: {10} "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. {11} "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. {12} 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' {13} "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' {14} "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Notice the contrast in attitudes. The tax collector stood some distance away and was even unwilling to lift his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner.” The tax collector understood his plight. He knew he was a sinner. He did not compare himself to someone else who might be a worse sinner. He knew that he was a sinner who needed God’s mercy and forgiveness. Jesus said that this man went away justified.

A second reason that people sometimes see themselves as righteous is that they look at the deeds that they have done and think that those deeds justify them. Notice what the Pharisee said. “I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.” Fasting and tithing are good things and we should pray and fast. We should give our tithes. There are many purposes of fasting. They include repentance, as in the case of Nineveh (Isaiah 58:5, Jonah 3:5-8). One purpose is to humble ourselves (Isaiah 58:5). One reason is to help free those in bondage (Isaiah 58:6). Another purpose is to divide our bread with the poor; it is to soften our hearts to the plight of the poor (Isaiah 58:7). There are a number of reasons for tithing, which include honoring God (Mal 1:6, 3:8, Pr 3:9-10), honoring God’s servants (1 Tim 5:17-18), and providing for the poor (Deut 14:28). We should fast and tithe, but those things do not remove the sins on the debit side of the account. If we have sinned, those sins still remain, and we have need of forgiveness. The Pharisee saw these works of his as things that made him righteous.

(Isa 58:5-7) “Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD? {6} Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke? {7} Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”

We are not made righteous and saved by our deeds or works. We are made righteous by God's grace and mercy. Notice what Paul said in Titus 3:5. God saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy." The Pharisee needed God's mercy because He was a sinner. Even though he had done some good things, he still had a sin problem that needed God's mercy and forgiveness.

(Tit 3:5) "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,"

A third reason that people see themselves as righteous is because they do not have a good understanding or perspective of God's holiness. In Romans 11: Paul said that God's ways are unfathomable. His holiness is hard to fathom or grasp or understand.

(Rom 11:33) "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

Notice what the prophet, Isaiah, said when he had a vision of seeing God. "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah was a righteous man of God, but when he saw God, he had a better understanding of what holy really means. When he compared his life to the holiness of God, he said, "Woe is me." He saw his desperate need for God's mercy.

(Isa 6:1-5) "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. {2} Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. {3} And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." {4} And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. {5} Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Jesus did not call the righteous, those that saw themselves righteous in their own eyes because they were better than someone else, or had done some good deeds. Jesus did not call those who were healthy. Who did Jesus call?

## **2. Jesus calls sinners.**

Jesus calls sinners. Jesus calls those who realize that they have a need for God's forgiveness in their lives. In verse seventeen, Jesus said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Our passage begins with Jesus passing by a tax booth, and Levi, the son of Alphaeus, is the tax collector in that booth. In the Matthew 9:9-13, we have a parallel passage and he is called Matthew, not Levi. This is the same Matthew that wrote the gospel of Matthew, so it is his personal testimony that he was sitting in his tax collector's booth. Not much is known about the life of Matthew. We know that he was probably the most educated of the twelve apostles. Socrates, a writer in the fifth century, says that he took the gospel to Ethiopia, where he died as a martyr in a city called Nadabah in 60AD.

Historians tell us that the tax booth was on an elevated platform, and was near the tollgate on the Great West Road from Damascus to the Mediterranean. At this location he could collect from all the ships that went along the coast from town to town. As a tax collector, he worked for the Roman government. Specifically, he was collecting taxes for Herod Antipas. Because he was collecting taxes for the Romans, the oppressors, he would have been considered as someone who was betraying his own countrymen. Tax collectors were known to take more than their share, and they made themselves rich at the expense of others. Therefore, tax collectors were considered the lowest of the lowest in the eyes of the Jews. They were despised by nearly everyone. The only people they could associate with were thugs, enforcers, prostitutes and other sorts of criminals.

(Mark 2:14) “As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.”

(Matt 9:9) “As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He \*said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.”

When I worked as a prison chaplain, all the sex offenders were kept in L-6. They separated the sex offenders from the rest of the inmates. The inmates had their own value system. Sex offenders were considered the most despicable criminals. The other inmates would hurt or kill these sex offenders, so the prisons had to separate them from the rest of the prison population. The tax collectors were in the same class, the most low-down and despised group of people in society.

As Jesus went on His way, He saw Levi in the tax booth and called to him to follow Him. The Greek tense is an imperative one, meaning there was an urgency and a compelling call to follow Christ. It was a strong exhortation to follow Jesus. Our passage says that Levi got up and followed Jesus. Luke records that Levi left everything behind and got up and began to follow Jesus. Levi was leaving behind a lucrative profession and position. He had all the material things that he could want. He had job security. But, Levi got up and left everything behind. Why? Because there was an emptiness or void in him that only God could fill. He knew that he was a sinner that needed cleansing. He knew that He was in need of a Savior. He was ready for a new life, and he left everything behind to follow Jesus.

(Luke 5:28) “And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.”

The next thing that Mark records is that Jesus is reclining at the table in his house and that there were many tax collectors and sinners dining with him. In addition to the tax collectors and sinners, there were some scribes and Pharisees present. So, this was a very mixed and diverse group of people. They did not just happen to be there.

(Mark 2:15-17) “And it happened that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. {16} When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples...”

In Luke’s account, we find that Levi gave a big reception for Jesus in his house. As a wealthy man, he probably had a big house. Luke tells us that there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people.

(Luke 5:29) “And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.”

When Jesus called Simon and Andrew in Mark 1:16-17, He told them that He would make them fishers of men. The woman at the well in John 4 immediately began to tell others about Jesus. When people came to Christ they immediately began telling others about Jesus. Statistically, the longer people are Christians, the less non-Christians they know. As a new believer, it is likely that most of your friends, the people that you hang out with, are not believers. In order to continually fish for men, we have to be intentional. We have to make friends and reach out to people that we meet in our daily lives. Bob Schindler said that most people we meet are where we live, work, or play, so we need to try and cultivate relationships with them.

(Mark 1:16-17) “As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. {17} And Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”

But Levi is not an old Christian with mostly Christian friends. He throws a big party and he invites his friends, who are also tax collectors and sinners. These were probably the only ones who would associate with him. The religious leaders that are there were also invited by Levi. These were people who were following Jesus’ ministry, and Levi does not exclude them, even though they were not his friends. Levi is fishing for men. He is doing exactly what Jesus told Simon and Andrew that He would teach them to do.

Levi used hospitality to bring his friends to Christ. Hospitality is a wonderful way to bring people to Christ. We housed a man named John Chetti in Orlando. He prayed to receive Christ while living with us.

We housed a man named John Cyboran. He was a golfer in Orlando, trying to make it onto the PGA Tour. John received Christ while living with us.

We housed a man name Greg Millen. He was from a well-to-do family in Pennsylvania. It was difficult to house him, as he expected Karen to wait on him. Greg received Christ at our home, and ended up marrying Karen’s sister. He is a godly man.

We housed a caddy named Dave Warner. Dave did not have a home to go to at the end of the 1994 golf season, so I invited him to stay with us in Georgia. Dave received Christ at the breakfast table one morning. We baptized him in our jacuzzi.

I mention these different men that we housed because we have seen excellent fruit in hospitality. That is not the only way to reach out to people. There are many ways to reach out to your friends and neighbors. We need to be creative and take initiative with our friends and neighbors.

The Lord gave me an idea of how to reach golfers. He gave me the idea of writing golf tips with spiritual lessons. I wrote Good News For Golfers. Later on, I wrote Good News About Fundamentals. Both of these tracts were great tools that I continue to use.

I also put together evangelistic golf outings. I made it where Christian golfers had to bring an unsaved friend of theirs in order to play in the tournament. There would be two Christians and two unbelievers in each group. I would play a par three hole with each group as they came by.

After the round, I would give a golf clinic and share my testimony with them. We gave an opportunity for men to respond. These clinics were great fun and very effective. Over the years, we have used puppet shows, food distribution, tea parties, and many other events and methods to reach out to those around us. I used to fish, and one thing that I learned is that you had to go where the fish are. You can't just find a place that looks nice and sit there and wait for the fish to come to you. You have to find the places that the fish are at, and then go fish in those areas. There is more to fishing than just finding water and throwing a hook in the water. There is also more to fishing for men than meets the eye. We have to be intentional and cultivate relationships with those that do not know Christ. We have to invite them into our lives and our homes. This is what Levi did.

Our passage ends with Jesus answering a question that was given to His disciples. They asked, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus gives a purpose statement. He tells us one of the reasons that He came. Jesus came to call sinners. In Luke's account, Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

(Mark 2:16-17) "When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" {17} And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

(Luke 5:32) "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

### **Conclusion and Applications**

Perhaps you are here this morning and you realize that you are a sinner and have never asked God to forgive you of your sins. This morning God is ready to forgive you. He has his arms open and He is ready to embrace you and to forgive you of your sins. If that is you, I encourage you to pray this prayer with me.

Father God, I am a sinner and I need Your forgiveness. I ask You to forgive me of my sins. I believe that You sent Jesus to come and die for my sins and that You raised Him from the dead. I want to make Jesus Lord of my life. Jesus, I ask You to come into my life this morning. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

There may be some here today that God has spoken to about reaching out to friends and neighbors. He wants you to use hospitality and invite people into your homes so that you can share Jesus with them. Hospitality is a wonderful way to reach out to others. In Acts 1:8, Jesus told the disciples not to worry about the times, but to focus on being His witnesses. God wants you and I to be His witnesses to our neighbors and friend.

(Acts 1:6-8) "So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" {7} He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; {8} but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

**Introduction** (Mark 2:14-17)

- 1. Jesus did not call the righteous.** (Rom 3:23, Isa 59:2, Heb 9:27, Luke 18:9-14, Isa 58:5, Jonah 3:5-8, Isa 58:6, Tit 3:5, Rom 11:33, Is 6:1-5)
- 2. Jesus calls sinners.** (Matt 9:9-13, Mk 2:14-17, Luke 5:28-32, Mk 1:16-17)

**Conclusion and Applications** (Acts 1:6-8)