

## Checking In

1. Take a few minutes to check in with everyone, see how they are doing, and open with prayer.
2. Church Life- Oct 13<sup>th</sup> All Church Service Project, Oct 31<sup>st</sup> Trunk or Treat.

## Learning

### *Knowing God*

#### Key Doctrines

- Sovereignty - God is the absolute ruler of all things and thus sovereign in His choice of the elect.

According to Romans 8, salvation comes in a specific order of events often called the “Ordo Salutis”. These events are: Election Predestination, Gospel Call Inward Call Regeneration Conversion (repentance and faith) Justification Sanctification Glorification. The value of *ordo salutis* theology is that it enables us to see clearly that it is God who saves, freeing us from the sinful tendency to take some credit for our own salvation. We do not proclaim, “I found it,” but, “He found me.” Rejoice that it is God who is the author and finisher of your faith.

- Sin – No sin is acceptable to God, all sin no matter how “small” is punishable by death. (James 2:10).

In contrast to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and their distinction between mortal and venial sin. The bible makes it clear that that all sin is mortal in the sense that it deserves death.

#### Key Observations

- Was there anything that stood out to you about this week’s sermon, what specifically encouraged or challenged you?
- *Read:* Mark 2: 13-14, Matthew 9:9, Luke 5:27-28  
What is significant about Jesus calling a tax collector to follow him? What is significant about Levi’s response to Christ’s command to follow him?

Tax collectors were hated by most Jews because of their reputation for cheating and because of their support of Rome.

A Jew who accepted such an office was excommunicated from the synagogue and shamed his family and friends. Thus, a Jewish tax collector was looked down upon for valuing money over reputation, respectability, purity before God, and concern for his own people, who had to pay extremely high taxes to the imperial power.

Mark’s words emphasize the brevity of Jesus’ call and Levi’s radical obedience. Jesus’ words, “**Come, be my disciple,**” are in the imperative mood, meaning this was a command, not an invitation. Levi recognized that Jesus wasn’t inviting him; Jesus was calling him. So Levi **got up and followed**. Levi’s radical obedience is amazing for the change it would effect in his life. Already ostracized by family and friends, following Jesus probably made no difference in this regard. But Levi was probably very wealthy—tax collecting was a lucrative occupation. Levi had been an outcast; now he was wanted as a member of a group. But he would have to learn to live in poverty.

- *Read:* Luke 18:9-14

What stands about the tax collector in this parable? What attitude of his should we be striving to emulate?

This Pharisee was confident of himself and his righteousness, while at the same time despising this other man, even though he too was in the Temple praying to the same God. The Pharisee did not welcome the tax collector who may have been seeking God; instead, the Pharisee gloated that he was so much more righteous. The **tax collector** who had come to the Temple and seems to have known full well the extent of his sin. He felt so low that he did not think he could **even lift his eyes to heaven** into God’s face; instead he **beat his chest** (a sign of sorrow), praying for God to **be merciful to him**. He recognized himself as a **sinner**. He had been convicted of his sin and had come to the one place where he could find forgiveness. He had come to God, humbly recognizing that he did not deserve mercy. Only the tax collector recognized his sin; therefore, he was the only one God justified. The self-righteous Pharisee had said that he had no sin; therefore, there was nothing for God to justify for him. He returned home no different than when he had entered. The principle is that no one has anything of value to bring to God in order to deserve salvation, mercy, justification, or even a second glance from God. **The proud will be humbled, but the humble will be honored**. Acceptance before God cannot be achieved by good deeds, piety, or any amount of self-proclaimed righteousness. If humility toward God and compassion for neighbor are excluded, the Pharisee possessed an impeccable life-style. But humility toward God and compassion for neighbor are the essence of true piety.

- *Read:* Mark 2:15, Matthew 9:10, Luke 5:29

What additional information does Luke’s gospel add to the account? What do Levi’s actions show about his commitment to “follow” Jesus?

Luke added, “left everything” This is not found in the Mark and Matthew parallels. This is included in the narrative to clarify for his readers what it means to follow Jesus. This also ties the present account to the call of Simon, James, and John, who also “left everything and followed” (5:11). In 14:33 Jesus stated that one must “give up everything” to become a disciple, and there also this refers to becoming a Christian since it is addressed to the “crowds” and “anyone” (14:25–26). Elsewhere following Jesus involves denying oneself and taking up one’s cross daily (9:23) and leaving one’s house and family (9:57–62; 18:28). To such “poor” belong the kingdom of God (6:20). That Levi **left everything** was no small matter. Matthew was probably very wealthy, so when he walked away from his booth, he left behind a lifetime of potentially great wealth. Several of the other disciples could always return to fishing, but Matthew could never turn back. **Lk 5:29** Levi called his friends together to meet Jesus too. He **held a banquet in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor** so that his **fellow tax collectors and other guests** could meet Jesus. This was a crowd that Jesus could not reach in the synagogues, for they had been excommunicated (their profession was seen as traitorous). Jesus loved them and had a message for them too—the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

- Why do you suppose that “sinners” are specifically singled out?

The NIV is quite correct to put the word “**sinners**” in quotation marks to indicate that it is being used with an unusual meaning. The term “sinners” referred not only to immoral and pagan people, but also to the common people who were not learned in the law and did not abide by the rigid standards of the Pharisees. According to the **Pharisees**, contact with these **scum** made a Jew unclean; to sit and **eat** with such people was particularly heinous. The Pharisees would have nothing to do with such people. But not so with Jesus, who stooped to the level of the poor, unlearned, common people—even sinners! Thus, the Pharisees pulled his disciples aside and asked why Jesus did this. They fashioned their question as an accusation. As a result the scribes despised them. Perhaps a better translation would be “outcasts” (GNB).

- *Read:* Mark 2:16-17, Luke 5:30-32, Luke 15:1-7  
Jesus came for those who are sick. How did the Pharisees misunderstand their own need for a physician? In contrast to their response what is the proper response (Lk 5:32, 15:7)?

Christ came to call **sinners, to repentance**. Jesus did not condone the activities of sinners, but required repentance—a change of mind that recognizes the need of a Savior and recognizes Jesus Christ as the only Savior.

- *Read:* Matthew 9:12-13, Hosea 6:6  
Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and instructs them to “go and learn”, what knowledge were that lacking?

The Pharisees' trouble was that although they followed the rituals of Judaism with great precision, their hearts were hard, cold, and merciless. So Jesus dismissed them with a challenge to **learn** the meaning of Jehovah's words, “**I desire mercy, and not sacrifice**” (quoted from Ho 6:6). Although God had instituted the sacrificial system, He did not want the rituals to become a substitute for inward righteousness. God is not a Ritualist, and He is not pleased with rituals divorced from personal godliness—precisely what the Pharisees had done. They observed the letter of the law but had no compassion for those who needed spiritual help. They associated only with self-righteous people like themselves.

- *Read:* Mark 2:17, Matthew 9:13, Luke 5:31, Rom 3:10-20  
Why does Jesus refer to those who are “righteous”?

The word “righteous” is probably used ironically to mean *self-righteous*, for such were many of the scribes. Jesus’ simply may be accepting their self-perceptions for the sake of discussion. In one sense, there are no righteous people in the world, so He came to call all men **to repentance**. But here the thought is that His call is only effective for those who acknowledge themselves to be sinners. He can dispense no healing to those who are proud, self-righteous, and unrepentant—like the Pharisees.

## Listening

### *Responding to God*

In light of this week’s sermon in our series, “City on a Hill,” how might Jesus be asking to “follow” Him in a new way?

- Are there specific ways that the Lord is asking you live out your faith among “sinners”?
- Are there specific ways that the Lord is calling you to come to him as the “great physician” for healing?

## Loving

### *Obeying God*

- What is happening in my own life right now that I need to share and for which I need prayer?
- This week I am committed to praying for \_\_\_\_\_ about:

## Checking Out

- What was most meaningful about this group session for you (*Give each person 1-2 sentences to share*)?