

- ***READ Matthew 9:9-13*** In the first few verses of this chapter (**Matthew 9:1-8**), we find the well known story of Jesus healing the lame man who has been brought to Him. Mark and Luke's accounts add the details that this man was actually lowered down through the ceiling for the place where Jesus was was too crowded for them to bring him through the front door. Jesus is moved by the faith of this lame man's friends, and He extends forgiveness upon him.
- There happened to be some scribes at this occasion, and they begin to speak to one another accusing Jesus of blasphemy for seeking to elevate Himself to the place of God by forgiving sins. Jesus, of course, knows their hearts and responds by saying that He said what He said so that they would all know that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins.
- While the words of Jesus were true and accurate, they also set off a long line of attacks from the Jewish leadership upon Jesus throughout what seems like nearly the entirety of His ministry. These attacks continue as we move into the verses we read just a moment ago where Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector, to come follow Him. Matthew does that very thing right then and even goes on to invite Jesus to come and spend time within his home.
- It is in Matthew's home that another crowd gathers around Jesus, this crowd being made up of other tax collectors and sinners. They were all gathered together around Matthew's table with other disciples sharing a meal with Jesus. The Pharisees, surely still perturbed from the words of Jesus to the lame man, begin to question Jesus as to why He would eat with such a low class of people. Jesus knowing their hearts and intentions speaks plainly as to why He would do such a thing, and those words are what I would like to focus on during our time of study this evening.
- Jesus speaks of the Physician, the sick, and while He doesn't mention it specifically...Jesus is talking about the church and the role it plays in mediating between the Physician and those who are sick. I'd like to begin our study by looking a little deeper into the Pharisees and their mindset which led them to behave this way and question Jesus as to why He was doing what He was doing in eating with these people.

I. The Pharisees possessed a strong superiority complex which greatly affected the way they viewed and treated others.

A. The Pharisees saw themselves as the religious elite of Israel.

1. Josephus tells us in his writings that the attitudes that led to the eventual formation of the Pharisees and Sadducees came into existence shortly after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity. Those Jews who were returning from Babylon took on strong feelings of animosity towards those who were not Jews. They wanted for there to be strict separation between the Jews and all other pagan peoples. This group eventually came to be known as the Pharisees. The word Pharisee itself actually means "the separate."
2. McGarvey writes, *"Originally these men were genuine patriots and reformers, but afterwards the majority of them became mere formalists...They were the patriotic party, and the zealots were their extreme section. They covered an extremely selfish spirit with a pious formalism, and by parading their virtues they obtained an almost unbounded influence over the people."*

B. This high opinion of themselves can be clearly seen in the way they carried themselves.

1. The Pharisees were highly concerned with their traditions, and they even go so far as to rebuke others (particularly Jesus and His disciples) for not following their traditions. This can be seen in what takes place in **Matthew 15:1-3** when the Pharisees and their scribes try to lay a rebuke against Jesus and His disciples for not washing their hands before they ate. Jesus responds to their charges by rebuking them for trying to hold people up to their own standards all the while they neglect the true standard of God.

2. We could also look to the reaction to Jesus gaining a following and see how much they hated Him for it. In **John 7:37-53** we see Jesus speaking of Himself in very strong terms as being the One who had the ability to give living water to those in need. The people's reactions of regarding Jesus as the Prophet and the Christ sent the Pharisees into a tailspin as they try to put Him under arrest. However, Jesus is able to escape and this only angers them even more. They begin speaking of anyone who follows His teachings as being foolish and ignorant of the Law. They even speaking in derogatory terms of Jesus's home region of Galilee. They truly were hateful men who cared only for their own well-being and notoriety.
3. In fact, when Jesus finally levies His own rebukes against them, in **Matthew 23**, He speaks to their pride and arrogance in wanting to be praised by men, and He strongly rebukes them for behaving in their manner. (**Matthew 23:1-12**)
4. These actions are simply symptoms of the heart problem that these men possessed, and it is what led them to speak ill of Jesus simply because He was eating with tax-collectors and those seen as sinners. In the minds of the Pharisees, no one of any real moral excellence or godliness would ever spend time with such people...he especially wouldn't spend time eating with them. We would rightfully shake our heads at the Pharisees for how they thought and treated others, but we would do well to make sure that we do not fall into the same mindset.

II. We must be careful to not adopt this mindset in regard to how we view or operate within the church.

- A. There can be a real temptation for us to view the church as an exclusive club meant only for the best kinds of people.
 1. If we are not careful then we can begin to see the church as a group of good people who happened to decide that all of the good guys meet in this place to do good things among one another. We might begin to see the church as a spiritual country club of sorts that only accepts people who have their lives all together.
 2. We can even see this in the way that we treat one another. Say it becomes known that someone has been caught up in some sort of sin. Say it has been found out that someone has been abusing alcohol and got a DUI. What might be the reaction to such a thing? Some people might see this as something that can just not be accepted and so they are going to be kicked out of the church. Forget going through the proper channels of addressing such an issue like speaking with that person and seeing what exactly is going on...we don't have time for that so we're just going to kick them out right then and there.
 3. This is exactly the type of way the Pharisees would've gone about handling the issue. It's either shape up right now or get out and find some other group to be a part of. We must recognize that this is not the proper approach to dealing with the struggles of people. The people Jesus had surrounded Himself with had issues, and these were exactly the same type of people that we see all throughout the Bible because God hasn't whitewashed the Bible to make it seem as if God's people are perfect people with no issues or struggles.
- B. In fact, we must recognize that God's people have always been flawed.
 1. The reality is that this book that we all have before us is full of a lot of things that some wouldn't even see fit to put on TV or write about within a book that they wished to sell. This is seen pretty quickly once we open up the book and see what all is going on.
 2. Within the first three chapters we see two people walking around bare naked without any clothes on. (I know...I know...I'm just messing with that example) But we don't get one more chapter into the Bible before we see murder. We then see Lot's daughters getting him drunk so that they could lay with him in order to preserve their family's lineage. We know well of the great sins of David in stealing Bathsheba as his own wife and killing Uriah. All throughout the Old Testament we see God's people doing wicked and evil things.

3. Then we get into the New Testament and the time of the church and see where godly people continue to make mistakes and do foolish things. Peter is confronted by Paul in **Galatians 2:11-13** for acting as a hypocrite in the way he associated with others depending on who they were and who he happened to be with. Oh by the way...this is the same guy who denied the Lord three times as He was about to be crucified. We see people lying to the Apostles in **Acts 5:1-11**, and we also see disputes within the church among people who are supposed to be spiritual family. Euodia and Syntyche of Philippi were apparently fighting amongst themselves and Paul urges them to get things worked out. (**Philippians 4:1-3**) Even whole churches are found to be enveloped in sin and wickedness like the church in Corinth and some of the churches that were found in Asia.
4. I point all of this out for this simple reason...whenever people are involved there will be difficulties and trials. This includes those people who come together and make up local churches. Each of us comes with our own baggage of struggles, but we come to the church... we come to Jesus so that we can find help with those struggles that we face.

III. The church was established so that the sick could come and be healed by the Physician.

- A. Luke's account adds an all important portion of this story that Matthew leaves out. *"I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."* (**Luke 5:32**)
 1. These words by Jesus were true and at the same time a jab at those who thought themselves as being righteous, but in reality they were too arrogant and prideful to recognize their own need for repentance. Surely the words of Jesus in the beatitudes would have been well practiced by these men for they too were those whom Jesus had come to save. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."* (**Matthew 5:3,4**) The Pharisees didn't seem themselves as being poor in spirit or in need of mourning, so Jesus wasn't going to do them any good at the moment.
 2. Jesus came to earth so that those who were hurting and broken could find relief and healing for their lives that had been torn apart by sin. This morning in our class here in the auditorium we were looking at what Jesus read from the book of Isaiah as He was in the synagogue and it fits quite well with this discussion we are having. *"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."* (**Luke 4:18,19**) It was after reading these words that we see Jesus sitting down and stating, *"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."* (**Luke 4:21**)
 3. But what does this show us about Jesus's mission on earth? It simply confirms what it is that Jesus says to the Pharisees back in **Matthew 9:12**. He had been sent to this earth to provide the healing that was needed for the people of God. He had been sent to the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. Those who knew they were broken and needed fixing were those that Jesus had been sent to save, and it was a work that God was most pleased with Him doing. This was something the Pharisees just couldn't grasp which was why Jesus tells them to go and learn what it meant when God says, *"I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE."* They needed to understand that it is God's will for the broken to be healed and made whole. It wasn't about looking good, but it was about being made good by the Great Physician Jesus Christ.

- B. All of this has been shown to make this point...the church isn't going to be perfect and pristine because it is made up of a bunch of broken and messed up people.
1. I'm not trying to say that we should accept sin in the church. That simply isn't the case, and Paul makes it clear in **I Corinthians 5:4-13** that sin within the church needs to be dealt with. If someone isn't willing to put off the sin that has separated them from God then they cannot expect for the Body of Christ to condone their sin.
 2. What I am saying, though, is that we seek to be patient with one another as we seek to be made better through repentance and conforming to the will of Jesus. He came to this earth to give broken people like you and me the opportunity to be made holy and righteous through our willingness to submit to His will in all things. However, that process isn't always smooth and it means that we might have to get our hands a little dirty at times dealing with the broken messes that are the lives of the people around us.
 3. The Pharisees would absolutely scoff at such an idea as being in association with people who had issues and problems because it might make them look less than pristine and wholly clean. Yet, we must be those exact kinds of people who are willing to go to the sick and broken and lead them to the Great Physician who is waiting to heal them. Just as Jesus said, there is no greater work and there is nothing more pleasing to God than for the broken to be brought to Jesus for spiritual healing and restoration. If we are sick and broken or if we know of others who are sick and broken then there is no other place that they need to be than right here with us in this spiritual family being cared for and worked on by our merciful Savior.

It is easy for us to look at the way the Pharisees often behaved and shake our heads at them in disgust for their horrible attitudes and treatments of Jesus, but if we are not careful then we can find ourselves possessing the same type of mindset by having no patience for the struggles of those who are around us...those who we are much more like that we maybe would want to admit. May God help each and every one of us to see our brokenness so that we might seek out the power of the great Physician who looks to heal us in ways that only He is able. May we also be so thankful for the Church, His Body in which all of us broken people and be in fellowship together as we strive to be made better by following the will of Jesus in our lives. The church is for the broken, and may we always have the doors wide open waiting for the sick and broken to come in and find rest.

PRAYER *Our Father in heaven...we approach you at this time in great humility acknowledging that we are broken and sick people who are in desperate need of a Physician and Savior. We praise Your Name for being mindful of us in our struggles and giving Your Son on the cross so that we might be healed and come to find hope in this life. May You strengthen each of us to continually go to Your Son for healing and aid. May we also realize that His desires for us are for our good, and may we all find healing at His feet. Help us to be mindful of those around us who are also in need of healing. May we show them the better way of Jesus, and may we have opportunities to lead them to the grace that heals us of our sins. Bless us as we go throughout this week, and may everything we do be to Your glory alone. In Jesus we pray these things...amen.*