

Summary

In this sermon from Mark 2:13-17, Pastor Mike explores the life of Matthew (also called Levi), a despised tax collector who encountered Jesus and immediately left everything to follow Him. Matthew's story reveals the heart of Jesus as a friend of sinners. Jesus did not call the already-righteous but those who recognized their need for forgiveness and a new life. The sermon challenges believers to reflect on who in their lives does not yet know Jesus and to actively cultivate those relationships with love, care, and the hope of the gospel.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for gathering us together today. As we open your Word and discuss what it means to be a friend of sinners, we ask that you soften our hearts and remove any judgmental attitudes that might keep us from seeing people the way you see them. Open our eyes to the people around us who need to know your Son. Give us the courage and compassion to love them well. May your Spirit guide our conversation today, and may we leave not just informed but transformed. In Jesus name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one hobby, interest, or activity that you enjoy doing with people outside of your church community?

Key Verses

- Mark 2:13-17
- Matthew 9:12-13
- Luke 5:27-28

Questions

- Jesus called Matthew, a man widely despised as a corrupt tax collector, to follow Him. What does this tell us about the kind of people Jesus chooses to use for His purposes?

- Matthew did not hesitate when Jesus said 'Follow me.' He got up and left everything. What do you think made it possible for Matthew to respond so quickly and completely?
- After following Jesus, Matthew threw a banquet and invited His old friends so they could meet Jesus. Why do you think so many Christians tend to lose touch with non-believing friends after coming to faith?
- The Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners. In what ways can Christians today fall into a similar Pharisaical mindset toward people who are living outside of God's design?
- Pastor Mike shared how his wife corrected him early in ministry for being judgmental toward people who did not yet know Jesus. Have you ever caught yourself being more focused on someone's sin than on their need for a Savior? How did that affect your relationship with them?
- Jesus said in Mark 2:17 that He came not to call the righteous but sinners. How does understanding your own need for grace change the way you relate to people who are far from God?
- Studies suggest that between 70 and 85 percent of people who come to faith in Christ do so because of the invitation of a friend. How does that statistic challenge or encourage you personally?
- Who is one person in your life right now who does not know Jesus? What is one practical step you could take this week to pray for them, care for them, or share the hope of the gospel with them?

Life Application

This week, write down the name of at least one person you know who does not yet have a relationship with Jesus. Commit to praying for them every day this week. Then take one intentional step to deepen that relationship, whether it is a phone call, a shared meal, an invitation to coffee, or simply showing up for them in a moment of need. Ask God to open a door for you to share His love with them in a natural and genuine way.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus is a friend of sinners. He did not come to call the already-righteous but those who recognize their need for forgiveness and a new life in him.
- Matthew's immediate and wholehearted response to Jesus shows that true repentance means turning away from a sinful way of life and turning fully toward Christ.
- Coming to faith in Jesus does not mean abandoning all relationships with non-believers. Matthew used his existing friendships as an opportunity to introduce people to Jesus.

- A judgmental or Pharisaical attitude toward people who are living in sin is a barrier to effective witness. God calls us to lead with mercy and compassion, not condemnation.
- The most powerful tool for evangelism is often a personal relationship. Most people who come to faith do so because a friend cared enough to invite them and introduce them to Jesus.

Ending Prayer

Lord, thank you for this time together in your Word. Thank you for the example of Matthew, who left everything to follow you and then turned around and brought his friends along. Forgive us for the times we have been more like the Pharisees than like Matthew, quick to judge and slow to love. Right now we lift up the names of the people in our lives who do not yet know you. You know every face, every story, every hurt, and every need. Use us, Lord. Make us friends of sinners the way Jesus was a friend of sinners. Give us boldness to invite, compassion to care, and faithfulness to keep praying until they meet you. We trust you with the results. In Jesus name, amen.