

What Does Jesus' Call Mean For Me?
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Imagine a Christian couple with some financial means who saw great potential in a young man. They could see that God had a call on his life to preach the Gospel. They knew to do it he would need an education. They also knew he was as poor as "Job's turkey."

So they said to the young man: "We will send you to college and seminary as our gift to you and an investment in ministry. We'll pay all the bills and there are no stipulations or requirements for you other than showing up and doing the work. It's a FREE GIFT."

The young man was not required to EARN his education.

- But what expectations would the couple have of him?
- If you were the young student in the story, how would you respond to this incredible gift?
- What would motivate the young man to do well in school?

This hypothetical story is an illustration of Christ's gift of salvation for each of us.

- Salvation is a FREE GIFT we don't earn
- However, there ARE some expectations of us...there is a DEMAND OF THE GOSPEL

"The demand of the Gospel arises out of a sense of gratitude not obligation."

Last week as we began our study of the book of Mark, I strongly made the point:

- Christ has a plan and purpose for every believer; every believer in Christ has a CALL on our lives.

This week as we look at Mark chapter 2 we deal with the question:

- What Does Jesus' Call Mean For Me?
- In other words...what EXPECTATIONS does Jesus have for me as I respond to His call?

[Context: The first 12 verses of Chapter 2...Jesus heals the paralytic]

Let's pick up with verses 13 - 17:

The Calling of Levi

13Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. 14As 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.

15While 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. 16When 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'?"

17 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."

- Jesus calls a tax collector...how do people feel about the tax collector?
- In these times it was even worse...tax collectors worked for the Roman government that was oppressing the Jewish people.
- If that wasn't bad enough, not only did they collect the money the Roman government required, what else did they do? EXTORTIONISTS...they charged a premium...a "cut" for them.
- We don't know that Levi/Matthew was dishonest all we know is the fact that he was a tax collector.
 - What kind of statement do you think it made to the religious establishment when Jesus called a tax collector to be one of his disciples?
 - It was clear that Jesus called the outcasts of Jewish society to follow him.

Here's a statement:

Jesus LOVES to take the WORST SINNERS and turn them into THE BEST SAINTS!
And that is GOOD NEWS for you and me!

- Verse 14 – What did Levi do when Jesus called?
 - He immediately followed...just like those fishermen last week
- Verse 15 – What did Levi do NEXT after he FOLLOWED?
 - He ENTHUSIASTICALLY invited his sinner friends to meet the Lord!

Here's an expectation Jesus has of us:

Once we've followed Him he expects us to ENTHUSIASTICALLY INVITE our sinner friends to meet him!

- What steps are you and I taking to invite our friends to meet Jesus?
 - Step #1...We've gotta have some friends who don't know him!
 - Do you only hang out with other believers?
 - Do you ever share with them about Jesus?
 - "Well yeah, I know a lot of unbelievers but I keep my religion to myself."

Our lesson commentary says:

"Christians should be willing to accept people where they are in order to allow God to bring them where they need to be with Him."

- Step #2...We've gotta reach those friends in comfortable situations.
 - Where did Matthew introduce Jesus to his friends?

- Now don't misunderstand me, we WANT to invite our friends to church and ESPECIALLY SUNDAY SCHOOL
- And some of our friends who are seeking answers WILL COME if we just invite them because they see church as a place where they might find those answers
- But, some of them need to be met in situations where they are more comfortable BEFORE they come to church with you.
- That's what Matthew did.
- Elaine's Couponing Classes...as an example

Once we've followed Him he expects us to ENTHUSIASTICALLY INVITE our sinner friends to meet him! And to do it CREATIVELY on NEUTRAL TURF and on THEIR TERMS.

- Look at verse 16. The "bad guys" in our story show up again. What do they ask the disciples?
 - Why is Jesus hanging out with the wrong people?
- Jesus had the best answer!
 - Who would you expect me to hang out with?
 - If I were a doctor who would you expect to be sitting in my waiting room? This medical career would be a lot of fun if it weren't for all the sick people!
- If we had a physician as a member of this class and one of us fell in the floor clutching our chest what would that physician do? Sorry I'm off today...NO!
- If we knew there was an award winning cardiologist in Marty Benton's class next door and one of us fell in the floor clutching our chest what would we do? We'd run next door and get the doctor.

John Piper in *Desiring God* said...

"The difference between Uncle Sam and Jesus Christ is that Uncle Sam won't enlist you in his service if you are sick, Jesus won't enlist you unless you are sick. Christianity is basically convalescence... 'pray without ceasing = keep buzzing the nurse.'"

Question: How many of us witness people with another kind of "heart trouble" every day and never tell them about our FATHER the GREAT PHYSICIAN?

Warren Wiersbe said of Jesus:

"He comes to us in our need; He makes a perfect diagnosis; He provides a final and complete cure; and HE pays the bill! What a physician!"

Another EXPECTATION Jesus has of you and me: Jesus looks at SINNERS as SICK PEOPLE WHO NEED HEALING and He expects us TO DO THE SAME! How many sin-sick people did we walk by this week who were begging for help, and we didn't call in our FATHER the GREAT PHYSICIAN?

Verses 18 – 22

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."

- Fasting was required of Jews one day a year on the DAY OF ATONEMENT
- Fasting is still a good thing for a specific purpose when we need to focus on God and reach out to Him
- But the Scribes and Pharisees turned it into a RELIGIOUS RITUAL to show how RIGHTEOUS they were. They fasted TWICE A WEEK not because it was required but to PUT ON A SHOW.
- Jesus gave a contrast...fasting versus a PARTY.
- Rabbi's often used weddings to illustrate the JOY to be expressed at the arrival of the Messiah.
- Where did Jesus perform his first miracle?
 - At a wedding.
- What was the miracle?
 - Water into wine. Ever wonder why it was wine? Why wasn't it potato salad? Or fish?
 - Now I'm getting into some tricky territory in a Southern Baptist church...but I'm brave enough to go there...
 - Regardless of how you and feel about drinking, what does wine at a party represent? Joy...good times.

Psalm 104: 14 and 15

14 He makes grass grow for the cattle,
and plants for man to cultivate—
bringing forth food from the earth:

15 wine that gladdens the heart of man,
oil to make his face shine,
and bread that sustains his heart.

- Weddings were used to illustrate our celebration of the Savior because the JOY that comes from Jesus should be like a PARTY!

- Jesus was saying to these stodgy, dry, uptight religious types: When my people are with me it's a PARTY! They don't sit around looking somber we're celebrating.
- By the way, when Jesus comes back for us what are we having? Wedding supper of the lamb...a party!
- Our faith gives believers a reason for JOY even when things are not going well.
- You can't sew new patches on old garments; You can't pour new wine into old wineskins ...what does that mean?
 - When washed, the new cloth would shrink and make a bigger tear from the old cloth.
 - When new wine expands as it ferments it would burst the brittle old wineskin (made from the skin of a goat).
- The Pharisees were so caught up in their old traditions and religious laws that weren't a part of scripture but what they had ADDED to scripture, that they had become RIGID.

The Life Application Bible Commentary says:

“Your heart, like a wineskin, can become rigid and prevent you from accepting the new life that Christ offers. Keep your heart pliable and open to accepting the life-changing truths of Christ.”

- Jesus doesn't “patch our lives” or try to pour the NEW WINE of the abundant life in the OLD WINESKINS of our old selves. He makes us NEW CLOTH; NEW WINESKINS; NEW CREATIONS.

Here's another EXPECTATION: Jesus expects us to live with a NEW ATTITUDE. An attitude of JOY because of what He has done for us. And to keep our hearts OPEN and PLIABLE so that we can accept the NEW LIFE He's given us.

We need to be serving Him out of JOY and be careful not to get so RIGID in our RELIGION that we miss where God is working.

Verses 23-28:

Lord of the Sabbath

23One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

25He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

27Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

- First point: Jesus disciples were NOT STEALING. It was a law travelers were allowed to pick grain from the edges of a grain field as long as they used their hands and not a sickle and didn't have a basket to gather in.
- However, in the eyes of the Pharisees they were breaking the Jewish laws of "working" on the Sabbath.
- Jesus said...if you think what THEY are doing is bad...didn't you ever read what David did? (1 Sam. 21:1-6) David's men were hungry on the Sabbath and the only place to get bread was the consecrated bread in the place of worship... bread that only the priests were supposed to eat.
- If it wasn't wrong for David and his men to eat the consecrated bread then it wasn't wrong for the disciples to rub heads of grain together in their hands and eat the kernels.
- In both stories these men had NEEDS and Jesus and David focused not on religious rituals but on MEETING NEEDS.
- Jesus was saying that it is more important to meet the needs of others than to keep religious traditions.

Here's another expectation: Jesus expects believers to have our priorities straight and to put meeting the needs of people above following religious rituals. How many people have "perfect attendance" at church yet never pause on the way to meet a need someone has?

One final story makes that point about PUTTING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE OVER religious rituals:

Mark 3:1-6

So what's the TAKE AWAY?

- Salvation is a FREE GIFT but Jesus does have EXPECTATIONS that we'll DO SOMETHING with it!
- When we accept the call of Jesus, He wants us to reach out to other sinners so they can meet Him too.
- When we accept the call of Jesus, we have reason to live with a NEW ATTITUDE that is characterized by JOY.
- When we accept the call of Jesus, we will be motivated to give attention to DOING GOOD and MEETING NEEDS and not just getting our PERFECT ATTENDANCE certificate.