

Last time left J standing there with hole in roof.
Mk.2:13 **Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.**

Always concerned with ministry

Lk.5:27 **After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth.**

After this

THE CONTEXT

All 3 syns - LEPER → PARALYTIC → Mt.
_____ The order is significant, because Jesus cleansed the leper (showing symbolically his power to cleanse a dirty heart), then he came right out and forgave a man's sins, and now he teaches about his position on sinners. He answers "How far does this forgiveness business go, and under what circumstances?"
3

THE CUSTOMS

Lk.5:27 ...Jesus went out and saw a tax collector

There were different kinds of tax collectors. At the top were the Gabbiaim who were an important class of people in the Roman world. Then various commissioners, owners of tax franchises, etc. At the very bottom was (income tax, etc.). The worst kind was a Mokhes the customs officer. (Mokhes) There was the great M, or chief tax collectors (Zachius) and little Mokhes.

The OT is full of promises about how someday God will someday grant the poor oppressed people of God deliverance from the rich, evil oppressors. There is no better example of a rich evil oppressor than a CO

He was allowed to invent a tax on anything he wanted____. all imports and exports; on all that was bought and sold; bridge-tolls, road-tolls, harbor-tolls, city-tolls. There were taxes on axles, wheels, pack-animals, pedestrians, roads, highways; on admission to markets; on carriers, bridges, ships, and quays; on crossing rivers, on dams, on licenses. There was a luxury tax. of 12.5%.

Seeing a customs officer meant long delays and big \$.
having to unload all one's pack-animals, when every bale and package was opened, and the contents tumbled about, private letters opened.

Steal your mule_____if unable to pay he would loan the \$ at exorbitant rates (clutches).
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Just imagine people who had the legal authority to rob you any time they wanted.

There weren't very many things that everyone agreed on, but hatred for these men was one. In Roman and Greek lit lumped together with beggars, thieves, and robbers, In the NT they are paired with sinners and with "immoral people" _____ extortionists, unjust, and adulterers, and when they saw that Jesus was "a friend of tax collectors" (Matt 11:19) they concluded He must be a drunkard. The rabbis link _____) them w/ robbers, murderers, and sinners_____

They were listed in the Talmud with the unclean beasts of the OT.

Could never testify in a court cuz considered liars.
They were universally hated.

But even more by the Jews. - they were traitors. had entered the service of their country's conquerors, and they amassed their fortunes at the expense of their country's misfortunes.

Barclay: "Every country hates its tax-gatherers, but the hatred of the Jews for them was doubly violent. The Jews were fanatical nationalists," and no crime was worse than being a traitor.

"But what roused the Jews more than anything else was their religious conviction that God alone was king, and that to pay taxes to any mortal ruler was an infringement of God's rights and an insult to his majesty."

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Most importantly, and the key to understanding this passage, the Jews believed that for a TC, repentance was almost impossible. "What if one repented?" They would assume it wasn't real.

Edersheim: Rabbinic teaching about... repentance...it is expressly and repeatedly declared in the case of certain sins...that, even if a man genuinely and truly repented, he must expect immediately to die, indeed, his death would be the evidence that his repentance was genuine, since, though such a sinner might turn from his evil, it would be impossible for him, if he lived, to lay hold on the good, and to do it. [e Ab. Zar. 17 a.]

Hence also it was said, that repentance was specially difficult for tax-gatherers and custom-house officers. [b Baba K. 94 b.] [1 ... on account of their frequent temptations to dishonesty, and their wild lives far from ordinances.]

No TC could ever enter a synagogue or Temple (TC stood afar off.)

Hugh Redwood tells Story of a woman with an illegitimate baby who went to a women's meeting in the dock district in London _____

_____ Then the vicar told her she could no longer come _____ "The other women say that they will stop coming if you continue to come." She looked at him with a poignant wistfulness. "Sir," she said, "I know I'm a sinner, but isn't there anywhere a sinner can go?" _____

That is precisely what Matthew was up against

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by the name of Levi (MATTHEW)

Mt. was a traitor, he sold out to Herod's govt. and agreed to extort the people to get rich.

He was the type who hung around "sinners" (people who were known for their blatant, gross, obvious, overt sin – people involved in especially ugly sins).

Levi had made a mess of his life. It was ruined. There was no way out.

His was one of those tragic stories. His parents, like all parents, probably had high hopes for him. They named him after the patriarch Levi – the father of the entire priestly line. Maybe Levi was in that line. Maybe his parents hoped he would be a great priest.

It was a disgrace to have one in the family, and the Talmud said it was righteous to lie to and deceive a TC. (not the Bible)

Nobody starts out wanting a ruined life, but here he sits. Some sad series of bad decisions had landed him at this dismal point of no return.

sitting at (in front of) **his tax booth.** (customs office)

So Jesus is returning back into town and comes

to the CO

It was an international crossroads, and today would be like an international airport.

The boarder between Philip's area and Herod Antipus' area was at C. Mt. would have worked for Herod – collecting duties on all commerce.

Also, all business on the Sea of G was taxed. There was a proverb: 'Woe to the ship which sails without having paid the dues.' [a Ab. Zar. 10 b.]

People always want to resist taxes – especially unjust ones.

Imagine when the Zealots came. Mt. must have been a rough character.

16

Imagine his life. His job would have been miserable – irate customers all day – violence, hatred. Always waiting for quitting time when he could go get drunk and spend his \$. You see, the only thing he had going for him was his \$. People who have nothing in life but \$ often commit suicide.

His life has been a series of bad decisions, and now he is trapped in a hole with no way out (no one would ever hire him).

What will Jesus do? The disc. maybe getting excited (they have been waiting over a year now for Jesus to begin delivering the people from the rich oppressors and the tyranny of Rome).

17

THE CALL

Jesus approaches the front of the tax booth. He confronts that hated, despised excuse for a human being - the little Moches. And can you imagine their jaws hitting the ground when Jesus said...

"Follow me," Jesus said to him,

This is the worst move Christ could have made for his reputation. This would make Jesus popular with no one. (Even the other 6 must have wondered).

150 years after this Celsus reviled the Xians because their Master made "infamous men, customs officers and sailors most wicked" His pupils.

But J wasn't interested in popularity, He was interested in sinners. There is only one group of people in the whole world that God is interested in, and it is sinners. If you don't see yourself as a sinner, God has nothing to offer you. Lk.5:32 is the summary of the passage **I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**

19

Command – not request

What does this mean? Trail along behind me for a day or 2? Jesus said this a number of times, and that gives us an idea what it means. In Jn.1 Jesus saw Peter, John, Andrew, Nathaniel and Phillip and said "**Follow Me.**" They followed Him for about a year, and then went back to their old jobs. They fish all night and catch nothing and Jesus repeats Mt.4:19, "I said, **follow me.**" There Jesus adds a 6 - James.

Follow Me means follow permanently.

So they follow for another year or two, until the crucifixion. Then they went back to fishing *again*. Jesus repeated the same miracle, reinstated Peter, then... John 21:17-19 "**3X - Feed my sheep. 18** _____ then told Peter he would be martyred. **Then he said to him, "Follow me!"**

From there Jesus ascended into heaven. He didn't mean follow me geographically. He meant devote your life to my service no matter what it cost you. Serve Me even to the death.
21:34

Luke 9:59 **He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."**

Matt 8:22 **But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."**

When Jesus says **Follow me** it means right now. One excuse that would never fly with Jesus is "I'm not ready."

Luke 9:61-62 **Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."**

Even if requires a break w/ family. When J says **Follow me** means follow, and don't ever look back.

Matt 19:16 **Jesus said to a greedy rich man, who loved his money more than he loved God, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."**

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When Jesus says **Follow me** it means leave everything else behind. When He says that to a greedy man, it means turn your back on a greedy life.

This is the call Jesus gives. _____

Lk.14:33 **if you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.**

When Jesus says, "**Follow Me,**" He means, drop everything, right this minute, forsake your past and everything you have been clinging on to, turn your back on the sins that you have been holding on to, and follow Me completely, continually, immediately, wholeheartedly, and permanently.

This is a crisis moment for M. He knows what this call means (had been around Jesus in that tiny town where Jesus had done so many miracles and preached so much).

Mt. had one thing in life, his \$ and this job. Following J would mean losing the one thing he had. It would mean burning the bridge with the govt. (would be replaced) and had already burned the bridges with everyone else. If following J didn't work out, there would be absolutely nothing for him. What would he do?
25

THE COMMITMENT

At that moment the Bible says this big, rough mean character came to his feet. – Maybe the thugs who worked for him for enforcement stepped forward toward Jesus as well. You just don't give orders to a CO who carries the authority of the King himself.

28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

Wow. It took him all of a few seconds to turn his back on everything. No lingering, no "let me think it over," no "wait until quitting time," no questions, no comments, no nothing. Mt. jumps up and follows so fast – he can't wait to follow J.

"Mt must have been a godly man – maybe he learned about God in the synagogue." Are you kidding?

But what about everything he gave up?
Interesting – Lk says that, but not Mt.9:9. Why?
Humility? Maybe, but I think more than that.

When a person is genuinely under conviction and the Lord is working in his heart, his life of sin becomes loathsome to him. He hates it and wants no more of it. The sin that was so enticing is now repulsive. And you ask, “What about what you are giving up?” and they say, “I’m giving up nothing. I’m giving up a worthless life of sin and garbage and I can’t wait to shed it.”

Mt. doesn’t go on and on about what he gave up. He doesn’t moan about losing what he had. God had worked in his heart, created a discontent with that life, and he can’t unload it fast enough.

“He said not a word, for his soul was in the speechless surprise of unexpected grace”

This is the way it is with repentant sinners. They want nothing of the old life anymore and looking back is not an option. They burn their bridges.

Like the man who was walking and came to a swift creek – too wide to be crossed easily. The first thing he did was to throw his coat to the other side.

30

CONCLUSION

Those who are truly repentant are that way because they believe the promises. They aren’t looking back at the garbage they have been in – they are looking through the eyes of faith at all that Christ has promised – and that is infinitely more appealing.

“I believe a price was paid – the priceless for the

worthless trade.”

After Matthew’s conversion account we never hear from him again in the Gospels. Never says or does anything. does not show up in any event, never asks a Q, never gives an answer, never makes a comment, never the hero of any story, never plays a part in any story.

This faceless, voiceless, quiet disciple is chosen to write the greatest work on the majesty of the kingliness of Christ that has ever been written. Groothius – 100 year book. Mt. is possibly the most read book in the world 2000 y later.

Christ took the most worthless refuse of human society and made him one of the most famous, respected men ever to live. At his calling, he is known as Levi. But Jesus calls him Mt. “Gift from God” Just like Jesus took an vacillating, spineless, ambivalent character named Simon and renamed him Peter (rock) – so here He take the most despised man in Capernaum and says “you are God’s gift to humanity.” And we name our children after him – one of the greatest men of history.

It all goes back to that one day in Capernaum when Jesus called and Mt. responded. Someday he will sit on one of 12 thrones in heaven and rule God’s people.

But it wasn’t for fame that he followed. It was for forgiveness. And when he writes his gospel and needs a climactic illustration of the magnitude of the forgiveness of Christ he says, “Jesus saw a guy named Mt. and called him.”

How far does this forgiveness go? All the way to the bottom - To the worst of sinners.

We don’t know much about Mt., but we know

6

Christ changed his life. What did he do with his time? I don't know, maybe he studied Scripture. Mt. quotes OT more than Mk, Lk and Jn combined.

34

Why did Jesus come into the world? **to seek and to save that which was lost.**

He did not come to call those who think they are R – but sinners.

Who will Jesus forgive? Only one group – vile sinners – no one else. That's why so few find the narrow way, because so few are willing to admit that. People like Mt. can see it, but religious people often can't.

What do you have to do to be forgiven? Follow Him. Just turn your back on everything in this world and your old life and decide to permanently, totally, wholeheartedly follow Him.

Wonder if convers. was genuine? Don't look to the past. Look at heart now: "Is there anything more important to me than following Jesus Christ?"

It doesn't take much of a man to be a Xian, it just takes all of him.

37

PRAY FOR PEOPLE MAKING DECISIONS

"I have decided"

Jill Stolte

Ryan

Renee

Jeff

Mimi Newman

Tim

Do you vow to turn your back on the old life of sin, and wholeheartedly follow Christ for the rest of your life?

Do you confess Jesus Christ as Lord?

- Cards
- Ministry survey
- Fellowship meal next week
- Tonight

PRAY FOR OFF

Ro.15:5,6 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.