

not a fan.

COMPLETELY.
COMMITTED.
FOLLOWER.

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Matthew 9.9-13
March 16th & 17th, 2013

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I. Connecting With One Another

Have you ever been tricked by an asterisk that directs you to “the fine print”? What was it? Or have you seen one of those commercials that promises relief for some minor medical condition that is followed by a bunch of side effects that are way worse!?

II. Introduction to this Study

This weekend – on Saturday at 5pm and Sunday morning at 8:45 & 10:30am – we continue our Lenten series *Not A Fan: Becoming Completely Committed Followers of Jesus*. If you’re reading along in the book, this week we’re engaging chapters 8 & 9 – pages 115-141 (see the full schedule at gdshp.ch/dgdeepr).

In this week’s passage, Matthew 9.9-13, we encounter Jesus interacting with someone he isn’t supposed to (big surprise!). And to everyone’s shock – and horror, no doubt – Jesus calls this person to leave his former life and follow Him. What ensues is yet another discussion with religious folks – fans – who are angry that Jesus invites outsiders into His community of followers. We learn, in short, that Jesus’ invitation includes no asterisk or fine print. Anyone – yes, *anyone* – is welcome to follow Jesus, which can be quite different from “being religious.”

III. Study the Text

- To get the full context of this passage, begin by reading Matthew 9.1-8. What strikes you as interesting in this passage? What questions does it bring up? Take a few minutes to discuss these verses together.
- Continue reading verses 9-13. What – if any – common themes do you see here that are also found in verses 1-8? There are a bunch of metaphors present in Matthew 9.1-13, though some scholars believe they all point toward the same thing. In his landmark book [Jesus and the Victory of God](#), N.T. Wright asserts,

What Jesus was offering, in other words, was not a different religious system. It was a new world order, the end of Israel’s long desolation, the true and final ‘forgiveness of sins’, the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. This, I suggest, was what was implied when Jesus announced ‘forgiveness of sins’ to particular people. The effect was the same as his eating with ‘sinners’: he was celebrating the coming of the kingdom, and those who shared this celebration with him were benefiting from this great ‘forgiveness of sins’. There is, in fact, no tension, no pay-off, between the personal and the corporate at this point.

What do you think of this statement?

- Notice again verse 9. Jesus’ call to Matthew was to a fellow Jewish man. In fact, both Mark 2.14-17 and Luke 5.27-32 reveal that he also went by “Levi,” perhaps revealing that he was from priestly lineage. And yet, the scandal of Jesus’ interaction has to do with his occupation: tax collector (which means he certainly isn’t a priest!).

None of us like paying taxes, but tax collectors like Matthew were especially disliked in Jesus’ day because they had forsaken their nationality and religious identity to work alongside the Romans, taxing their fellow Hebrews right in the middle of the Holy Land. As Kyle Idleman writes in [Not A Fan](#), “Anyone hearing this exchange would have been shocked. I’m sure the other disciples would have been offended. A tax collector? He’s not only a sinner; he sins for a living.”

Imagine you're there as Jesus openly interacts with Matthew. How would you respond? Can you think of a modern day example of what this would look like?

- d. Jesus doesn't just interact with Matthew – or invite Matthew to be a fan – Jesus invites Matthew to *follow* Him. Perhaps this is most troubling to the religious leaders of the day because they themselves couldn't seem to shift from fans to followers. In his book [*Jesus and Community*](#), Gerhard Lohfink writes,

The Twelve must have been an odd mixture – from Matthew the tax collector (Matthew 10.3) to Simon the Zealot (Luke 6.15). Including both a tax collector and a Zealot in a single group united the most opposed forces that existed anywhere in Israel at the time, for the tax collectors collaborated with the Romans, while the Zealots emphatically rejected the Roman occupation as incompatible with the reign of God.

Instead of calling to Himself a homogenous, likeminded group, Jesus seemed committed to calling all kinds of various and sundry folks as disciples. And Jesus continues to do so today. Perhaps that's why even – or especially – others at church can be difficult for us to get along with? While being loving and respectful (of course!), think through that idea with your group – that even we, at Good Shepherd in 2013, are an odd mixture. How is that wonderful and beautiful? How is that difficult and challenging?

- e. We're told that Matthew simply got up and followed Jesus right then and there. Why do you think Jesus called him? How do you think Matthew's history as a social outcast influenced his decision to leave everything to follow Jesus? What do you think it meant for Matthew to follow Jesus? Write any thoughts you have here:
- f. Reread verses 12 & 13, with the context of the dinner party in mind. Who, in Jesus' mind is "healthy"? Who is "sick"? Does Jesus really mean that the religious folks don't need Him?
- g. In verse 13, Jesus quotes Hosea 6.6, the whole of which reads, "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." Why do you think he says this?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. How have you heard Jesus accepting you as you are and yet calling you to follow Him? Was that a long time ago – or does that still happen today?
- b. Are there areas of your life that you now find it difficult to follow Jesus in? In other words, are you still sick and in need of a doctor?
- c. Read Jesus' two short parables in Matthew 13.44-46. How could you become *that* kind of follower of Jesus?
- d. How could you be even more committed to the odd mixture of fallible followers here at Good Shepherd?
- e. What is Jesus trying to teach you this week, this day, this hour, as you seek to follow Him?

V. Pray

Spend some time in prayer:

- a. Pray that Jesus would give you – and Good Shepherd, as a church community – the desire to pursue Him and His Kingdom like the person who found a great treasure hidden in a field,
- b. Lift up the others within our community with whom you have differences, recognizing that Jesus has called them to follow Him as well,
- c. Pray for our church community, Presbytery and denomination as we engage in a process of discernment.