

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for July 31, 2016

Mark 2:13-17
Questionable Company

I. The calling of a tax collector (2:13-14)

A. Usual crowds and ministry (2:13)

He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. (2:13)

- He was previously beside the sea when He called His first four disciples (Mark 1:16-20)
- We have already seen crowds around Jesus
 - Whole city of Capernaum gathered at Simon's house (1:33)
 - After healing the leper, Jesus could no longer enter towns but people still came to Him in desolate places (1:45)
 - Many gathered in the house at Capernaum (2:2)
- He was teaching them again
 - Jesus was proclaiming in Mark 1:14-15
 - He taught with authority in the synagogue (1:22)
 - His mission was to preach (1:38-39)
 - He preached in the house at Capernaum (2:2)

B. Unusual calling of Matthew (2:14)

And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. (2:14)

- Levi is also known as Matthew (Matthew 9:9)
 - It was not unusual for people to have two names
- Levi the "son of Alphaeus" could have been brothers with James the son of Alphaeus
- Levi was familiar with Jesus due to his job at a tax booth on the sea of Galilee
- What did tax collectors do?
 - They estimated the worth of merchants' goods that were in transit and collected taxes on them for the Roman government
 - Matthew probably dealt with the shipping trade on the Sea of Galilee (cf. Mark 2:13)

- Vague tariff rates allowed the tax-gatherer to demand higher fees so as to increase his own profit
- How were tax collectors viewed by their fellow Jews?
 - Jews excommunicated tax collectors due to their corruption in defrauding their fellow Jews
 - Since they cooperated with the Romans, they were further alienated in society
 - “The Mishnah prohibits even receiving alms from a tax collector at his office since the money was presumed to have been gained illegally (*m. B. Qam.* 10:1). If a tax collector entered a house, all that was in it became unclean (*m. Tehar.* 7:6). The rabbis went so far as to say it was permissible to lie to tax collectors to protect one’s property (*m. Ned.* 3:4).” (Strauss, 130)
 - “When a Jew entered the customs service he was regarded as an outcast from society: he was disqualified as a judge or a witness in a court session, was excommunicated from the synagogue, and in the eyes of the community his disgrace extended to his family.” (Lane, 101-102)
- Jesus utters the statement, “Follow me,” to Levi
 - Opposite of what Jews might have expected
 - Similar to fishermen, this a call to discipleship (1:16-20)
- Mark’s only commentary on Levi’s response is, “And he rose and followed him.”
 - Luke 5:28 “And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.”
- This passage progresses from lesser to greater
 - It was insane for Jesus to invite a tax collector into a life of discipleship
 - This bad perception according to the Jews would only get worse in the following verses

II. The company of transgressors (2:15-17)

A. The dining with questionable company (2:15)

And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

- Reclining at table shows the way they ate meals involved laying down
- The reference to “in his house” means Levi’s house

- **Luke 5:29** “And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.”
- Mark confirms a negative understanding of tax collectors labeling them with “sinners”
- This scene indicates that there were “many who followed” Jesus
 - They “many” is a reference to tax collectors and sinners

B. The dispute from the scribes of the Pharisees (2:16)

And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

- The “scribes of the Pharisees” is a particular group
 - Scribes/experts in the law could be in one of three groups:
 - Pharisees, Sadducees, or Independent
- What do we know about the Pharisees?
 - In the intertestamental period, Israel was controlled by the Seleucids for a period of time
 - The Seleucids practiced Hellenism, that is they forced Greek culture and mythology upon the Jews in Israel
 - Certain Jews kept separate from the outside influence of Greeks
 - This group became known as the Pharisees, who formed as separatists meticulously following the Law of Moses
 - They even added oral law as a fence to keep from transgressing the written Law
- Thus, these separatist scribes of the Pharisees would never be seen eating with tax collectors, like Jesus was doing
- This question was intended to be negative not of curiosity
 - **Luke 5:30** “And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, ‘Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’”

C. The desire of the Messiah (2:17)

And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

- Jesus gave an illustration and then an explanation
- Illustration: Sick need doctors, not the well/healthy
- Explanation: Jesus (Son of Man) came to call sinners, not the righteous
 - Parallels: Physician/Jesus, Sick/Sinners, Well/Righteous

- The “righteous” could be a reference to nobody since there was/is not a single human being who is righteous (Romans 3:10)
 - Or the “righteous” could be referring to the self-righteous Pharisees who did not perceive that they had a need for a doctor
- Added in **Matthew 9:13** “Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”
- **Luke 5:32** “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”
 - Jesus maintained a mission of calling the lost to respond in repentance to the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15)