

The Physician

(Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:14-17; Luke 5:27-32)

Mat 9:9-13 ESV As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. (10) And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. (11) And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (12) But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. (13) Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mar 2:14-17 ESV 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. (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. (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?" (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."

Luk 5:27-32 ESV After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." (28) And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. (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. (30) And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" (31) And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. (32) I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Context: Jesus calls Matthew (Levi) to be one of His disciples. Matthew was a tax collector – to the Jew, a traitor and pawn of the Roman government. Jesus was the guest of honor at a feast held by Matthew at which many other tax collectors and “sinners” (possibly prostitutes, drunks, etc.) were in attendance. To the religious elite, these people were unclean. They ask the question of the disciples, “How is it (why) that He eats with tax collectors and sinners?” We do not have a written response from the disciples.

Source: When Jesus hears about the question, He gives the answer in the form of a parable and then a comment on the parable. Since the question is concerning His activity, His answer must also include Himself in some way.

Audience: The scribes and the Pharisees – the religious elite who took pride in going above and beyond the Mosaic Law. It is likely that the disciples were also present when Jesus spoke this parable. The Pharisees needed to be confronted with their hypocrisy. The disciples (as is still true today) needed constant reminder of Christ’s purpose.

Culture: Though there are differences in approach, we readily understand the concepts of physicians and sickness. The physicians of Jesus’ day, though, were more knowledgeable in the use

of herbs and natural remedies. We also, unfortunately, understand the desire to separate ourselves based on a self-perception of relative righteousness.

Response: None given. As noted above, Jesus does make a comment which helps explain the simple parable. He directs them to Hosea 6:6 and plainly describes the purpose of His ministry, to call sinners to repentance and thus into the kingdom of God through faith in Him, the world's only Savior.

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Questions

1. Where is Jesus in the parable and how does that describe Him? _____

2. Where are the tax collectors and sinners and how does it describe them? _____

3. Who else is in the parable and how does it describe them? _____

4. How does the reference to Hosea 6:6 help explain the parable? _____

5. How does Jesus' description of His ministry help explain the parable? _____

6. What is the challenge that the parable presents to the Pharisees? _____

7. Where are you in the parable and what challenge does it present to you? _____

