

Bring Your Friends to Jesus | Mark 2:13-17

Our plan for reaching people at FBC is very simple: Befriend people and point them to Jesus.

- Everyone can make a friend, and everyone can point people to Jesus.

In Mark 2:1 - 3:6 we see 5 compact stories.

- Jesus is the hero in these five stories

They are referred to as the “controversy dialogues.”

- 1) Controversy over Forgiveness (1-12) – Who can forgive sins but God alone?
- 2) Controversy over Friendship (13-17) – Why does he eat with sinners and tax collectors?
- 3) Controversy over Fasting (18-22) – Why don't your disciples fast?
- 4) Controversy over the Lord of the Sabbath (23-28) – Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?
- 5) Controversy over Healing on the Sabbath (3:1-6) – they watched him to accuse him...

Big Idea: Lead your friends to Jesus because Jesus changes lives.

In these stories we see 5 pictures Grace

Jesus: Forgiver of Sinners

Jesus: Friend of Sinners

Jesus: The Bridegroom for a Sinful Bride

Jesus: Lord of the Sabbath who Gives Rest to the Weary

Jesus: The Restorer of the Desperate

What's the response of the people in these stories?

- some loved Jesus and some wanted to (3:6) “destroy him”.
- Some love grace and Some are angered by it.

One thing is for sure: no one is left unaffected by Jesus' ministry!

Last week my title for story #1 was: Bring your friends to Jesus: Only he can forgive.

For the second story my title is:

Bring your friends to Jesus: He befriends sinners.

He is not a friend of SIN. He DOES NOT condone sin.

- Jesus was separated from sin, but not isolated from sinners.
- He befriended them and changed them.

In Vs. 1-12 Jesus was in Peters crowded home

In Vs. 13 he leaves... look where He goes...

Mark 2:13 “And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.”

- **Note:** Both of those actions are in the imperfect tense... meaning
 - “the crowd kept coming”
 - “and He kept on teaching”.
- **In other words:** They came in waves and he taught them in waves.

Mark 2:14 “And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom(tax booth).”

Illustration: In 1985, America’s national budget was 1,021 trillion dollars.

- This is a lot of money... A LOT of tax dollars...
- It’s hard for us to even comprehend that number...
 - Your mind right now might not even know how to process one trillion dollars into manageable bites.

A man by the name of **Bob Brabanec**, a professor of mathematics, took the time to help us understand that number... He says,

“If you began at the birth of Christ spending \$1,400,000 a day, every day, without any time off for weekends or holidays, and continued

spending at that rate through the fall of Rome, the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, right on into the twentieth Century till today, you would have just now succeeded in having spent the \$1,021 trillion. OR, putting it in shorter time frame, say fiscal 1985, the fiscal year in which we succeeded in spending the \$1,021 trillion, you would have to spend more than \$32,000 a second, about \$2,000,000 a minute, or more than 114,000,000 an hour!”

Think of the energy it takes to spend this much money...
Better yet, think of the energy it takes to COLLECT it!

IT WOULD TAKE A MIRACLE... But we all know Uncle Sam is capable of miracles!

You even mention the word “IRS” and you see blood pressure spiking and people going for their heart medicine.

- Btw, this didn’t start in 1985... this goes all the back through history to even Christ’s time period.

Info: In that time period the Roman’s collected their money through what they called “**tax farming**”. (kinda like farming out a McDonald’s)

Here’s how it worked:

- They assessed a district a fixed tax figure, and then sold the right to collect taxes to the highest bidder. The buyer had to hand over the assessed figure at the end of the year and could keep whatever he gathered above that.
 - You can see the problem with this right away...
 - there wasn’t a QuickBooks software that went through a yearly audit...
 - zero-poor record keeping from collector to state.

The system consisted of two categories of taxes.

1) Stated taxes

- There was a poll tax which all men ages 14-65 and woman 12-65 had to pay for just being alive.
- There was a ground tax which required one tenth of all grain and one fifth of all wine and oil produced.
 - In some places, the Romans also exacted a tax on fish. Very possibly the was done in Capernaum where the fishing industry was so vital.
- Lastly, there was an income tax which was one percent of one's annual income.

Not much room for error in category 1...

2) Duty taxes

- People paid separated taxes for using roads and docking in harbors.
- There was a sales tax on certain items, as well as import and export duties.
- A tax was even pain on a cart... every wheel was taxed.
- They could stop anyone on the road, make him or her unpack their bundles, and charge just about anything they wanted.
- If a person could not pay, the tax collectors would sometimes offer a loan at unreasonably high rates.

Kent Hugh's says that they were "trained extortionists."

Kyle Shearin says about them, "They were like a 1st century mafia organization." He says, "Don't picture (tax collector's) with black wire-rimmed glasses and suspenders leaning over a calculator—see (them) like the Godfather type."

These tax collectors were considered to be the scum of the society.

- It was so rare to see any honesty in that profession that a Roman writer said he once saw monument to an honest tax collector.
- They were so untrusted and hated that they were banned from synagogues and not allowed to serve as a judge or a witness in court.

With all of that in mind, look again with me at **Mark 2:14** “And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus (a tax collector sitting at his tax booth.), and Jesus says to him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.”

- Luke’s gospel says, “and leaving everything, Levi rose and followed him.” (Luke 5:28)

Note: In just a few minutes the whole town knew about Levi’s decision and they couldn’t believe it!

- **They were probably saying:**
 - “did you hear about Levi?... It probably is some scheme of his...”
 - “did you hear that Levi gave up his position for Jesus? I don’t think it will last...”

Little did they know that Levi was Matthew... he would someday write the gospel of Matthew!

- **Matthew writes of himself in this account in Matthew 9:9** “And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.”

Info: Some scholars believe that Levi was actually given the name Matthew like Peter and Paul. **WHY?**

- Because the man who was once a covetous con artist would become what his new name meant: a gift of God to his people!

Illustration: Centuries ago a number of workmen were seen dragging a great marble block into the city of Florence, Italy. It had come from the famous marble quarries of Carrara and was intended to be made into a statue of a great old Testament prophet. But it contained imperfections, and when the great sculptor Donatello saw it, he refused it at once. So there it lay in the cathedral yard, a useless block...

On day another sculptor caught sight of the flawed block. But as he examined it, there rose in his mind something of immense beauty, and he resolved to sculpt it. Two years later, after much work, on Jan 25, 1504, all of the great artists of the world assembled to see the work. Botticelli (boti-chel-e), Leonardo da Vinci, and many others were there...**The vail dropped and the praises rose...IT WAS A MASTERPIECE!** And the centuries have confirmed that judgment. Michelangelo's David is one of the greatest works of art the world has ever known.

Point: Christ saw in the flawed life of Levi a Matthew.

Point: Christ saw in the messed-up character of a tax collector a gospel writer and evangelist.

This makes me think of **Eph 2:10** where Paul says "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

- **In other words:** Christ sees in us what no one else sees!

Levi's life was changed... **so what does he do?** Invite everyone over to eat.

- This is how we know he was a Baptist...

Mark 2:15 "And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him."

Luke account says in 5:29 "And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them."

In **basic**, Levi puts together a party to celebrate his call to discipleship...

- He invites all of his other **tax collecting friends** and **"sinners"**.
 - **Info:** **"sinners"** was a technical term that Pharisees used to refer to those who didn't follow scribal tradition or eat their food according to their cleansing rules."
- **So, you have the group of social misfits and community rebels... and there sits Jesus at their party... eating, drinking, socializing...**

Historical Context

- In the ancient Near East, to have a fellowship meal with someone meant that you accepted them in your company.
 - It was a boundary marker.
 - It was more than just nourishment.
 - It symbolized friendship, intimacy and unity.
- **Meals were also ways to pursue reconciliation.**

In having this banquet, **Levi** is really repeating the words of **John Newton** when he said, "**what brings us all together, is that we are great sinners, but Christ is a great Savior**".

One commentator of this event, "**Among the Jews (in particular) it was an unheard-of thing for a rabbi or any other religious leader to lower himself by staying at the house of a 'publican.'**" (Geldenhuys).

I can't help but wonder if little Zacchaeus was sitting across from Jesus at this table... *the tax collector who would come to Christ in Luke 19.*

- **He would later come to Christ and invite Jesus over to his house.**

Two years ago I read a book called "***A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community and Mission Around the Table.***"

- It is basically an exposition of all the meals that Jesus has in Luke's gospel, which are astonishingly everywhere in Luke's gospel.

Chester asks the question, “How would you complete this sentence: **The Son of Man came**”

He says the NT completes this sentence with three answers:

- 1) “to serve not be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many”
- 2) “to seek and save the lost”, and
- 3) has come “eating and drinking”. (Luke 7:34)

Note: The first two describe “**why**” Jesus came, and the third explains “**how**” he came – his method.

- Jesus did it so much that they called him a “**glutton and drunkard**.” (7:34).
- But he said, “**wisdom is justified in her children**.”(35)
 - **In other words:** This was a wise method of evangelism!

Chester says “[Christ’s] mission strategy was a long meal, stretching into the evening. He did evangelism and discipleship round a table with some grilled fish, a loaf of bread, and a pitcher of wine.”

Notice the frequency in Luke's gospel:

- Luke 5 – Levi and tax collectors and sinners
- Luke 7 – “One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and took his place at the table...” he is then anointed with ointment
- Luke 9 – Feeds the 5,000
- Luke 10 – eats at the home of Mary and Martha
- Luke 11 – “A Pharisee asked him to dine with him...” he proceeds to rebuke the Pharisees
- Luke 14 – Jesus is at a meal when he urges us to invite the poor to our meals
- Luke 15 – Story of the Prodigal Son (with Pharisees and tax collectors as the audience)
- Luke 19 – Jesus invites himself to Zaccheus’ house! “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner”
- Luke 22 – The Last Supper
- Luke 24 – The risen Christ has a meal with two disciples at Emmaus, and then later eats fish with his disciples in Jerusalem

This is only references to meals; **There are numerous others to food also...**

“In Luke’s gospel, Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal” (Robert Karris, *Eating Your Way through Luke’s Gospel*).

In the ministry of Jesus, meals are place of **grace, community and mission.**

- I want to encourage you to make your table a place for grace, community and mission.

There is an important truth we can gain from this:

Those who avoid tax collectors and sinners are like Pharisees; those who dine with them are like Jesus.

Look at Mark 2:16 “And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?”

- To put this in relatable terms, “How could Jesus, a godly man, eat with mafia leaders, harlots, cheats, swindlers, and others?”

Jesus was separated from sin, but not isolated from sinners.

- **Note:** He befriended them and changed them.

“Pharisees” (fä-rē-sī'-os)- they were literally called “the separatists”

- For them it was an unforgivable disgrace for Jesus, who claimed to be a teacher of the Law, to disregard customs.

Some Christians hold similar beliefs...

- Example: In 19th century England there was a poor woman who attended a church woman’s meeting. She had been living with a man of another race by which she had had a baby, and she brought the child with her. She liked the meeting and came back again and again. But then a leader came to her and said, “I must ask you not to come to this meeting again.” Seeing her questioning look, he continued, “The other woman say that they will stop coming if you continue to come.” Looking at him in poignant winstfulness, she asked, “Sir, I know I’m a sinner, but isn’t there anywhere a sinner can go?”

(Praise the Lord that lady was later found by the salvation army and claimed for Christ.)

This was the same thing Matthew was up against until he met Christ...

He was saying, “I know I am a sinner” to the pharisees, “isn’t there anywhere a sinner can go?”

- **Their response:** no
- **Jesus:** follow me back to your house... lets eat together...

My guess is that no one in this room would claim to have those pharisaical beliefs... IN FACT, I would say you even hate those beliefs!

Even still, many of us live them out....

- We come to Christ, and in our desire to be godly we seek out people “Like us”...
- Ultimately, we arrange our lives so that we are with nonbelievers as little as possible.
 - We attend Bible studies that are 100% Christian
 - A Sunday School that is 100% Christian
 - Prayer meetings that are 100% Christian
 - We play tennis with Christians
 - eat dinner with Christians
 - We have doctors who are Christian-ish
 - Christians electricians
 - Christians veterinarians
 - EVEN OUR DOGS ARE CHRISTIANS...

The result is we pass by hundreds of people without every noticing them, let alone trying to influence them positively for Christ!

None of us are Pharisees Philosophically, be we may be practically.

Are you a friend of sinners?

Do you eat with them, reach out to them, serve them?

What steps could you take to begin eating with non-Christians?

Reach out to people you work with.

- Got to dinner with them
- Attend sporting events together
- Have them over

Reach out to those we know are hurting.

- An unwed mother
- Minister to the cultures around us
- Volunteer in the local prisons
- Get involved in the community... even if it means resigning a church job to do it.

Jesus prayed in **John 17:15**, “I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.”

Jesus came to befriend sinners and see them changed. This is why He said...

Mark 2:17 “When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance?”

Jesus gives two statements in response to the pharisee

- 1) “I came for the sick, not the well”
- 2) “I came to call the sinners not the righteous”

I take both to mean, “the so-called well” or the “so-called righteous,” “the self-righteous.”

“call” – it is a summons to repentance.

Notice that they did not repent before he had a meal with them.

- He fellowshiped with them, befriended them, and then called them to repentance.

We like to reverse this in the church culture.

- We only eat with the upright.

Jesus didn't require repentance in advance before spending time with sinners and tax collectors, and neither should we.

Two Applications:

1. If Jesus can change Levi, He can change you.

- Jesus is handing out party invitations, you are invited.

2. Jesus befriended sinners, we should too.

Let me share some more practical helps I have gleaned from others:

- Be Friendly
- Make Friends.
 - We can't do our work of pointing people to Jesus if we are not with them.
 - One reason we don't have a gazillion things going on at FBC, is we want you to have time for table fellowship and outreach.
- Choose to be where people are. (where people hang out.)
- Don't be a "weird Christian."
 - Don't lead with,
 - "I want to talk to you about the four horsemen of the Apocalypse."
 - "If you died today would you go to Hell?"
 - Be genuine. Talk about grace. Tell your story.
- Ask questions about them.
- Look for common interests.
 - Fred Luter calls it "frangelism" friendship evangelism
 - He started a church by inviting men over to watch boxing.

- Be Prepared Answer their Questions
 - It's okay if you don't have all the answers.
 - Tell them you will do your research and be ready next time.
- Serve People

Questions:

- Would you pray that God would use you to lead a friend to Jesus this year?
- Would you be willing to add feet to that prayer and invite one of your not Christian friends over to your home this week?

Story of Pastor in Seattle making friends for Christ

We met in the elevator of our condo building. Instead of the classic stare down at the ground and avoid eye contact bit, I said hello and introduced myself. I asked him a few non-awkward, basic questions. How long have you lived here? Do you like it? Have you met any cool people?

The following week, I saw him in the lobby, and we picked up the conversation with a longer discussion revolving around the Seattle Mariners and their dim prospects for the year. I

checked again to see if he was up for talking more, "If you want to watch a game at Sport, [the appropriately-named

Seattle sports pub,] let me know." He accepted, we figured out a good date and time and within a few weeks, we were

grabbing a bite and watching a game together. It wasn't long before he found out I was a Christian, went to church, and

loved Jesus. He said to me, "Wow, my stereotype of Christians has been blown away. You're normal. You like good food and drink, you love your city and don't come off as a judgmental

jerk." I soon invited him to church, where he heard the gospel preached powerfully. He became a Christian and got involved in Community Groups, praise God.

Sounds a lot like the ministry of Jesus. He came eating and drinking.

So, Who's coming over for dinner this week?

So, Who are you inviting/bringing next week?

(Men please come forward for Lord's Supper)

Lord's Supper Connection:

- When I read about Jesus having a meal with someone in scripture I can't help but think of it being a foreshadowing of a better meal with sinners who have repented from every tribe and tongue.
 - The Lord's Supper is another picture of that Greater Supper that is coming... the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.
- **Point:** You can't look through the window and see this meal like the pharisees did in Mark 2... You're either at the table or you're not.

If you're not a Christian today it's not because he won't have you, it's because you will not come.

- Some of you are looking for a magical experience to get saved. Finger in a cloud, lightening from heaven
- If you have a desire to get saved. That's not natural. That's God doing something greater than...

Prayer

God, our hearts yearn for you because of the:

- The blood that bought us
- The Love that sought us
- The grace that taught us
- Grave that brought us into the fold.

We are resting this moment in the truth that the tomb is empty and the throne is occupied.

Pastor Ethan come to lead Lord's Supper