

The Scandal of Grace
Mark 2:13-17
October 21, 2012

Introduction

Jesus did things that were scandalous to the Jewish leaders, Pharisees, scribes, priests, Sadducees, etc. They would react in shock and horror whenever Jesus disregarded the social taboo (such as touching the leper) or the man-made traditions (such as prohibitions on the Sabbath). This is the reason He was rejected. He was not religious enough. He was not holy enough for the legalistic Jews. They killed Him for that.

Think on this...if Jesus had come today in 2012, Jesus would have been hated and murdered because He would be considered too demanding, too judgmental. We would have hated Him for condemning good people. The Jewish leaders hated Him for forgiving bad people. Our culture is immoral and highly secular; whereas the Jewish culture is moral and highly religious. Two different cultures with the same result.

The Jewish leaders developed their deadly hatred for Jesus early in the ministry. They thought Him so unholy that they thought He did everything by the power of Satan. They hated the fact that Jesus hung around with sinners and taught them the forgiveness of God.

Luke 7:36-39 *Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so He went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸and as she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. ³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, He would know who is touching Him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."*

For Pharisees to be touched by sinners was unthinkable, shocking. Yet Jesus allowed this. He was not tainted by her touch, and He was not affected by it either. He showed grace to her. Pharisees and other religious leaders declared with a sneer that Jesus was friends with “sinners”

Matthew 11:19 *(also Luke 7:34) The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners.'*

They being the religious leaders would have never been seen in the company of sinners.

Luke 18:11 *The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.'*

They considered themselves separate from everyone else...holy, righteous, and clean. This was the scandal that they saw—Jesus ate with sinners and fellowshiped with them, telling them the good news of the gospel...that Jesus came to save the ungodly.

Romans 5:6-8 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ¹⁰For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to*

Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!

Mark 2:13-17 *Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to Him, and He began to teach them. ¹⁴As He walked along, He saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow Me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed Him. ¹⁵While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with Him and His disciples, for there were many who followed Him. ¹⁶When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw Him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked His disciples: "Why does He eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" ¹⁷On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

I. Jesus Calls Levi (13-14)

- Jesus went out
 - Out of where?
 - From the house He had been preaching (**2:1-12**)
- Sea shore
 - He taught outside because there was no more room inside the house for the crowd
 - He wanted to teach about the kingdom of God
- Goes back to Capernaum
- The calling of Levi
 - Levi – Matthew

Matthew 9:9 *As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth.*

- Tax collector
 - Booth
 - Matthew is collecting duty taxes (along the trade route from Damascus to Sea)
 - Despised
 - Jews had nothing to do with them because they worked for Gentiles
 - Romans franchise the tax collection—sold to highest bidder
 - Jews extorting fellow Jews for Rome (and for himself)
 - They were forbidden to synagogues and temples (excommunicated)
 - They were considered the same as murderers and thieves
 - Lepers were respected more than tax collectors
 - They often had thugs so they could extort for extra money
 - They could become very wealthy
- Follow Me
 - Simple and Life-changing
 - Left everything (**Luke 5:28**)
 - If Matthew changed his mind, he couldn't go back and get his job back
 - Shocking transformation
 - How did this happen?
 - He was feeling the guilt and worthlessness of his position before God. He longed for repentance and forgiveness from God.

Luke 18:13 *But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*

Transition: Matthew experiences grace and forgiveness, and his life is changed from that moment. His burden is so much lighter that he invites his friends to meet with Jesus.

II. Jesus Eats With “Sinners” (15-16)

- Having dinner
 - At Matthew’s house
 - Reclining—long, relaxed meal
 - One arm leaning on elbow with other hand for eating
 - Feet away from table
- Many tax collectors and “sinners”
 - Only people that hung with tax collectors
 - “sinners”
 - Not word for broken laws of Torah
 - Group of people that Rabbis see as not clean
 - Extremely poor people were considered sinners because they could not afford sacrifices
- Eating with Him
 - Jesus is the host!
 - He eats and fellowships with them
 - Offers of grace
- Teachers of the Law—Pharisees
 - They were hounding Jesus, following Him everywhere
 - They see Him eating with sinners
- Ask His disciples
 - They do not ask Jesus Himself
 - They were seeking to rebuke Him by estranging His disciples from Him
 - They refused to eat with sinners

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

Note: They have obscured the meaning of this passage with their own application because they paint broad pictures of “sinners” instead of any actual immorality.

- Full of contempt for them

III. Jesus’ Grace to Sinners (17)

- Who needs the doctor?
 - Healthy?
 - The sick

Matthew 11:28 *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Matthew 23:4 *For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

- I have come not to call the righteous but sinners.
 - To Pharisees
 - I didn't come for you
 - Why? Because you think you are righteous
 - You do not need Me, and I cannot offer you anything
 - They raged with hate and wanted Jesus dead
 - To sinners
 - I came for you
 - Follow Me

Romans 5:20 *where sin increased, grace increased all the more,*

Conclusion

The church is not made of good people, but of bad people who know that they are sinful and are in need of forgiveness. They understand that they cannot obtain peace with God through their own efforts. However, because they seek forgiveness, they have obtained the righteousness from God as a gift. He forgives those who know their sins, acknowledge it, and place their trust in Him.

Luke 18:9-14 *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-robbers, evildoers, adulterers-or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' ¹⁴I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*