

22 March 2026 - Sinner, Jesus is calling you!

Introduction

A thing that tends to neutralize believers from growing, is the guilt that comes from when we sin.

Instead of running to Jesus, we avoid Him, we avoid where His word is preached, we avoid other believers and at times we choose not even to have quiet times because we feel so guilty.

The next step is that we start blaming.

Yet, the Bible teaches us that we actually have to do the opposite.

We are to run to God.

We are to acknowledge our sin and confess our sins to Him

We are to run to God our saviour.

He is the one who has authority to forgive sins.

He is the one who has accomplished the forgiveness of sins on the cross.

He is the one bringing healing to our sin-stained lives.

1 Peter 2:24 LSB

Who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that having died to sin, we might live to righteousness; by His wounds you were healed.

It was to save sinners that Christ Jesus came into the world. He did not come to help them save themselves, nor to induce them to save themselves, nor even to enable them to save themselves. He came to save them!

William Hendriksen

Historical Background

Matthew had demonstrated the Messiah's authority:

- in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
(Slide Mount of Beatitudes overlooking Capernaum - chapel built by Franciscan sisters 1936 – **slide 1**)
- to heal the sick Matthew 8:1-22
(Slide - depicting Jesus' healing – **slide 2**)
- over creation Matthew 8:23-27
(Slide depicting Jesus calming the storm – **slide 3**)
- over the demonic realm Matthew 8:28-34
(Slide pigs' reminder of Jesus who sent demons into 2000 pigs – **slide 4**)
- to forgive sin.

Passage

Matthew 9:9–13 LSB

And as Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he stood up and followed Him.

Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.

And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?”

But when Jesus heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.

“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Proposition

3 Acts of Christ Reveal Why You Should Follow Jesus:

1. Jesus called a sinner to follow him vs 9
2. Jesus associated with sinners. vs 10
3. Jesus came to call sinners. vs 11-13

1. Jesus called a sinner to follow him vs 9

Matthew 9:9 LSB

And as Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he stood up and followed Him.

⁹ And as Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he stood up and followed Him.

Having proven His authority to forgive sins, you see some implications of that authority.

Since Jesus can forgive sins, He can work with the worst of sinners.

Essentially Jesus answers some heart questions

- Can He really forgive you?
- Can you become a useful follower despite you being a wretched sinner?

Jesus’s response to these kind of questions would be let me demonstrate, let me give you an example of someone who was an extreme sinner that I called, that I saved, That I forgave that followed me and joined in my mission.

Matthew points to an event that chronologically followed the healing of the Paralytic in Peters Home in Capernaum in which Jesus proved his authority to forgive.

In fact, Matthew point to himself and how Jesus called him.

Jesus had left Peters home and as He walked along the seaside teaching people, on the outskirts of Capernaum, He saw a Man called Matthew.

The other gospel writers called him Levi.

Matthew describes this all in the third person.

Slide 5- statue of Matthew in the Basilica of St. Paul's outside the walls in Rome)

He does not give much detail, he does not elevate his own status, he simply states that he saw a Man called Matthew (which means gift of Yahweh), but he describes simply what he was doing.

He was sitting in a **tax office**.

Slide 6 - Jesus calling Matthew

Slide 7 - relief showing money changers counting the daily income.

Slide 8 - tax receipt from Egypt displayed in a museum at the university of Chicago.

Slide 9 - Roman coins on display in Kavala Museum in Greece that Matthew would have been familiar with.

Mark and Luke add who His dad was and his occupation.

Mark 2:13-14, he was the son of Alphaeus.

Luke 5:27 he was a publican (a tax collector)

It's like when you meet a prostitute and they simply state they meet with men.

Matthew did not need to say more to get a Jewish reaction.

What Matthew did brought with it a whole stigma attached to it.

It's like saying I am a Hamas terrorist to an Israeli today.

Tax collectors were the most despised, vile corrupt people in Israel.

They served and were loyal to the occupying Romans while taxing their own people more than was required by the Romans.

They purchased these franchises which entitled them to levy taxes from the travelers. They essentially had licensed extortion rackets enforced by Romans.

They accept bribes from the rich and would often extort more from the middle and lower class

They loved money and amassed great fortunes under the authority of the oppressors at the expense of their own countrymen.

Like some government officials in our country.

Alfred Edersheim Jewish scholar described two kinds of tax collectors in those days.

The Gabbai: collected the regular taxes, for ground, income, poll tax = 1/10 of all grain, 1/5 of wine and income tax at about 1%

The Mokshes (douanier) which was the worst kind of tax collector.

They expected tax from all imports and exports.

They levied taxes for axles, wheels, pack animals, pedestrians, roads, admission to markets, carriers, bridges, ships etc.

On goods they ask 2 1/5 to 5%, on luxury goods 12 1/5 %.

They expected people to unload all their pack animals, open every bale, package and everything private was opened up.

They ruled supreme.

The term Mokshes was connected with the idea of oppression and injustice.

They were viewed as a criminal race, unclean animals (like pigs), traitors and Jews believed God had set His face against them. Leviticus 20:5

The Mishnah even forbids people to change money from the guilt laden chest of the Mokshes.

They were barred from synagogues and forbidden any religious or social contact with fellow Jews.

They were seen as liars, ranked with robbers and murderers and forbidden to give testimony in a Jewish court.

There were two levels of Mokshes:

- The great Mokshes who hired other men to collect taxes for them and experienced partial anonymity, which protected some of their reputation from their fellow Jews.
- The small Mokshes who were in constant contact with the community.
- The Gabbai was despised
- The great Mokshes were despised even more.
- But the most despised were the small Mokshes because they were the face of those who oppressed the people and fleeced them for money.

Matthew brief statement "Matthew sitting in the tax office) meant he was a small Mokshes and implied the worst kind of sinner in the eyes of a Jew.

Like the Psalmist wrote

Psalm 40:12 LSB

For evils beyond number have surrounded me, My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see; They are more numerous than the hairs of my head, and my heart has failed me.

And Jesus Saw Him

He knew this man was a sinner, in fact his iniquities were evident to all, an outcast from society, a traitor to his people.

Jesus did not ignore Him

He gave a brief command.... two words

Follow me. (accompany me, come after me as a disciple, come and be a learner of me, imitate me, trust me, and embrace my mission)

The grammar reveals it's the a command to follow Jesus a lifestyle.

If you're a sinner

Jesus gives you the same command

Matthew 16:24 LSB

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Luke 9:23 LSB

*And He was saying to **them** all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*

John 12:26 LSB

If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

John 10:27 LSB

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

To follow Jesus means to leave what you are doing

It means to change direction

It means to repent and trust Jesus

Its means to follow and imitate Jesus and it means to obey Him and embrace His mission

We see Matthew's reaction

The Grammar describes it as a snapshot event.

You see the event as a whole

He stands up

He leaves everything behind

Luke adds

Luke 5:28 LSB

And he left everything behind and rose up and began to follow Him.

In terms of material wealth, Matthew most likely made the greatest sacrifice of material possessions, yet he made no mention of it.

It's what Paul described.

Philippians 3:7 LSB

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

True conversion implies:

- you see the supreme value of Jesus
- you gladly leave your old manner of life behind,
- You turn and trust Jesus
- You embrace the lifestyle of imitating Jesus

Matthew gave up his lucrative career, but gained a destiny

He gave up His possessions but gained eternal wealth.

He gave up temporal security but gained eternal life.

- He turned
- He trusted
- He followed Jesus
- He imitated Jesus

You may ask what about the fact that He was such a sinner?

Now you may recall the question

Can He really forgive you?

The answer is:

If Jesus could call a sinner like Matthew to follow Him,

He can call a sinner like you to follow him

If Jesus died for a sinner like Matthew

He died for a sinner like you

If a sinner like Matthew obtained forgiveness of sin by trusting in Jesus, then so can you.

If Matthew could leave everything behind and follow Jesus so, can you.

If Jesus could forgive Matthew His sins, He can forgive you of your sins

The Gospel of Matthew proves to us.

Matthew:

1. trusted Jesus
2. followed Jesus
3. Imitated Jesus
4. joined the mission of Jesus
5. Matthew was forgiven

Application

Consider your own life and all the sins you have committed

Amazing Grace—366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions 1. Christ Receiveth Sinful

Men

The thrilling news of the gospel is that Jesus welcomes the nobodies of life and

transforms them into somebodies. The pages of church history are filled with examples of people whose lives have been dramatically changed from vile sinners to spiritual saints.

If Jesus could forgive:

- idolators and liars like Abraham
- Deciders like Jacob
- a murderer like Moses, David and Paul,
- prostitutes like Rahah and Mary,
- adulterers like David,
- extortioners like Matthew,

Then He can forgive you.

To get forgiveness before the throne of God

You must repent

You must trust in Jesus's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins.

Luke tells us what every believer should do.

Acts 3:19 LSB

*Therefore, repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.
In Jesus, you were redeemed, Jesus paid the debt you owed God and in doing so you received forgiveness of sins, forgiveness for all the times you broke His commandments.*

Ephesians 1:7 LSB

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions, according to the riches of His grace

Every true disciple of Jesus is a forgiven disciple.

The question this morning is have you truly repented and come to rely upon the gospel.

Now if you have, you are legally and judicially forgiven and declared not guilty.

But as children of God, we do sin and it messes up the fellowship with God.

How should you respond.

The Bible tells you to confess your sin, which means you agree with God that something is sin and God promises to forgive and cleanse you restoring the broken fellowship even though the relationship with God is never broken.

1 John 1:9 LSB
If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Looking at Matthew, we see the early steps.

As Matthew started the journey of following Jesus, the first thing he did was introduce Jesus to his friends.

This brings us to the second point

2. Jesus associated with sinners. vs 10

Matthew 9:10 LSB
Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.

As Matthew starts following Jesus, the first thing he did was have a banquet.

Luke tells us its was big and happened in his house.

Luke 5:29 LSB
And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.

So, Matthew invited all his friends,

Slide 10 - of a typical table setting photographed at the village of Nazareth,

Slide 11 -Painting of a banquet scene dated 30 A.D., found in Rome

You can just imagine the list:

- tax collectors
- sinners.
- some of the Gabbai and fellow Mokshes,
- Maybe a few robbers, murderers

- drunkards, prostitutes
- a list of ungodly people. The riffraff of society.

And

Then we get Jesus and his disciples.

Looking from the outside it would have caused many a head to turn.

Especially from the Pharisees

In fact, Jesus enemies mentioned Jesus's dining habits.

Matthew 11:19 LSB

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.

Luke 15:2 LSB

And both the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

The point we should take from this was that as a disciple of Jesus, you must interact with unbelievers.

Why?

To introduce them to Jesus.

Matthew's first response:

Let me gather as many of my friends together

And let them meet Jesus.

This man who came,

Who did not avoid me

Who did not tell me how wicked I am, because I know how sinful I am

Ne He simply called me to follow Him.

Matthew's response to Jesus was immediate, and positive.

He showed intentionality to share Jesus with all who were close to him.

He must have been passionate about Jesus

How intentional are you to share Jesus with unbelievers around you?

Are you intentionally keeping yourself separately from unbelievers

or do you seek to introduce them to Jesus.

What is your attitude towards the outcasts of society.

Do you choose to keep yourself separate from them?

Or do you view them as sinners needing Jesus?

It does not matter what they have done,

We are all sinners

WE all need Jesus

You need him just as much as any murderer or thief does.

Do you avoid dirty smelly stinky people

Do you avoid people who look dangerous

Or do you seek to be a follower of Jesus so as to introduce them to Jesus.

If you keep yourself distant from sinners, how can you ever be an ambassador for Jesus.

Application

How should you prepare to cross those boundaries to rub shoulders with unbelievers.

1. Prepare well. (gospel booklets)
2. Join in with us as we share the gospel as a church
3. Memorise key gospel verses
4. Memorize what you could say
5. Pray and ask the Lord to give divine opportunities to share the gospel with people He brings across your path.
6. Embrace a mindset that God controls everything so each appointment is potentially a divine appointment.
7. Ask good questions
8. See when it's appropriate to introduce people to Jesus

Display Jesus to them in your words, your attitude, your actions.

Display Jesus to them in how you respond to trials.

Talk to them about the gospel of Jesus.

This brings us to a third action a follower of Jesus should do, Know Jesus heart concerning sinners will impact what you do.

3. Jesus came to call sinners vs 11-13

Matthew 9:11–13 LSB

And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?”

But when Jesus heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.

“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

11 And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?”

The Pharisees were members of the Jewish ruling party.

They were scrupulous observers of the law as interpreted by the Sopherim or scribes according to tradition.

The term Pharisee actually comes from the Aramaic and meant the separate ones.

They kept themselves away from people or things that were impure so as to obtain a degree of holiness or righteousness.

You could only be in league with them if you pledged yourself to strict observances of the Levitical purity and avoid associating with the ignorant or careless and made sure you pay your tithe.

Here we see the contrast between a man who knew he was a sinner and chose to follow Jesus and men who did not view themselves as sinners and actively kept themselves away from sinners.

The Pharisees separated themselves from these sinners.

Matthew saw himself as sinner, yet introduced his fellow sinners to Christ

Jesus and his disciples associated with sinners.

The Pharisees cornered Jesus’s disciples maybe afraid to speak to Jesus directly.

Their question actually functions more as a rebuke than a legitimate question, putting the disciples and Jesus on the spot.

In fact, the grammar reveals that they were asking, why is Jesus continuedly eating with taxcollectors and sinners.

Their motives appeared to be entrapment.

The issue was, how could this man who claimed to uphold Godly standards higher than theirs sit down with a bunch of sinners.

I mean was it not Jesus who had taught:

Matthew 5:20 LSB
For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

If He truly was from God, He would not be with such vile creatures as the tax collectors and sinners

The problem was that these Pharisees were blind to their own sinfulness.

They thought that if they just avoid other sinful people and apply strict traditions and religious practices, they would be holy.

The problem

Romans 3:10 LSB
as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one."

Jeremiah 17:9 LSB
The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can know it?

Their self-righteousness prevented them from depending upon the righteousness of Christ.

Their judgmental attitude blinded them to their own guilt.

Jesus did not abandon His followers, but steps into the conversation.

¹² But when Jesus heard this,

He did not back down.

He explained exactly why he was doing what he was doing.

He used a threefold argument to explain why he was associating with the sinners.

- Logic
- Scripture
- His authority

1st the argument from logic

He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.

He used an illustration comparing the needs of a healthy person with the needs of a sick persons.

The sick need a doc,

The healthy don't.

The implication:

So, the doc should be among the sick.

and by implication the sick know they need the doc, while the healthy see no need for a doc.

It's when you realize you have a problem that you seek help.

The tax collectors and sinners knew and openly admitted they were sinners.

They understood their need for a savior.

The Pharisees however were blind to their own sinfulness which left them blind for the need of a Savior. They were their own savior.

Outwardly the Pharisees appeared righteousness, but inwardly they were totally corrupt.

Jesus later said about them

Matthew 23:27–28 LSB

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

In this way, you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

This is a core problem in Islam.

They do not believe they are born sinners

Therefore, they see no need for a savior.

Is that your problem?

When the pastor preaches about people that sin, you always in your heart think that that's not you.

Or when they speak of immature Christians, then you classify yourself always as mature.

Jesus's point

He came for those who understood they were helpless in their own sin and realized their need for salvation.

Jesus's 2nd argument fired at the Pharisee came from Scripture

13 But go and learn what this means:

'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice

Telling a Pharisee "Go and learn what this means" is in fact a rebuke: you did not know what in fact you should have known.

Jesus quoted from Hosea

This book tells the story of the prophet Hosea that married a prostitute, Gomer.

Her unfaithfulness illustrated Israel's unfaithfulness to God.

But Hosea continued to love and even forgive Gomer which showed a picture of God's continual love and forgiveness offered to Israel.

The context of the passage Jesus referred to is where Yahweh called Israel to return to Himself (Hosea 6:1).

Yahweh promised to heal them and to bandage them.

Hosea 6:2 He would make those who were dead alive to live before Him.

Hosea 6:3 Israel is invited to pursue to know Yahweh

Hosea 6:4 He rebuked Ephraim and Judah for their fleeting nature of their loving kindness that evaporates like dew.

Hosea 6:5 He announced judgment upon them through His prophets and through his word.

Then in contrast to the announcement of judgment these words

For I delight in lovingkindness rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

God delights showing loving kindness (Hesed=mercy, love, unfailing love, covenantal love, Grace, goodness.) to those who return to Him, and who pursued knowing God

God delights in people keeping his commands.

God just as much delights when sinners return to Him for Mercy.

God delights in showing compassion (leniency towards offenders, kindness)

The ultimate display of God's compassion, His Mercy and grace is displayed in the gospel.

Lost sinners came to Jesus, not because He catered to them or compromised His message, but because He cared for them.

Warren W. Wiersbe

God wants to save sinners.

They need to repent and return to Jesus

God loves demonstrating His compassion to a repentant sinner seeking to know God.

That's why Jesus associates with sinners.

So, He can show mercy to the repentant ones.

Jesus's final argument was from Authority

For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

Having established that those in need help and that according to God's Word He loves showing mercy to repentant sinners.

Now Jesus had established the fact that He has authority to forgive sins.

He then made the most profound statement as He gave His divine perspective on His ministry answering the reason for Christ incarnation and revealing the core reason for the gospel.

When I read that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, it was as if day suddenly broke on a dark night.

Thomas Bilney (Protestant Martyr)

I did not come to call the righteous but sinners

Luke added a call towards repentance.

Luke 5:32 LSB

I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

If you are righteous, it means you perfectly conform to God's character and law.

It means you're perfectly holy.

As you have that view of yourself; you shut yourself off from Christ's call and from Christ's mercy and grace.

You're saying you need no Savior.

Consider this story Jesus told comparing a tax collector and a Pharisee.

Luke 18:10–14 LSB

Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood and was praying these things to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

I tell you; this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Application

The question you should ask is are you acting like a Pharisee, self-righteous, self-justifying, viewing yourself as needing no change, looking down on others?

Or do you view yourself as the tax collector filled with the awareness of his sin, appealing to God for His Mercy?

Jesus wants you to understand that He came to call sinners

He came to save sinners.

Followers of Jesus know they are sinners.

The more mature you become, the more aware of your sin you become as you are exposed to more and more of the Word of God.

And it's this greater awareness that drives you more and more to the foot of the cross, leaving you in awe at the amazing forgiveness that God in His mercy has for sinners that trust in Jesus.

Conclusion

In conclusion let's listen to the words of Paul.

Colossians 2:13–14 LSB

And you being dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him, having graciously forgiven us all our transgressions. Having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us, He also has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

On your death bed will you echo the words of Dr Archibald

The late venerable and godly Dr. Archibald Alexander of Princeton had been a preacher of Christ for sixty years and a professor of divinity for forty. On his deathbed he was heard to say to a friend, "All my theology is reduced to this narrow compass—Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Charles Spurgeon