

INTRO

- Are you a fan of something (sports team, celebrity)? What makes you a fan?

READ

Mark 2:13-17

Levi — also called Matthew; Jewish tax official; tax collectors were despised primarily because they were seen as collaborators with the Roman Empire and corrupt.

Pharisees — means “separated ones”; an important and influential Jewish sect at the time of Jesus; known for their skill at interpreting the Law of Moses and deep devotion to it; hostile to Jesus because they regarded him as compromising their interpretation of the law.

Sinners — technical term for common people regarded by the Pharisees as untaught in the Law and who did not abide by their standards; considered unrighteous.

REFLECT

In today’s text, Jesus is challenging our perception of what it means to follow him individually and who makes up his new community. When Jesus calls Levi, we see the call threefold: relational, communal, missional.

RELATIONAL: FOLLOW JESUS

“Follow me.” — Jesus (v14)

Qu: how would you answer someone who asks, ‘what is Christianity about’?

Some believe Christianity is a call to follow religious rules of living; others believe its a call to embrace a philosophy of life. Jesus calls us to follow HIMSELF. It’s a call to personal relationship with him primarily.

*Qu: What is the difference between a **fan** and **follower** of Jesus?*

It’s easy to be a fan of Jesus. It’s costly to be a follower. Jesus calls us to follow him, not fan him.

COMMUNAL: FOLLOW JESUS TOGETHER

Read v15 again.

Qu: do you believe your personal faith is a private matter? why/why not?

The call to follow Jesus is personal, but not private. The call to follow Jesus is a personal and public call into a new community. The dinner party Levi throws is a beautiful picture of his new community (Jesus and other disciples) overlapping with his old community (“sinners and tax collectors”). The church visible should look like this: a community of disciples and “sinners” drawing closer to Jesus.

MISSIONAL: FOLLOW JESUS TOGETHER ON HIS MISSION

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (v17)

Lastly, the call to follow Jesus is a call to be on mission with Jesus. For Jesus to share a meal with such company at Levi’s house, was deeply scandalous for the Pharisees. It didn’t fit their paradigm of what a holy religious leader should do. They believed being holy meant separating from sinners. Sadly, many Christians today have this mentality. But what does Jesus do?

Qu: how does Jesus interact with sinners? How do you think followers of Jesus should interact with sinners?

Jesus answers the Pharisees by declaring his mission in v17. Jesus neither separates from sinners nor compromises in sin. He meets them where they are at (behind tax booths, at dinner parties) and challenges them to follow him. As his followers, we should do the same.

“Follow me.” — Jesus

RESPOND & PRAY

- Out of the 3 calls to following Jesus, which one is most challenging for you? Why?
- How can we as a group be more intentional practicing and encouraging PEBCI?
- Pray for one another to be strengthened in following Jesus.