

Disreputable Dinner Companions

Passing along, Jesus saw a man at his work collecting taxes. His name was Matthew. Jesus said, "Come along with me." Matthew stood up and followed him.

Later when Jesus was eating supper at Matthew's house with his close followers, a lot of disreputable characters came and joined them. When the Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company, they had a fit, and lit into Jesus' followers. "What kind of example is this from your Teacher, acting cozy with crooks and riffraff?"

Jesus, overhearing, shot back, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? Go figure out what this Scripture means: 'I'm after mercy, not religion.' I'm here to invite outsiders, not coddle insiders."
(Matthew 9: 9-13 MSG)

Suggestions for experiencing this story

1. As you listen to the reading – sit back, relax your breathing, and open yourself to God as revealed in this story.
2. As you listen, you will have questions and confusions but put them aside and just uncritically become part of the story- accept it as it is and see where that takes you.
3. If you were doing a character sketch of Jesus from this story – what words describe him?
4. What's the relationship between the Pharisees and the tax collector crowd?
5. Why does Jesus approach produce change differently than the rules and regulations guys?
6. Can you visualize Jesus calling you to learn from him like Matthew's friends? They stayed in their jobs but followed.
7. Which is more demanding on us – offering mercy or following religious prescriptions?

Prayer for Today

O Lord, who has mercy on all,
take away from me my sins,
and mercifully kindle in me
the fire of your Holy Spirit.

Take away from me the heart of stone,
and give me a heart of flesh,
a heart to love and adore you,
a heart to delight in you,
to follow and enjoy you,
for Christ's sake.
(Ambrose: c.339-97)



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