

Who are the People the Lord Won't Save?

Matthew 9:9-17

Intro:

1. ILL: "The People Jesus Won't Save".
2. We are all sinners - whether we feel sinful or not!
3. So - the answers to these two questions become very important to us.

I. v9-13 - Who is Accepted in the Kingdom of God?

A. Is the gospel invitation selective or universal?

1. Moral perspective.
 - a. The Jewish Law of Moses was the best moral code of the ancient world.
 - b. The Jewish people, compared with everyone else, were the beacon of morality to the rest of the world.
 - c. The Lord's criticism of the religious leaders was of their legalistic implications & distortions of the Law, not the Law itself.
2. Because of this high moral code, prostitutes were considered the worst of sinners.
 - a. They were in rebellion against the clear teachings of the Bible.
 - b. They were not only sinning themselves, they were soliciting & tempting godly men & leading them into sin.
3. But - the Lord didn't automatically reject anyone who had a bad reputation.
 - a. He told a prostitute she was forgiven of her sins. ILL: Woman caught in adultery (Jn 11:1-8).
 - b. He allowed a prostitute to worship Him. ILL: Anointing of Jesus' feet (Lk 7:36-56).
 - c. But - would you be as gracious? ILL: The prostitute who wasn't accepted in church.
4. But - the Lord didn't automatically reject anyone because of their race, nationality or former religion.
 - a. The Lord rebuked James & John who wanted to send fire down upon a Samaritan town because they rejected Him (Lk 9:51-56).
 - b. They probably wouldn't have requested that for a Jewish town!

B. Who were Matthew & his friends?

1. They were tax collectors - Jewish traitors who sold out to the Romans.
2. They were crooks who had the authority of Rome to extort their own people & they did.
3. Because of this, they became social outcasts who could only find acceptance among their own kind.
4. v10 - The big difference between them & the Pharisees was they came to Jesus!
5. You've got to recognize you're sick before you can call a doctor! ILL: The Pharisee & the Tax Collector (Lk 18:9-14).
6. Notice the Lord's response to them.
 - a. v9 - To the tax collector, "Follow Me!"
 - b. v13 - To the Pharisees, "Go & learn!"

C. So - who is accepted in the Kingdom of God?

1. Those who recognize their lost condition & choose to do something about it.
2. The Lord isn't as much concerned about what you've done in the past as He is about what you plan to do in the future. He expects a repentant heart!
3. v13 - He wasn't implying that the Pharisees didn't need Him! His implication was, "I'm doing what you should have been doing!"

II. V14-17 - What Should Your Attitude Be Then?

A. Let's look at fasting.

1. Why fast in the first place?
2. There are some good reasons for going without food.
3. Physical reasons.
 - a. You can lose weight. But must be done wisely to keep from hurting your body.
 - b. To clean out toxins from your body. It is often a natural cure for some illnesses.

4. Spiritual/Mental reasons.

- a. **v15** - It can help you emotionally. When you are mourning, in grief, you might not think of food & it might even make you sick.
- b. It can help you volitionally by you taking control of your desires. You can rule your desires instead of having them rule you!
- c. It can help you mentally.
 - 1. After fasting awhile, clean oxygenated blood reaches your brain allowing you to be more alert for important decisions.
 - 2. You can mentally focus on the Lord in prayer easier.

5. Instances where fasting became important in the Bible.

- a. **Act 13:2-3** - While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Fasting helped them be sensitive to the Lord's direction.
- b. **Act 14:23** - Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. Fasting helped Paul, Barnabas & the elders focus on the Lord.

B. What was the wrong attitude here?

- 1. Although the Pharisees were the bad guys & John's disciples were the good guys - both groups focused on the Law of Moses. They fasted because their religion demanded that they do!
- 2. You can't mix your Christian faith with a legalistic attitude!
 - a. **v16** - The old garment is the Law - the new patch is your faith.
 - 1. The patch will shrink when the cloth is washed making the rip worse.
 - 2. Christian faith doesn't fit into a legalistic system.
 - b. **v17** - The old skin was the Law - the new wine is your faith.
 - 1. When the wine ferments a new skin will expand, an old rigid one will burst.
 - 2. Christian faith can't be crammed into a legalistic system.

C. An example of looking at a problem through the eyes of legalism rather than the eyes of love.

- 1. The "Defiling my Body" issue (**I Cor 6:19-20**). You can defile your body by drinking alcohol, smoking, over eating, lack of exercise.
 - a. Legalistic attitude.
 - 1. Your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. So - If you mistreat it, the Holy Spirit will not dwell in it.
 - 2. To be a part of God's kingdom you must worship the right way on the right day, abstain completely from the world (we'll tell you what that means) & invite at least one person to church each day.
 - 3. Because God will not accept you until you conform completely to His standards!
 - b. Love attitude.
 - 1. I should not engage in any practice that might hinder my total life witness to others.
 - 2. My life is the only Bible some people will read. I want to keep my body as pure & as free from vices.
 - 3. Because of my love for others, I want to get the most effective response from my witness!
- 2. The "Getting to Heaven" issue.
 - a. Legalistic attitude: what can I get away with, as far as worldly living is concerned & still get in?
ILL: The Con Artist on "Touched by an Angel"
 - b. Love attitude: Because I already am in, what can I sacrifice to show my appreciation to God?

God accepts you just as you are - sin & all!
But He accepts you only with a repentant attitude,
That way He can begin conforming you
to the image of His Son!

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