

In both the example of the patched cloth and the used wineskin, trying to keep the old while adding the new just ruined them both. Jesus is not a patch for the old system of religion, nor can He be contained by what had come before Him. What are some of the ways Jesus has changed your way of “doing church”? Are there practices and customs you thought you had to observe but you have since discovered are no longer necessary? Maybe it is the kind of music, the order of the service or the way we pray?

Change can be difficult to accept. But we must remain flexible so we can be shaped by Jesus. The next time you find yourself confronted with change, ask God to use it to give you a fresh perspective and keep you ready for the new things He wants to do in your life.

WRAP-UP

When Jesus called Matthew, a tax collector, to follow Him, He challenged the social, cultural, political and religious norms, but He also offered hope to the outcasts. Jesus came as a doctor, a healer, and our Savior, but before you can be healed you must admit you are sick. The tax collectors knew they were sinners. But Jesus brought the good news, that not only could diseases be healed, but sins could also be forgiven. The Pharisees didn't recognize their own sinfulness and were convinced that by following the laws and customs of the faith they were righteous. They were wrong. All that they had depended on fell short of making them right before God. And Jesus had not come to put a patch on their religious systems. He came to bring change, and a new season of joy and celebration to those who humbled themselves and followed Him.

MEMORY VERSE

17 On 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."

- Mark 2:17 NIV

Challenge-

Ask God if there is a practice you have been observing that He wants to change. Maybe try something as simple as sitting in a different section at church!

A Radical Encounter with Jesus Gospel of Mark - Week 10

INTRODUCTION

In this week's passage, as we return to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus continues calling His disciples. When Matthew (also called Levi) encounters Jesus, he leaves behind his job as tax collector to follow Him and invites his friends to join him and Jesus for dinner. But the Pharisees became antagonistic when Jesus defied the old rules and customs, and it became apparent that Jesus was doing a new thing that challenged their social, cultural, political and religious norms.

Ice Breaker

What is one old way of doing things that you are reluctant to let go of?

Key Passages

16 When 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?" 17 On 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."

- Mark 2:16-17 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Hope in a Hostile Environment

14 As 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. 15 While 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. 16 When 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?"

- Mark 2:14-16 NIV

In this passage we find Jesus encountering two very different groups, the tax collectors and the Pharisees. Mark doesn't elaborate on the call of Matthew, also known as Levi. Jesus says, "Follow me." and he follows. But when we

consider what that invitation to follow represented to Matthew, we discover why Jesus would encounter hostility from the teachers of the law (Pharisees).

11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. - Luke 18:11 NIV

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus used a parable to contrast the Pharisees and tax collectors. What does the prayer of the Pharisee (Lk 18:11) reveal about the way the tax collectors were viewed and treated by this group of teachers in Mark 2:16? Why did Jesus' acceptance of tax collectors agitate the Pharisees?

By sitting at the table with Matthew and his friends, Jesus demonstrated acceptance, love and hope for the outcast. But this challenged the values and laws of the Pharisees because tax collectors were excommunicated from the synagogue, disqualified as a judge or a witness in a court session, and in the eyes of the community a disgrace to their extended to their family. Yet Jesus accepted them.

What did Matthew and his friends have to forfeit and what did they gain by following Jesus?

2. Jesus as Doctor and Healer

*17 On 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."
- Mark 2:17 NIV*

14 "I tell you that this man [tax collector], rather than the other [Pharisee], went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." - Luke 18:14 NIV

At the time of His encounter with the Pharisees and tax collectors Jesus was already recognized as a miraculous healer. But here He points out an important fact, to be healed you must first recognize that you are sick.

Jesus contrasts the healthy and the sick, as well as the righteous and the sinner. If Jesus came to call sinners, what did that imply about those who followed Him? Why was that a barrier to the Pharisees (Lu 18:14)?

It is humbling to acknowledge that we are sinners in need of a savior. We might not like to admit it, but just like the Pharisee in Luke 18, we prefer to view ourselves as righteous. Yet until we can admit to ourselves that we are spiritually "sick", the great physician can't reach us.

3. Celebrating and Looking Ahead

The Pharisees continued to scrutinize Jesus as He challenged their status quo. Fasting was a common observance among the Jews. They questioned why Jesus and His disciples didn't observe fasting as they and the disciples of John the Baptist were doing.

*19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast."
- Mark 2:19-20 NIV*

*28 You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' 29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.
- John 3:28-29 NIV*

There were many solemn reasons for undertaking a fast. John the Baptist came preaching repentance and fasting commonly accompanied repentance. But as he explained in John 3, when Jesus arrived, the bridegroom had come, and it was a time for joy!

Jesus ushered in a new season, one of joy and celebration. Both John and Jesus referred to Jesus as the bridegroom. What are the reasons for the guests or friends of the groom to feel joy? What are the reasons the bride would feel joy? How do those reasons relate to our joy in Jesus? What solemn future event do you think Mark 2:20 refers to when they would fast?

Jesus shifts His analogy from a wedding to patches and wineskins- wait what?! It seems He is emphasizing the fact that, because He has come, things are different, and the old ways will no longer hold up under the change Jesus brings.

21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."- Mark 2:21-22 NIV

The Pharisees were expecting Jesus to fit into the practices and customs they had always known. But the good news of Jesus is that their Savior had arrived. The religious practices that pointed to a coming Messiah had to change because when Jesus arrived, everything changed.