

## **Matthew 9:9-13 Jesus Calls All Sinners! Pentecost 3 June 25, 2017**

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Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and from Jesus Christ who gives perfect healing! Amen. In our gospel lesson, Matthew 9:9-13, Jesus called Matthew to follow Him to receive great blessings. These are Your words heavenly Father. Help us to always see the value of Jesus' call through Your Word...

Dear Christian Friends,

It is the season when we need to pay attention to weather warnings. It's important because if you are out on a lake or walking far from shelter to know if a storm is coming. Many a person has expressed thanks to a weather service that they were warned and could stay safe from a violent storm.

Today, Jesus gives a warning to help us prepare for a much greater danger. God's judgment is coming and it's more powerful than an F-5 tornado. There is no man-made shelter to protect us. Not even death will stop God. He will raise all people to life and will call them before His throne and open His judgment books. Are we ready or not? Jesus prepares us fully because

### **Jesus calls all sinners!**

**First, Jesus allows no false pretenses or excuses that will only harm us.** The Pharisees thought that they were ready for God's judgment. They remind me of the two little pigs who built their houses out of straw or sticks. The wolf blew them down. The Pharisees began about 150 years before Christ. "Pharisee" meant "one who is separate." Their purpose was to protect Jews from foreign ungodly influence. Rather than use God's Word, they made 100's of rules which separated them from people they considered sinners. They made the rules to stay close to God. But, they were wrong. It showed in their clashes with Jesus. The same thing happened in the church at Martin Luther's time. Traditions had taken the place of God's Word and faith Christ was no longer included. The same dangers that give people a false security are alive today!

When the Pharisees complained that Jesus was eating with tax collectors and notorious sinners, Jesus quoted *Hosea 6:6*: "*I desire mercy, not sacrifice.*" Mercy is caring for people in need. The Pharisees considered themselves near-perfect. If they needed to, they thought they could offer a sacrifice to satisfy God. Rather than confess their sins and seek God's cure, they thought they heal themselves. Jesus told them if they really were so godly, why didn't they have mercy people who needed help? Why didn't they listen to God's commands in His Word? Why were they standing in the way of Jesus helping people in need?

As Christians, we are tempted to think that our works give us a better status before God. Our sins may be more subtle or hidden than others who openly rebel, but we are still sinful in God's perfect eyes even if we act like better Christians than others. We can thank God that He works much good through the things He has us say and do. But, our works don't make us right before God. In our country's courts, coveting a car isn't wrong but stealing it is a crime. But before God, all sin offends our perfect God. And our excuses will not erase our sins. Some people try to find churches that will tell them they are not sinning. But that is like getting a diagnosis for cancer and looking for another doctor who says we're well. We may feel better for a short time, but we don't have a cure. God's Word alone tells us what is right or wrong. What if our sins don't bother us or if we aren't listening to God's Word or if we find that we are standing in the way of others getting spiritual help? Then hear Jesus' call: "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*" (*1 John 1:8*) We don't want to be a like a child who won't admit having dirty hands when they are really covered in mud. Unless we are spiritually washed, we will suffer judgment. The wages of sin is death and eternal suffering will follow. When we truly acknowledge this we're ready to hear.

**Second, Jesus calls all sinners to live in His forgiveness.** Jesus' mission was not to excuse people for their sins. He met with extortioners and notorious sinners not to condone them but to free them from sin. He exposed sins of godly people like the Pharisees so they would stop trusting in their works to save them and receive Christ's answer for sin. By His death, Jesus has removed all sins as far as the east is from the west. He became the scapegoat, like the Old Testament animal that was chosen. After the people's sins had been confessed on its head, it was led into the wilderness to die. Jesus is our substitute. Peter wrote, "*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*" (1 Peter 3:18)

Jesus referred to people who knew of their sins as those ready for a cure. "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.*" (v.12) Christianity does not start with how good we are. Christianity starts with how good Jesus is to sinners like us! After calling us to repent, Jesus offers us perfect healing. We read in Hosea 6, "*Come, let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces but He will heal us; He has injured us but He will bind up our wounds.*" (v.1) We don't need to impress God by our strength or works. But in Christ, God receives everything needed for us to be saved from our sins.

What if a teen has been driving for a year & says, "I'm a good driver and I deserve my own car? Does the teen deserve a car? No! If a rich friend of the family really cares about the family's needs and buys the teen a car, it's not because of the teen's driving, but because the friend's love. Jesus doesn't give us a car. He gives us the forgiveness of all our sins that He paid for with His own life. He freely gives us eternal life with God and with all believers who are in heaven. He gives it because He loves us and wants us to be blessed forever. He said, "*I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*" (v.13) He's calling us in love!

At Jesus' time, disciples chose their teacher. But Jesus chose Matthew. It states, "*Matthew got up and followed him.*" (v.9) His call to Matthew was effective. It not only led him to follow Jesus, it moved him to extend Christ's mercy to others. Matthew invited "*many tax collectors and "sinners" who came and ate with [Jesus] and His disciples.*" (v.10) Today, there are times when young patients saved by a doctor decide to become doctors to help others. Some become first responders or weather experts after being helped by those professionals. Matthew became a spokesman for Christ's forgiveness to help others.

We have received Christ's mercy out of God's pure love. Christ became a sacrifice for our sins. He lived a perfect life on earth and now by faith Him, His life is credited to us as righteousness. Unlike the Pharisees, we know that Jesus is the healer of our souls. And He has told us, "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*" (Luke 6:36) Think again of the gift of that car. What will the teen do with it? Will he or she forget about the family and use it for selfish things only or will the teen help run errands for the family or give rides to younger siblings? Will that teen stop to visit a friend who is sick or give a ride to a friend in need? Christ has called us sinners to receive the best gifts of all: forgiveness and eternal life. How do we respond to God's gracious gifts as we live in this world of sinners who need to know the truth?

Many people living today are thankful that the weather service provided a warning to save their lives from a dangerous storm. We too, are thankful that God has given us His Word in Christ not only to warn us of His coming judgment, but to save us from it! We've heard Jesus' call to turn from our sins and to receive His gift of forgiveness. By faith, live in His forgiveness! Live with confidence in Christ! Let those who are in grave spiritual danger know that there is a safe place for them in Christ! Amen.