

# The Doctor Maked House Call

by Skip Heitzig

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*Skip Heitzig's sermon explores the transformative power of Jesus' call to sinners, exemplified through the life of Matthew the tax collector.*

**Duration:** 55:52

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:19, Matthew 9:9-13, Mark 2:17, Luke 24:32, 2 Corinthians 6:14

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the excitement of coming into contact with the living God, comparing it to the concept of contacting aliens in a movie. The speaker emphasizes the awe and realization of walking with Jesus and recognizing Him as God in human flesh. The sermon also highlights the immediate response of individuals like Peter and Matthew, who immediately followed Jesus without hesitation. The speaker shares a refreshing experience from India, where new Christians openly declare their faith and are baptized in public, demonstrating the joy and celebration of their commitment to Jesus. The sermon concludes with a reminder that religious upbringing can sometimes blind people to their need for a Savior, and encourages believers to have contact and identification with those they seek to help, emphasizing the power of touch and caring involvement over theological knowledge.

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## Transcript

This is a big pulpit. It is a privilege to be here. I wanted to come here actually for some time and Danny you're gracious for having me.

Thank you to the worship group, that was great. Actually I used to live right up the street in Huntington Beach, 8th and Pecan down by the, up here and God moved me to a place where we have lots of beach. No ocean connected to it however, just lots of beach.

But God's been gracious I'm out in Albuquerque, New Mexico. People get that confused with Mexico. It's not Mexico, it's a state in the United States where I live.

You don't need a passport if you ever come through there, you're welcome to come. You don't even need shots. Would you turn tonight to Matthew's Gospel chapter 9. Some of you remember a movie that came out years ago called Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

Remember that movie? And it was the whole idea behind it was that aliens were trying to contact earthlings and earthlings found it a unique and desirable thing to contact life on other planets. And so the movie revolved around that theme and there were a special elite few who were able to contact aliens. But I can't think of anything more exciting than coming into contact with the living God and what it must have been like to walk with Jesus.

Especially coming to the realization as some did after walking for a long time with him that this is God and human flesh that I'm dealing with. As Peter came to grips with that on the boat when he said depart from me Lord I'm a sinful man. We have started a series in our church that we have called Close Encounters of the Divine Kind.

It's a series of all of the encounters Jesus had in the New Testament with individuals. And one of the admirable things about Jesus is that he never dealt with two people the same. He never had a canned approach.

He wasn't like a politician who said nice things to get votes. Sometimes he challenged people. Sometimes he rebuked people.

Sometimes he graciously forgave them and invited them to come closer. But never did he deal exactly the same with any two people because he dealt with them as individuals as they were as they had needs before him. And we have come to Matthew chapter 9 and I want to specifically look tonight at verses 9 through 13.

The calling of Matthew and then the event that happens in Matthew's house after that. Let's begin in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father this is your book.

You are its author. And Lord as the divine author we pray as the psalmist did. Open my eyes that I might behold wondrous things out of your word.

We pray father that we might have the same experience as those two on the road to Emmaus that our hearts would burn within us as you speak to us along the way and open up the scriptures to us. Though these are things that we have read, we have heard before, we pray that your Holy Spirit might make them fresh, meaningful and rich to our lives. I thank you father for this group of people who have Bibles in their hands and hearts ready to listen.

We pray father that as you visit us tonight with your presence that you might make known unto us ways that we can please and walk with you. We ask it in Jesus name. Years ago before I really entered the ministry it was my ambition to become a doctor.

So I was going to school and I made it up to pre-med. I was actually a radiologic technologist. I did x-rays and CAT scans.

And I thought that being a doctor would be awesome. Not just for financial reasons at that time but just the whole idea that you were able to help people. But I saw that there were people who looked to doctors as some kind of divine being.

Sometimes doctors thought they were divine beings. But many people looked to doctors as if they could cure everything and would be astonished if when they went to the doctor's office the doctor wasn't able to miraculously peer into their bodies and tell them what was wrong with them. What disease they had.

I've heard people complain, I can't believe it. I went to the doctor and he couldn't find out what's wrong with me. As if he was able to come up with some kind of a miracle cure.

And I have found that doctors by and large are very weak in the area of diagnosis and cure. I heard of a guy who went to a doctor, a young man, knocked on his door, stretched out his hand to meet the doctor and he said, I just want to thank you. I have actually a lot to thank you for.

I dropped by to tell you how much I benefited from your treatment. The doctor looked at him, scratched his head and said, you know, I don't recognize you. You're not one of my patients, are you? He said, no, but my uncle was and I'm the heir to his estate.

And I just want to thank you very much. In Matthew chapter nine, Jesus refers to himself as a physician, as a doctor. In fact, he says down in verse 13, but go and learn what this means.

I desire mercy and not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And that's right on the heels of a reference that he makes in the previous verse.

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. The implication is obvious. There is a disease that everyone has called sin and only Dr. Jesus can cure that.

In fact, he's so successful at being a physician of the soul that he has a 100% cure rate. Anyone who comes to him will be cured of that disease. The great thing about Jesus is that he makes house calls.

And there is a theme built into Matthew nine in these verses that shows the compassion that Jesus had to not just stay in a place and have people come and hear him, but to go out to them and to be a doctor who made house calls. In fact, built into this set of passages is one of the most succinct reasons for why Jesus came to this earth. He came to call sinners, he said, unto repentance.

We begin in verse nine, as we said, and the first portion of this, there's actually three movements in this section. The first is a call to surrender. It says, then as Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office.

And he said to him, follow me. And he arose and followed him. Let's read it all the way through to get the gist.

So it was as Jesus sat at the table in the house that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, but go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

It says that his name was Matthew, the one that Jesus went out to see. Matthew was probably a name given to this man by Jesus. In fact, most scholars believe that, as we know, his original name was Levi, Luke tells us, and that Jesus probably came and gave him the name Matthew, which was not his original name.

His original Jewish name growing up would be Levi, but Jesus changed his name, as was the custom of Jesus. We should be used to the fact that Jesus would look at an individual and often nicknamed them something else. He did it with Peter.

Peter's original name was Simon, Shimon. And he looked Peter over and said, I'm not going to call you Shimon anymore. I'm going to call you Petros, Rocky, a small stone.

I'm going to rename you. He did it with James and John. Remember when they were in Samaria and they didn't receive Jesus.

And so they came to Jesus and said, Lord, would you like us to call fire down from heaven and just toast these guys for not receiving you? And Jesus said, you don't know what manner of spirits you are. And he nicknamed them Sons of Thunder. And I imagine that was a joke among the disciples.

Here come the Sons of Thunder. And they probably laughed as they saw them coming to join the other disciples. The interesting thing, if Jesus renamed Levi and called him Matthew, is that the name Matthew means a gift.

We're going to see that Matthew really was a ripoff. And yet Jesus looks at Matthew, Levi, and calls him a gift. He turns a ripoff artist into a gift for the rest of God's people, which is just like Jesus.

It's just like Jesus to look at an individual and see that person differently from how we would see them. We would look at a person, know his reputation, judge that person, and we'd say, jerk. Jesus would say, I see the potential.

If I could take your life, if I could remake you into something better than what you are and give you back and make you useful, that's what I see you as in the end. It's just like Jesus to do that. In fact, he specializes in that kind of stuff.

We remember in the Old Testament when the prophet was sent to the house of Jesse to pick a king. And he went down the list and he found Eliab who was tall and handsome and figured, this guy's got to be the king. And God tapped him on the shoulder and said, Samuel, I have rejected him, for the Lord does not see as man sees.

Man looks at the outward appearance. God looks at the heart. So here's Levi, a ripoff artist, as we're going to see.

But Jesus sees him with such different potential. The Bible says we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus and to good works. And what God does is he takes people in rough, hewn condition, not polished, but he goes to the junkyard.

And then he reworks them, he restores them and then gives them as a useful gift to his people. Verses 9-13 is the only thing written about Matthew, that is the story is. The story is recorded in three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Same story, given from a different angle. But it's the only thing we know about Matthew. In fact, there are no recorded words or conversations that Matthew has with Jesus or anyone else.

But we do have his book, the book of Matthew, written by Matthew. Though there's only one story in the Bible about him, there's a few facts just by examining the text that we can learn about him. First of all, he was Jewish.

We know that by Luke's account. His name was Levi, which meant he was from the tribe of Levi. Which probably meant he was a renegade priest.

He was because he was of the tribe of Levi, being groomed to serve in the temple as a priest. But somehow went astray, became a tax collector, didn't go the way of the ministry, but he went a different route. We know that he was a Jewish man.

Secondly, we know that he's an IRS agent, because it says so in the text. It says Jesus passed on from there and saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. If it's any consolation, tax people were as hated then as probably they are now.

You know how when tax time comes along we go, oh, I hate that, especially if an audit comes in the mail. But back then it was even worse. First of all, because tax collectors were considered traitors, hired by the Roman government.

And the Jewish people felt the oppression of Rome on their backs all the time. They hated the Romans. Moreover, they hated people who collected money for the Romans.

That was Matthew. Hired by the Roman government. We see that he had a tax booth that he was sitting at in this verse, probably at the head of the Sea of Galilee by Capernaum.

There was a list of taxes that people took back then. Now we complain, especially around this time of year, about what our taxes are going to be like. And we hit up the upcoming politicians and what their policies are concerning how they're going to tax us.

Listen how the taxes were back then, and you'll understand why people hated Matthew so much. First of all, there is what is called the poll tax. It was the tax for being alive and breathing air.

Every male from age 14 to 65, every female age 12 to 65, was taxed across the board for just living. Beyond that, there was an income tax, flat 10% above the poll tax. There was an import tax.

There was an export tax, if you had a boat, there was a harbor tax. If you caught fish, there was a fish tax. You were taxed on every fish you caught.

There was even the cart tax. If you owned a cart to transport vegetables or animals or goods, you were taxed per wheel. If you had a two-wheel cart or a four-wheel cart, you were taxed per wheel.

There were taxes for roads, taxes for walkways, taxed by the Roman government, and Matthew collected them. The method of collecting the tax, by the way, was called tax farming, much like a franchise for a McDonald's or a Burger King. Somebody would buy into the office, a high bidder would buy, with a good sum of money, the ability from the Roman government to extract taxes.

The way the Romans figured it was this. There was a tax minimum that they wanted from the people, and they gave the tax collector the freedom, within reason, to tax above and beyond what Rome required, and they were able to line their pockets with the rest. You can see the possibilities for rip-offs with that kind of a system.

The rich would pay off the tax collector to evade taxes, and so the guy had to make up for it somehow, so he taxed the middle class and the lower class. Matthew was hated, because Capernaum and Galilee were filled with middle class and poor fishermen, and so Jesus goes out of his way to go to Matthew, not to pay taxes, but he wanted Matthew to follow him. He walks up to him, and he said, follow me, and he arose, and he followed Jesus.

Tax collectors were barred from the synagogue. If you were a tax collector, you couldn't go to the temple, you couldn't go worship in the synagogue. In fact, the Jewish people said they were the swine of society, classed among unclean animals.

I'll tell you why I paint that kind of a picture, and I give you that information. Because it was that kind of a person that Jesus walked up to and said, follow me, changed his name to a gift. And again, I want to underscore that that's the style of Jesus, isn't it? He goes out of his way to find people like us.

People that the world, by and large, would push off to the side and say, reject, worthless, hopeless case, but he sees different potential. He sees what they can become if he changes them. Look at the story of the Samaritan woman.

Jesus needed to go through Samaria. Remember that the text said he had to go through Samaria? He didn't have to go through Samaria. He could have gone through the Jordan Valley, he could have gone up the coast, like every Jew did, but he wouldn't do it.

He had to go through Samaria. Even the Samaritan woman said, how come you, a Jew, are talking to me, a Samaritan woman? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. But he had an appointment with her because he saw what she could become and she evangelized her town.

Scriptures replete with examples like that. Centuries ago, there was a large block of marble cut out from the marble quarries in Carrara, Italy and shipped to Florence to be made into a beautiful statue by one of the great sculptor artists of that time. It was brought to Florence, it was examined by artist after artist to see if that block of marble would become their next project.

The first sculptor that came along was Donatello, not the Ninja Turtle, the great artist. And he looked it over and he saw that there was a flaw running through it and he thought to reject, I can't do anything with it, it's not a good pure block of marble and he wouldn't do anything with it. Artist after artist looked at it and rejected it until one came along and thought this could become something great.

His name, Michelangelo, again, not a Ninja Turtle. Michelangelo took on that project and created probably his greatest work, the statue called David. Considered by many to be his greatest work, flawed as a stone but perfected when the master decided to take it on and take a flawed block of marble and make it into something beautiful.

That's the style of Jesus. He saw Matthew's flaws but a little chiseling and he could become something. The third thing about Matthew was that he was religious.

He was religious. Now, that doesn't mean he was a believer. When I say he was religious, what I mean by that is he had what we would call a Sunday school education.

He was raised in a religious home. How do I know that? By reading his gospel. Matthew, more than any of the gospel writers, quotes the Old Testament scriptures over and over again.

He knew the Old Testament better than any of the other guides. He would often say, as is written by the prophets. So probably Matthew, if we put it all together, was brought up in a religious home in the tribe of Levi.

His mom and dad couldn't wait to get him into the ministry. He was groomed for the priesthood but he went astray. He saw dollar signs in his eyes instead of the priesthood.

He became a tax collector, sold out to the Roman government, became hated by his people. Jesus said, follow me. We can see also in verse 9, he was a decisive man.

A man of action. All Jesus said is follow me. Not like, hey, I want to talk you into this.

Now sit down and let me tell you the benefits and the four spiritual laws and think about it. He just said, follow me. Immediately he arose and he followed Jesus.

And probably within 20 or 30 minutes, the whole town of Capernaum knew that Matthew was following Jesus. When I go to places like India, one of the most refreshing things I notice is that when a person makes a commitment to Jesus Christ, everybody knows about it. It's not in a church in India where people are baptized.

They're usually baptized out in the open like a river or like you have Corona Del Mar here real close. But when a Christian or a young person or an older person becomes a Christian, this is what they do. They take everyone together, the church, the person who is saved, or the people, and they make a procession and go through Main Street of town, clapping, singing psalms and hymns to the Lord.

Everyone looks out their window and they see old Harry and John and Francis who used to be Hindus now following Jesus going down to the river to be baptized. Well, Capernaum is a little enough town that when Matthew made a break and a decision to follow Jesus like this, they all knew about it and they probably thought, can you believe it? Matthew's following that Messiah character. I wonder why Matthew's doing it.

He's probably in it for the money, though how he'll get it, we don't know. Maybe it won't last very long. Maybe it's a midlife crisis.

There's got to be something more to it than this. But he followed Jesus and he was in for the greatest adventure of his life. In the next three and a half years, he would see things he would never see sitting in a tax booth.

And at that point, he severed himself from everything he knew as security, from a secure position, a financial base with the Roman government. He cut it all off. It was a call to surrender.

Jesus goes out of his way from Capernaum, goes to the tax booth, calls Matthew, Matthew responds. The next movement in the next few verses is Jesus with a company of sinners. He moves from the toll booth to Matthew's home.

Verse 10. So it was as Jesus sat at the table in the house, Matthew's house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? No doubt, Matthew had a farewell dinner.

He wanted to invite his friends. He wanted to share his experience. He wanted to share his Savior with the people that he knew so well.

And so he gets all of his buddies together, tax collectors and sinners, or publicans, as the old King James says, and sinners. And some of the Pharisees were hanging out as well. Matthew knew something about human nature as a young believer, that people would rather go to a dinner party than go to a prayer meeting.

What if Matthew were to say, hey, we're going to have a prayer meeting at our house tonight. How many unbelievers would show up? Not many, but he said, hey, dinner's on me, gang. They all showed up.

In fact, the Pharisees showed up. There's something to be said for that kind of creative evangelism. And that's why I love so much the Harvest Crusades.

Instead of having it just in a church, you go to Anaheim Stadium or the Pacific Amphitheater, or some of you go out to the streets and share your faith with people, going out to them. We read that the Pharisees are a little bit angry. That's because the people, the tax collectors and the sinners, were what they would call an unwashed crowd.

They were the riffraff of society. They were not only abhorrent to the Jews, that is the tax collectors were, but especially abhorrent to Jewish leaders. A sinner was a technical term used for anyone who did not adhere to the law of Moses.

What really made the Pharisees angry was not that they wanted to hang around Jesus, the fact that Jesus wanted to hang around them. That really disturbed them, and they brought it up. Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? I notice something often, by the way, about these Pharisees.

When they have something that they're against Jesus with, they don't go to Jesus directly. They always tell somebody else. This is the second time in the scripture I read when they had something that they were angry about with Jesus, they went to the disciples, and they probably whispered and said, how come your master eats with tax collectors and sinners? They didn't know that Jesus was God, and he could hear them no matter what part of the room he was in.

I heard that, and probably out loud he said, he who is well does not need a physician, but he who is sick, and exposed them all before all. Now, I want to stop here for just a second, because these verses speak to us about our relationship to the world and evangelism. What kind of a relationship do we as Christians have with the outside world? Now, I want to lay down a scripture that we all know when it comes to this, and that's a scripture in 2 Corinthians that says, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

Almost every Christian I've met knows that verse. And that's true. There needs to be a separation, a cut with the world, with the things of this world.

However, unfortunately, many Christians cut the nerve of relationship with non-Christians almost immediately after they become a Christian. We want to surround ourselves with godly people like us. We want to rid our lives of unbelievers and have exclusive Christians around us.

And unfortunately, we can have the same idea that those who tuck themselves away in convents and monasteries often have. A monastic kind of an idea, a separatist. I'm a Christian.

The world has cooties. I don't want the cooties of the world. And the only way to survive is to withdraw to the extent that only Christians are around me all the time.

And then we cut the nerve of being able to relate to them well. We forget what it feels like to be lost and hurting and begging publicans and sinners. Jesus did say that we need each other and we need to be built up in fellowship.

That's why we're here tonight. But he also said go into all the world and preach the gospel to every living creature. So while we need each other to be built up with Christian fellowship and have Christians around us, we must remember that real evangelism takes place outside the door.

I have a friend who has, over his doors going out, you are now entering your mission field. As you leave the doors, you remember, hey, we're called to go out. Some people have the come ye mentality.

This is the church. If you want to get saved, come to me. Jesus' idea was no, empty out the salt shaker where it's needed to be.

And that's what we see Matthew doing here, just what Jesus did. Going out, getting his friends, bringing them into his house. The Pharisees not liking it all.

Oh, by the way, what was their method of evangelism? Compare Jesus' style, going out to them at their level. How did the Pharisees do it? The Pharisees' method of evangelism was by taking the index finger and pointing it at people judgmentally. You wretch, you filthy person, you sinner.

Wouldn't that attract you into the kingdom? There's a billboard in Canada, as you're driving on the freeway, that says the wicked will go to hell and perish forever. Well, yeah, that's true, but what's the flip side of the coin? God loves you and has a plan for your life. He wants to save you and rescue you.

Go get them, tell them, compel them. The Pharisees were exclusive, Jesus was inclusive. His arms were wide to bring them in.

It's that kind of judgmental formalism that made a lot of us in the 60s and 70s wear placards and march around street corners and universities with signs that would say, Jesus, yes, Christianity, no. People saw that there's something great about Jesus, but the idea of what the church is about, I don't want anything to do with. But Jesus in the Gospels was so different, and that's what attracted me.

I was brought up in a traditional church, a formal church, a legalistic church. But when I read the New Testament, I thought, I can hang out with this guy. This guy's great.

He's inclusive, he's loving. He's so different than the way his servants portray him. He went out and got Matthew, Matthew went out and got them.

However, it is much easier to evangelize the Pharisees' way rather than Jesus' way. It's a lot safer to point fingers while we remain in a little bubble of Christianity, a safe, sheltered, kind of a Christian, cloistered atmosphere, and just say, the world's bad. Look at homosexuality.

Look at that. I can't believe that. It's a lot easier that way.

Let's face it. The world wears on us. I remember I worked at St. Joseph Hospital over here in Orange for a long time, and then I worked over at Westminster Community Hospital over on Beach Boulevard.

And I was around lots of antagonistic unbelievers who couldn't wait until I got to work. They would think up some new cut. And when they saw me coming, here's the preacher man.

And they would say things for shock value about Jesus Christ and my presence. That wears on a person day after day, doesn't it? Some of you are exposed to that kind of stuff. But Jesus prayed, I remember, in John 17, Father, don't take them out of this world.

Keep them from the evil one. Lord, I don't want you to remove them from the world. Keep them in the world, yet not of the world.

And it's Jesus' intent to keep us next to the person with the filthy mouth and the drug addiction and the bad marriage so that we can be light pulling them out of darkness. There was a conference speaker at a Christian conference who after he gave his message, an 8-year-old girl came up to him. And in confidence, she said, Sir, I have an important question.

Is it okay to commit suicide? Can you imagine an 8-year-old girl asking that question? And concerned, he said, why do you ask? She said, well, in Sunday school, we just heard that heaven is a wonderful place without crying, without tears, without fighting. He said, tell me what's going on at home. She said, well, my father and mother are both alcoholics.

They fight, they hit each other. My father beats up my mother. We get up in the morning on our own accord.

We make our own breakfast. We send ourselves to school. Our clothes are usually dirty.

We get to school. People make fun of us. They laugh at us.

We come home only to hear fighting. If heaven is that wonderful, I want to leave now and go there. 8 years old, she came to that place of desperation.

The conference speaker took her aside and wisely said, Young lady, God has a purpose and a plan for your life. And though you're 8 years old, the purpose that God has you in this world is that you might be a light to lead them out of their darkness. He said, I commit to praying with you until your parents come to know Jesus.

She rallied her brothers and sisters around each other, and they prayed, and in a year's time, Mom and Dad came to know Christ. That's the purpose of it. So Jesus said to them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but only those who are sick.

But go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. I'm going to take that a step further.

Jesus told His disciples of the things that would happen to them when they decided to follow Him. Now, the stuff that Jesus told them, I don't find many Christians counseling new believers this way. Mostly it's, hey, you're in for the greatest journey in your life, and it is.

You're in for peace and joy, and that's true. You have meaning and anchor and purpose. That's right.

But, when a person makes a commitment to Christ, hell will not give him a standing ovation. You become a target. I had a distinct pleasure today to baptize my brother-in-law.

We've been praying for him for a long time, and he was raised in a Christian environment, but he kind of went his own way and did his own thing. He said, I want to be baptized, and I want you to do it. And so up

at his house today in Le Havre Heights, we baptized him.

And I said, I want to ask you, why are you doing this? He said, well, I've come to the place in my life where I recognize that I can't make it without Jesus. And I've been trying for a long time, and I've tried so many avenues, but I can't do it. And I'm willing to make a break and follow Him today.

I said, you know what that means, Scott. That might mean that you're going to have to make a break with some of your friends, and a lot of them aren't going to be happy. They're going to leave and go the other way.

He said, I know that. I'm willing to make that step. Jesus said, behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves.

That doesn't sound too heartfelt a proposition. Wait a minute, Jesus. I'm following you, and you're going to send me into the midst of wolves? That's right.

I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Why? Not so they can devour you, but so those wolves can become sheep eventually. That's His intent.

That's His purpose. Now, those last two verses, let's consider those. We move from the company of sinners to the condemnation of self-righteousness.

The Pharisees are angry. The sinners and publicans are excited because Jesus is there in their midst reaching out to them. They complain, and Jesus responds, those who are well have no need of a physician, only those who are sick.

The doctor is making house calls. Now, why were the Pharisees angry? Well, we know that the Pharisees considered eating a sacred duty and a privilege. The Pharisees believed that they must remain clean and separate.

In fact, the word Pharisee comes from the Hebrew word parash, which means to be distinct or to be separated. They were determined after the captivity, we're going to be not like a sinner, we're going to cloister ourselves away and do what God wants us to do in every situation. And that kind of mentality went so far that they separated themselves from the life of the ordinary person to where they thought that they could get spiritual cooties just by being around unbelievers.

They wouldn't brush their robes up against a Gentile. They wouldn't walk on a dirt road if a Gentile walked in front of them. And they had all of those stipulations and regulations.

To eat with a person meant to enjoy intimate fellowship. If I eat bread, you eat bread, it goes into our systems, we become one with each other. Jesus was doing that with tax collectors and sinners, and in their minds he was becoming one with the sinner.

But Jesus says, people who are well don't need a doctor. Only sick people need a doctor. And then he gives them a commandment, go and learn what this means.

I desire mercy and not sacrifice. Jesus agrees with the Pharisees. When they say, those are bad people, I didn't mean this section over here, bad people.

These are bad people. Jesus is agreeing, they are, they're sinners. And bad, sick people need a doctor.

And that's why I'm here, I'm on a house call. Well people don't need a doctor, only those who are sick. Go and learn what this means.

I desire mercy and not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. A person becomes a Christian exactly the same way that a person who's sick goes to a doctor.

Have you ever met a person who is sick, even visibly? I mean you look at them and you think, you're hurting for certain. You need some help, you need to go see a doctor. And they will say, I don't need a doctor.

I'm fine, I don't trust doctors. My dad was like that, that's how I know this. My dad would rarely go to a doctor.

He came from the old school, he was raised in the Depression, a self-made man. And my mom was a nurse and she could tell disease when she saw it. And she would say, Lou, you need to go to the doctor.

I do not. Well, only when you realize you're sick do you go to a doctor. I'll never forget one time I was helping my dad work on a car.

He was tuning it up, he had the car running. I'll show you the extent he would go to. The fan belt was twirling at a rapid RPM and he was getting his hands in the engine.

And he cut the top of his fingers off, the first two, index finger and middle finger, snipped them off at the bone, the joint. And there was blood everywhere. I'm sitting back as a little kid, shocked.

What does my dad do? He takes his handkerchief off, wraps it up, binds it together and keeps working. Until his handkerchief became so laden with blood that it was dripping on the radiator. I said, Dad, you're going to bleed to death.

Go to the hospital. Well, I guess I better. And he walks in, goes to his bathroom, turns on his shaver and begins shaving his face, putting on a clean shirt because why go to the emergency room and look like this? It was hard to get him to any medical care.

I'm amazed he just turned 77 years old and I thank God that he was able to make it that long. Now that's how people are spiritually. Only people who recognize I'm bad, I'm a sinner, seek a savior.

That's why you can never save people or get people into the kingdom of God by just patting them on the back and giving them self-help techniques and psychology and sociology and make them feel good at church. Only sinners seek saviors. Only when a person says, I am in sin, I need to repent of my sins, it's only then when a person seeks someone to take care of their sin.

Hey, I'm a doctor. And only sick people need a doctor. He says, you go and learn what this means.

And he quotes out of the book of Hosea. Classic passage. Because Hosea is that great story about Israel who's fallen away from God, divorces God actually, runs out on God, and has an adulterous spiritual affair with the things of this world, but God brings her back in love and mercy and compassion unto himself.

So you go learn what that scripture means. You ought to know this text. You're Bible scholars.

Go read your own theology books and come back. For I did not come to call the righteous but the sinners to repentance. A person who is saved sees his need, as we said.

And some of the greatest people in the Bible and in history have admitted their own spiritual need. Again, Peter was on that boat. And when he recognized that Jesus was the Son of God, God in human flesh, Peter didn't say, good job, God.

He fell down on his knees and says, depart from me, Lord, I am a sinful man. Before that he was an expert fisherman. But now he was a sinful man.

The man in the temple beat his breast and said, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. Jesus said, that man went away justified. It was Saint Augustine who said, Lord, save me from that wicked man, me.

John Knox, probably the greatest preacher that Scotland ever saw, said, in youth, in middle age, and now after all of my battles, I find nothing in me but corruption. These are great men of God who walked with God, but who recognized the need to be close to Christ. John Wesley said, I have fallen short of the glory of God, and my whole heart has become altogether corrupt, abominable, and consequently my whole life is being an evil tree and cannot bring forth good fruit.

Augustus Toplery, who wrote that song, The Rock of Ages, wrote, Oh, that such a wretch as I should ever be tempted to think highly of himself. I am myself nothing but sin and wickedness in whose flesh naturally dwells no good thing. Here's Jesus, Dr. Jesus, who can handle those kinds of diseases.

And he comes in their midst to become a physician. What Jesus is implying, by the way, when he says this to the Pharisees, is that they are spiritual quacks. A spiritual quack is not able to treat a disease.

Those were the Pharisees. They were able to point the finger and diagnose the disease, but offer no help. You've got a problem.

You're a sinner. That's like a doctor saying, You've got cancer. You've got a cold.

You've got a virus. Well, help me. Give me medicine to cure me.

Jesus was there to help them. They were there to point the finger. He was implying you are spiritual quacks, and they had their values upside down.

Listen to what Jesus says regarding the scribes and the Pharisees in another place. He says, Woe unto you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices, but you have neglected the more important matters of the law, justice, mercy, faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former.

They claimed to be well, and they were the sickest of all. They were the teachers of the law, and they were sicker than all the rest. When we first moved to Albuquerque, ten years ago, eleven years ago almost, we began with evangelism through contemporary Christian music, rock concerts.

Now, you've got to understand something. That part of the country is at least ten years behind this place. I mean, they just found out five years ago that the Beatles broke up, and they're just getting over that.

When we started with Christian rock concerts, the town was outraged. We got calls on our radio show and at the church saying, you are devil worshippers, and this is demonic. I mean, the whole city was in an

uproar.

Even to this day, there's some of that mentality floating around in our part of the country. We have in our church what we call a metal church, and on Friday nights until midnight, the real heavy rocker metal heads come in, and we have an evangelist and a pastor on staff with real long hair who's a rock and roll lead guitar player. He's gifted in the word.

He leads people out of Satanism, out of the occult, out of animal sacrifices. Every week he leads them to Christ. We have people, one lady came up to me, I can't believe you allow that kind of music.

After all, this is a church. I said, that's the point. We're a church.

That's the whole point. Only sick people need a doctor. Not like, okay, listen, before you can come in here, we have to have you cut your hair.

There's a barber shop right at the door. We have a tie for you and wingtip shoes and a huge Bible that would probably be apropos for a young Christian. Then you can join us.

See, that kind of thinking is Phariseeism. It's being exclusive rather than inclusive, and Jesus was indicting the Pharisees for that kind of a thinking. Oliver Cromwell, I love what he did.

When he was the ruler of England, there was a shortage of silver and gold, so they couldn't mint any new coins. And he had his soldiers scurry the countryside to find if there were any deposits of silver and gold to make new money. And they came back and they said, we have found none except in the cathedrals the statues of the saints are silver.

He says, melt down the saints and get them back into circulation. That's classic. That's classic.

Instead of becoming this religious icon, get them useful. Melt them down and let's use what we've got. Verse 13, before we close, look at it one more time with me please.

When he says, I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. That's heavy, man. I didn't come to call righteous people.

It's not that the Pharisees were righteous, but they thought they were righteous. And because they thought they were righteous, they didn't see their need of a Savior. Because they didn't see their need of a Savior, at that point they couldn't be saved.

Until they saw their need. The Bible says, none is righteous, no, not one. Their religion, their experiences of going through the motions, blinded them from their need.

Now carefully listen to what the prophet Amos says to the children of Israel. God actually speaks to Amos and says, I hate, I despise your religious feasts. I cannot stand your assemblies.

And even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs.

I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river and righteousness like a never failing stream. Now on one hand, God is the one who started the sacrificial system.

The feasts, the assemblies. He invented them, he told them to do it. But now he says, I hate it.

It's because they were going through the motions, you see. And their religion kept them away from seeing their need to cling to God and come to Him in repentance. For people like that, Jesus offers no hope.

Have you noticed that religious people are the hardest to witness to? I can tell you they are, because I came from a real religious home. And as soon as I received Jesus Christ after a Billy Graham crusade, I went to my family and told them, I'm a Christian. You know what their response was? You've always been a Christian.

So what? What's the news? I'm a Christian, you're a Christian, we're all Christians here. And I tried so hard to share with them, we don't need Jesus any more than we've got Him. You were raised in the church.

We go to church, therefore we have Jesus. I find that atheists, agnostics, are much easier to witness to. My father-in-law was an agnostic.

In fact, he was an atheist at one time. He used to tuck my wife, when she was a little girl, into bed every night, giving her parables on the non-existence of God. That's how she was raised.

And so he would admit, I don't know God, I don't love God, I'm not a Christian. One evening, after writing a book on the power of positive thinking, called *How to Make Your Dreams Come True*, he decided to read the New Testament to see if Jesus was a positive person. And so he found the red letter edition and read all of the red letters in the gospel.

At the end of it, he closed it. After reading John, he said, I am compelled to believe that this man spoke the truth. And immediately after reading that, he became a Christian.

Gave his life to Jesus that night. Called a friend, Don Evans, on the phone, who worked for Chuck Smith, and said, I need to be baptized, I'm a Christian now. Chuck said, meet me down at the ocean, baptize him.

Two days later. Religious people are so tough to get through, because it can be a blinder to the need for a savior. Couple basic lessons in this little story.

There's first of all a message to people who are like Matthew. Raised in a Sunday school environment, a religious background, they were destined perhaps for something religious. Their parents thought, oh, this little child of mine, that's going to serve the Lord.

They've grown up with a background, but they're still sitting at the tax booth. In their own little world, their own little vibe happening, their own career mapped out. Maybe attending church.

Jesus would invite those kind of people, if there are any here tonight, to travel with him. To follow him. You'd be in for the greatest journey.

One thing's for sure, you'll never be bored. Following him. It will be adventurous.

The things he'll get you into will be very exciting. But you must see your need for a savior. Secondly, it speaks to all of us who are believers on our methods of evangelism.

Not to be exclusive, but inclusive. Not to push people away, but to draw them in as Jesus did, as we see Matthew here. A friend of publicans and sinners.

I think one of the greatest compliments Jesus ever received is that he was a man who spoke with authority, but he was not like the scribes. Here's a religious figure who's not like all the others. Actually, one of the greatest compliments somebody paid me in Albuquerque is when they came up and said, you don't remind me of a pastor.

I said, thank you. That's a compliment. I appreciate that.

Jesus was different. And Jesus is different. He was so inclusive and tender and compassionate with people, not like the others.

And that's the message for us who are believers, to include them. I know I've said it, and I've met many people who have said things like, I wish I could quit my job and get into full-time ministry. I want to be in full-time ministry.

Don't you see? You are. You are, no matter where you're at. If you work in a hospital, or you work in an office, or you work out on the street, or you build homes, you're in full-time ministry.

And God has you as a light to bring those who'd never attend a church, who are in darkness, into the light. That's Jesus' style of evangelism, being where they are in their setting to bring them into the light. C.T. Studd, who gave all of his money away to become a missionary, wrote, and it's become a famous song by now, he said, some people want to live neath the sound of church and chapel bell, but I want to run a rescue shop next to the gate of hell.

That was his attitude. I want to be where they are and lead them into the light. As the jet is passing overhead, I'd like to close with a quote by Kent Hughes, who wrote a commentary on the Gospel of Mark.

He said something that just poked me in the eye and in the heart, and I brought it to share with you. He said, we will never affect others as Christ did, unless there is contact and identification. We have to be willing to take the hand of those whom we would help.

Sometimes a touch, caring involvement, will do a thousand times more than our theology. This is what all churches need to do. We are great in theory.

We are careful about doctrine, but we need to lay our hand on some rotting flesh in our neighborhood. In the executive towers where we work, at school, in the city slums, we cannot expect this to only be the job of missionaries, because a church which does not regularly place its hand on rotting humanity around it will not be sending out missionaries to do that either. So may God give us the compassion that Jesus had to not worry if people will criticize us for hanging around those people, if we do it for the reason to be a light bulb in a dark place.

Ever seen a person out in the sunshine with a flashlight? You'd think he'd be silly if he was out there trying to find my way. No, you use flashlights when it's dark, and you're a flashlight man. And some of you work and live in dark places.

God has you there to be a bright and shining light. Heavenly Father, we are grateful that you have sent us out as sheep in the midst of wolves. You told us, Lord, that in the midst of that, that we should be faithful unto death.

Lord, we thank you for how Jesus would reach out to others and take an interest in others that the world would see as castaways. We thank you, Lord, that you've done that to us and for us. We were nothing until you found us.

You've given us life. Lord, I pray that we would be very much unlike the religious leaders of Jesus' day who pointed fingers instead of extending arms. I pray that we would be like our Master, who saw people differently, named them differently, and reached out to them differently.

Father, fill us with your Holy Spirit and with boldness to share your Word, to be a witness. Lord, I thank you for this group of people interested in your Word, and I pray that you would affect this community by their witness. Keep them strong, Lord, filled with your joy, the knowledge of your presence.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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