

The Call; Mark 2:13-17

I. Follow Me

A. Mark 2:13–14 (ESV); ¹³ He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. ¹⁴ And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

B. Jesus was teaching

1. “All the crowd was coming to him” to be taught
2. They recognized that there was something very important, very life changing, in what Jesus was teaching
3. Mark 1:27–28 (ESV); ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

C. Levi (Matthew) was sitting in the tax booth

1. Tax collectors

- a) “Tax collecting was a profession the Jewish population despised because it was purchased from the Roman authorities. Tax collectors had to levy a certain tax on all goods for Rome. Herod Antipas would also get part of the tax collected. Anything above the set amount which they collected, they kept as their salary. Tax collecting was noted for its high incidence of fraud. Levi was probably collecting the tax on fish exports.” ¹
- b) “Everywhere throughout the Empire they were hated for their rapacity [*greed*] and dishonesty; but among the Jews especially were they abhorred, as being the representatives of a heathen, hostile, and victorious power.” ²
- c) Luke 18:9–14 (ESV); ⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

D. He got up and left

1. What an amazing response to Jesus’ teaching
2. I am reminded of Lydia, the Jailor at Philippi, the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost
3. We don’t see this kind of response to the Gospel very much — yet it was prevalent in the first century
4. Matthew 4:21–22 (ESV); ²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their

¹ Robert James Dr. Utey, *The Gospel according to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*, vol. Volume 2, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 32.

² John Henry Burn, *Mark, The Preacher’s Complete Homiletic Commentary* (New York; London; Toronto: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1892), 57–58.

father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

E. We are called

F. 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 (ESV); ¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

G. Jesus says “follow me”

H. What do we do?

1. We (generally speaking) give excuses as to why we don't think we have to
2. We make up our own theology of what it means to follow Christ because we don't want to give up our lives
3. instead of simply giving up our lives for Christ
 - a) All of the apostles thought it was a simple thing to do
 - b) Ananias and Sapphira thought they could keep their old life
4. We can make the decision hard by incorporating all the things of our old life that we want to keep

II. The Great Physician

A. Mark 2:15–17 (ESV); ¹⁵ And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

B. This message is just as valid today as it was in the first century

1. We must recognize that we were once (and a lot of people still are) alienated from God
2. Ephesians 2:12–13 (ESV); ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

C. Jesus can bring those who are far off near to Him

1. He is the Physician — it is His blood that heals us (Isaiah 53; 1 John 1:7)
2. Hebrews 10:4–10 (ESV); ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’ ” ⁸ When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

D. God has been calling us to Himself for a very long time now

III. Answer the Call

A. No matter your past (tax collector, prostitute, government official), you can be healed

B. But you must give up everything you once were and everything you have

C. Just as Levi “rose and followed Him” so must we!

D. Why? Because it is only His blood that heals us (John 14:6)