

11th January 2026

Jesus' Message
Andrew Fanstone | Mark 2:13-22
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Good evening. It is wonderful to be here. This is a beautiful place.

As I prepared for this, I felt some tension. The passage speaks about sinners and tax collectors, and about Jesus coming not for the righteous but for the sick. Bath is a privileged city. It is beautiful, prosperous, and affluent. You are blessed to be here.

Yet this passage says that Jesus did not come for the righteous, but for the lost, the least, and the sinners.

I live in Brazil, where our work focuses on the least, the lost, and the darkest places. We have over one hundred missionaries working in rubbish dumps, rural areas, favelas, on the streets, and in strip clubs. We do this because, as disciples of Jesus, we want to do what Jesus does.

The remarkable thing about Jesus is that He has the same message, power, and love for people in the worst shanty towns of Brazil as He does for people in a beautiful city like Bath.

The Call of Levi

Let us read from Mark 2:13–14

“Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. 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.”

This is followed by Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners.

This passage is extraordinary. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Revelation describes Him seated on the throne, worshipped day and night. Living creatures cry “Holy, holy, holy,” and elders cast their crowns before Him.

Yet this same Jesus is found sitting at a table, eating with sinners and tax collectors.

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No one would invent a God like this. A God who creates the universe, yet chooses to sit, eat, and share life with those society rejects. Jesus is fully God and fully man.

The religious leaders ask, "Why doth this man eat with publicans and sinners?" The question we must ask is this: do we reflect Jesus, or do we reflect the judgemental religious leaders?

Jesus' Mission

Jesus states His mission clearly in Luke 19:10

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost"

That must become our goal as well. To seek and to save the lost requires intentionality. It is easier to remain among comfortable, like-minded people. But Jesus did not stay inside religious spaces.

Billy Graham said:

"The Bible never says for sinners to seek the church. It always says it is the church's role to seek the sinners."

Jesus' ministry happened in everyday life: weddings, meals, streets, homes. If most of our faith is lived inside church buildings, then our model does not match Jesus'.

The church exists to gather, train, and send. We are called to go out.

Chosen from the Crowd

Jesus stood among a large crowd and chose Levi. Levi was likely the most hated man there. Yet Jesus called him by name and said, "Follow me."

Levi left everything immediately.

Following Jesus is not merely believing facts about Him. It is not just singing or praying. It is following Him.

Jesus' call is first to be with Him. Direction comes later. Like Abraham, we may not know the destination, but we are called to trust and obey.

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Seeing Individuals

Jesus sees individuals in the crowd.

In Fortaleza, Brazil, we go into red-light districts at night. Before we go, we pray and ask Jesus to show us who He wants us to meet.

On one occasion, we felt led to a woman named Rachel with blue eyes. In a nightclub, missionaries met a woman with blue eyes and prayed for her. During prayer she began to cry, saying everything spoken described her life.

Her birth name was Rachel.

God sees individuals. We must go out to find them.

Eating with Sinners

Mark 2:15

"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."

Jesus' strategy was simple. He ate with people.

Luke 7:34

"The Son of Man came eating and drinking."

Luke 10:8–9

"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal those there who are ill and tell them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."

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The pattern is clear:

Eat. Demonstrate the Kingdom. Speak.

Eating creates relationship. Relationship opens hearts.

Listening Before Acting

When we entered the favelas, I had detailed plans and projects. God told me to stop and listen instead.

Listening led to invitations, meals, trust, and transformation.

A drug dealer eventually gave us a building for children's work. This happened through relationship, not programmes.

We must make friends before we make disciples.

Truth and Friendship

Friendship does not remove truth.

John 1:12

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"

There is a moment to speak clearly. Love and truth must walk together.

The Sick and the Saviour

Mark 2:17

"On hearing this, Jesus said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Sickness is not limited to addicts, prostitutes, or the homeless. We are all sick.

Sin is the greatest sickness. It separates us from God.

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Revelation 3:17

"You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."

We all need a Saviour.

John Wesley said that before preaching grace, one must preach sin and judgement. Without understanding the disease, we will not value the cure.

Romans 6:23

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:21

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

The Gospel at Work

Jesus still calls the least, the lost, and the unlikely. He rewrites lives and sends them out to change the world.

This is the gospel.

Invitation

The Bible is not just to be read, but experienced. We are all sick. The first gift offered is forgiveness. There is only one cure.

Acts 4:12

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Repent and believe.