

“Our Ministry Target” - Mark 2:13-22

Today we examine “our ministry target” – shown to us in today’s passage in Mark.

That we have a ministry is clear because we are Jesus’ disciples - and His ministry is our ministry. In today’s passage we find His ministry clearly defined. Though our ministry is generally to “all the world” Jesus here specifies the target, and thus helps narrow our focus.

Our passage is the calling of the disciple Matthew and the ensuing reception party he gives in honor of Jesus. This story is important enough to get a full telling in all the synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. As far as we know, Matthew is the 7th disciple to be called – 7 being God’s “perfect number.” (already called: brothers Peter & Andrew, brothers James & John and Philip and Nathaniel). This calling of Matthew perfectly and purposefully focuses our attention on “our ministry target” as we will see today.

OUR PRIMARY TEXT: Mark 2: 13-22

V13 And He went out again by the seashore; and all the multitude were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.

V14 As He passed by, He saw Levi [Matthew] the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he rose and followed Him.

V15 And it came about that He was reclining *at table* in his [Matthew’s] house, and many tax-gatherers and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. [Luke 5:29 records that Matthew gave a “big reception” for Jesus in his house]

APPROPRIATE COMPASSION

V16 And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax-gatherers, they *began* saying to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?" [Note the 3x mention of who was there]

V17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

MARK THE WORDS OF JESUS: “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

[in Matt. 9:13 Jesus adds: “learn what this means – ‘I desire compassion and not sacrifice.’ “]

APPROPRIATE JOY

V18 John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

V19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

V20 "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

APPROPRIATE FLEXIBILITY

V21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results.

V22 "No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

[This account, very similar, is also given in [Matt. 9:9-17](#) and [Luke 5:27-39](#)]

THE WALK ON THE SHORE

V13 - Note that Jesus' ministry now moved out of the "church" and into the streets and seashore, out of necessity. This also speaks of Jesus and us going to where the needy people are.

But this seeming stroll on the seashore is more than it seems. This road by the seashore (actually by the "lake" of Galilee) was the "international highway" from Syria to Egypt. Thus, it was that the Romans had a tax collecting station in Capernaum on this well-traveled road. Jesus had a mission that day – the calling of Matthew – and Jesus knew right where to find him.

THE CALL OF MATTHEW

V14 - The call of Levi (Matthew, of the tribe of Levi) is significant. Matthew was a "hated" Jew because he was a traitor to Judaism in working for the Roman government as a collector of taxes and making his living on the extra tax he could extract from his own people – he was an "extortionist." That Matthew felt a need, and probably shame, is implied by the fact that he so quickly followed after Jesus. This also implies that he had

probably encountered Jesus previously, as had the fishermen disciples before their call by the sea. Jesus did not reject him as worthy of salvation, but rather called him out of his sin. This speaks of our ministry to the lost - going to the rejected and despised to call them out of their sin. “Matthew” translates as meaning “gift of God” – and through Jesus he was to become a gift indeed.

Luke 5:28 tells us that Matthew “forsook all” in following Jesus. Unlike the fishermen who could go back to their nets, and did on occasion, Matthew could never go back to his trade after leaving it – he would be replaced in an instant by others who wanted his position of affluence and rebuffed by the Romans of returning to his post.

We will see that our “target” is one who know he needs a Savior. And Matthew is the perfect example of that target. He is in need and he leaves his sinful life to follow Jesus.

MATTHEW’S RECEPTION PARTY

V15-17 – Luke’s account of the dinner makes it clear that it was in the home of Matthew in honor of Jesus – and that he invited his friends – other tax-collectors and sinners in the eyes of religious society. It was also in the sight of the Pharisee scribes who were, even at this early point in Jesus’ ministry, watching his every move.

Note the 3x mention of who was at the party: “tax-gatherers and sinners” – an unreligious and unrighteous crowd, to be sure. They would be the friends of Matthew – none other Jews would have had them. Note also that Jesus was invited, as well as his disciples. This speaks to us, that when the opportunity to be with non-believers of questionable moral character we should not reject the opportunity to be seen with them or befriend. The key is that we be sure we are “with” Jesus in those occasions and representing Him. [Note: there is never a mention in Scripture of Jesus going to the brothels and bars to be with “sinners.” – but when He found the opportunity to be with them he took it.]

The scribes of the Pharisees take offense at this supposed “rabbi” mingling with sinners. To eat with them – implying intimate fellowship – was the ultimate wrong.

The words of Jesus that we “mark” today are Jesus’ response in v. 17: “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician but those who are sick; **I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.**” [“to repentance” adds Luke in 5:32]

1. Our ministry target is Jesus’ ministry target, for we are his disciples.
2. Our ministry target is those who are in need of “Dr. Jesus” – the heavenly physician - and we are his “interns.” Of course, a doctor would be with his patients.
3. Our ministry target is those who acknowledge themselves as spiritually “sick” or needy – not those who consider themselves “righteous” or spiritually healthy apart from Jesus.

4. OUR MINISTRY TARGET: ONE WHO KNOWS HE NEEDS A SAVIOR

Note that most people acknowledge that they are a sinner. Few, however, translate that knowledge into a need for a Savior. Those who do are prime targets. For those who don't we can help them see that Jesus is who and what they need.

Other scriptures help affirm this ministry target:

1 Timothy 1:15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

Luke 15:7 Jesus: I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

VERY INSTRUCTIVE is Matthew's account in 9:13 where Jesus says: "But go and learn what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (quoting Hosea 6:6). In our ministry to the sinners of the world the #1 thing needed is COMPASSION – a heart

FASTING, PATCHES and WINESKINS

V 18-22 – All three synoptic gospels record this exchange following the reception party. The transitions of "then (Matthew), "and" (Mark), "and they said to him" (Luke) all point to this exchange taking place directly after, meaning that the principles of the exchange instruct us as to the "ministry target" of the previous verses.

APPROPRIATE JOY

Fasting is not appropriate when the bridegroom (Jesus) is with us. True then, true now. Jesus spoke of a day (his crucifixion – "taken away") when fasting and somberness is appropriate. But otherwise, the Christian life and ministry must be one of JOY

APPROPRIATE FLEXIBILITY

Jesus gives 2 examples. 1) Of the new, unshrunk patch that will not flex with the old, shrunk garment when it gets wet, and 2) of the new wine that will stretch and burst the old wine skin as it ferments. Both speak of the need for FLEXIBILITY in our life and ministry.

If we are going to effectively minister to the sinner who has need of a Savior, we had best represent that Savior and his followers as those who have JOY and FLEXIBILITY. There is no room for sour judgement or rigid legalism if we are to reach the sinner in search of a Savior.

But even more, Jesus' 2 examples speak to what the new life we offer in Christ is NOT to be. Namely 1) a "patch job" or 2) a "fill job"
Rather the new life of Christ makes one a totally NEW CREATION.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

John 3:3, 7 Jesus answered and said to him, [Nicodemus] "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

This is the JOY filled message we must bring to our "ministry target" – that Christ does not simply "patch up" the old – it will never fit. Nor does Christ "fill up" the old – it will not last. Rather, Christ make all new.

MARK 10 tell us of 3 different "sinners" who came to Jesus

1. Pharisees (10:2) - self-righteous and not needing a Savior
2. Children (10:13) - the disciples thought they should not come to Jesus, yet Jesus rebuked them, "saying that the kingdom belongs to such as these" – meaning dependent, trusting and needy.
3. Rich Young Ruler (10:17) – wanting to be saved, and yet not willing to "sacrifice all" – he did not need a Savior badly enough

OUR MINISTRY TARGET is those who would come as a little child: desperate for what Jesus has to offer – his unconditional love and his eternal life.

SONG: Breathe ("and I'm desperate for You, and I'm lost without You")