

Jesus Calls

1. Introduction

- The verses we are looking at this morning we see Matthew's conversion - the writer of this gospel
- At first glance it seems like a nice little story of Jesus getting alongside someone from the wrong side of the tracks and then going and having a party with them
- And we think
 - Jesus is pretty cool > he's not a prude
 - He likes to party it out with the sinners and tax collectors
 - He's not too bad a bloke
- But as we look at the passage in more detail, what we get is a window into what it means to follow Jesus
 - If you're considering following Jesus
 - If you are already a follower of Jesus ... then
 - this is what it looks like
 - this is what is required if you're willing to accept Jesus call
- What we find as we dig into it, is that this passage challenges us
 - It challenges you whether you are a Christian or not
 - It will challenge you as to what you think following Jesus is all about
 - It will challenge your complacency
 - It will challenge you on the way you think of yourself and the way you think about others
- But it will also comfort you
 - For even though this passage will challenge and confront you ... it will none the less give you hope and assurance despite the short comings that are exposed
- This morning I want to look at the passage under three headings

- Following Jesus means renouncing your old life
- Following Jesus means recognising your moral failure
- Following Jesus means rejoicing in your salvation

2. Following Jesus means - Renouncing your old life [SLIDE]

- **Context**

- Let's get our bearings in Matthew's gospel
- In Ch 5-7 during the famous sermon on the mount, Jesus was teaching all about the Kingdom of God
- Now in Ch 8-10 Matthew is aiming to show us that Jesus is the king of God's kingdom ... and that he has come with all power and authority
 - We've seen that in the way he's healed the sick, calmed the storm and cast out demons
- Last week in 9:1-8 ... we saw that Jesus healed paralysed man
 - Shocked everyone who saw it
 - But more shocking was Jesus declaration that the man's sins were forgiven
 - And in doing so he not only made clear that our greatest need is the forgiveness of our sins
 - But by virtue of forgiving the man's sins ... Jesus was also claiming to be God ... and therefore had the power and authority to forgive sins
- So in Ch 9 we see that as the King of God's kingdom, Jesus has come to deal with sin and summon sinners
- Jesus moves on from there and on the way he sees Matthew sitting at tax collector's booth
- **Tax Collectors**
- In case you didn't know ... tax collectors in Jesus day were despised (nothing much has changed!)

- That's because they were collecting taxes for the Romans > Jewish overlords
- In effect they were helping to finance the Roman occupation of Israel
- That made them collaborators with Romans and therefore traitors
- In addition, tax collectors were known for skimming profits
 - That is, they would charge more than required to pay the Romans and pocket the difference
 - So they were getting rich at the expense of their fellow countrymen
- We see in v9 that Matthew responds to Jesus call by getting up and following Jesus
 - Matthew recognised there was something about Jesus
 - Something in his power and authority that he hears the call and he follows
- Now Matthew is much more self-deprecating in the way he records Jesus calling of him
 - Because in Luke's version of this same account ... Luke says Matthew not only got up and followed Jesus ... but that he 'left everything'¹
 - That is he not only left his tax booth
 - He left his job > left the money > the lifestyle
 - He left his whole way of life
- It would have included
 - Renouncing the way he ripped people off
 - Giving up his material desires
 - Letting Jesus determine the direction of his life from now on
- **Application**
- That's what it means for you and I to hear Jesus call and follow him
- If you're here this morning checking out Jesus and Christianity ... this is what Jesus is calling you to

¹Luke 5:28

- Following Jesus is not something you add into your schedule
- It's not something you fit in around your lifestyle
- Being a Christian is not something you do so long as it doesn't interfere with your life and your priorities
- Following Jesus means 'leaving everything behind'
- That is ... you leave behind
 - Your old life, your old priorities, your old desires, your old sins
 - When you follow Jesus you walk to the beat of a different drum
 - You no longer waltz through life singing along with Frank Sinatra "I did it my way" ... because when you follow Jesus ... your whole life is about doing it Jesus way

- Because following Jesus changes everything
 - How you use your time
 - How you use your money
 - What you chose to fill your mind with
 - How you treat others
 - How you parent your kids
 - What priorities and goals you have
 - How you view your work

- Following Jesus changes everything
 - You need to know that's what Jesus is calling you to
 - Because being a Christian is not something you can add to your life and then expect everything to carry on as it was before
 - If you do ... then you misunderstand what Jesus is calling you to
- For he is the king of God's kingdom > he has all power and authority
 - When he calls you and you follow ... he becomes your king
 - His priorities become your priorities
 - His will becomes your will
 - His perspective becomes your perspective

- If you've been following Jesus for some time, it's very easy to think
 - "I get that"
 - "I know Jesus is the King"
 - "I understand I need to give up everything to follow Jesus"
- But the thing is ... are we really prepared to leave **everything** behind to follow Jesus

- One of the blessings of going to Sri Lanka recently it gives you an opportunity
 - to step outside our culture and
 - to see what's different and
 - to see what our culture considers normal and okay

- And when you see those differences it forces you to re-evaluate those things with fresh eyes and see things you're blind to
- It challenges you to consider ...
 - "am I really leaving everything behind to follow Jesus ... or am I just leaving behind those things I'm willing to give up"
- In Sri Lanka God challenged me on two things - one was comfort and the other money

- **Comfort**
- On the whole, the people of Sri Lanka live with very little excess
- Sure there are people with money
- But most live very simply
 - Very few own cars – most rely on bicycle or bus to get around
 - Most houses are have concrete floors or tiles if they are lucky
 - Homes are small and basic
- And when I came home this week it highlighted just how comfortable our life is

- Multiple cars, multiple bedrooms, Netflix TV, multiple computers, kids in private schools
- The thing is ... that's normal for many people in Australia
- And we're blind to just how comfortable we are ... and if I'm willing to dig beneath the surface ... I think it's because I love comfort
- I'm comfortable with comfort
- And it challenges me ...
 - is that something I'm willing to leave to follow Jesus
 - or is it something I'm holding on to that I'm not willing to let go?
- **Money**
- The other area which is related is our use of money
 - In Sri Lanka, the pastors we met were, on the whole, quite poor
 - Yet Pastor John and his family poured their whole life and their money into the orphanage, their church and caring for people
 - Others pastors have to work part-time or full-time in order to fund their ministry
 - It was clear to me, that for these people ... money was something they let go of when they followed Jesus
- I came home convicted of the money and the wealth I have at my disposal compared to those we were teaching in Sri Lanka
 - Liana and I think we are generous with our money > we aim to give away about 12% of our income to church, CMS and other Christian ministries
 - And as I saw them living with so little ... it forced me to think ... am I being as generous as I can ... or am I only being as generous as I want to?
- But stepping outside my cultural norm exposes things we don't normally see

- And the hearts willingness to be generous is one of those areas of life where we as Western Christians may think we're following Jesus and leaving behind worldly attitudes and perspectives
 - But in reality ... we often only willing to leave these thing behind to the extent they don't inconvenience us or make life too uncomfortable
- So the challenge for us to consider what it means when Jesus calls us to follow him
 - What is it your unwilling to let go of to follow Jesus?
 - What sin are you continuing to indulge in that you know needs addressing?
 - To what extent is following Jesus shaping
 - the way you use your time and your money?
 - the way you treat others, parent your kids?
 - your goals you've set for this year?
- Friends, Jesus call to follow him means renouncing your old life and priorities
 - And that means leaving **everything** behind
 - Not just the things you're willing to leave behind

3. Following Jesus means - Recognising your moral failure [SLIDE]

- The second thing we see in these verses is that following Jesus means recognising your moral failures
- After Jesus calls Matthew, Matthew invites Jesus and his disciples to dinner at his house
 - Matthew invites all his mates - other 'tax collectors' and so called 'sinners'
 - These were the non-religious types
 - People who didn't go to the Temple or synagogue
 - Didn't keep the Law
 - Weren't religious like the Pharisees

- And this upsets the Pharisees
 - v11 - *they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"*
- This is not so much a question ... it is more of an accusation
- And so Jesus replies
 - *"It's not the healthy who need a doctor, it's the sick"*
 - *But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

- Jesus is not saying that the Pharisees are righteous > nor is he saying they're healthy
- He's using the categories that the Pharisees thought in
- To them ...
 - Righteous = religious ones = those right with God
 - Sinners = irreligious = outside of God's favour
- Jesus is saying that sinners are the ones who are sick and in need of healing
 - And as the king of God's kingdom who has power and authority to forgive sins ... Jesus is the physician of souls who can bring them the healing they desperately need
 - And for those who realise they're sinners ... they will hear his call and be saved
- But those who think they're righteous
 - Those who don't see themselves as sinners
 - Those who don't think they need healing ... Jesus says "I've got nothing for you"

- The key is there in v13 where Jesus tells them
 - *But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'*
- Here Jesus is quoting from the Old Testament prophet Hosea 6:6
 - In Hosea ... God is rebuking Old Testament Israel for

- Coming to God and doing their sacrifices
 - Fulfilling their religious duties
 - And not getting the point of why they were doing them in the first place
- One of the key aspects of the OT sacrificial system was for the people to see that sin was so serious that it deserves death and that sin needed blood to be shed in order to obtain forgiveness with God
 - And as they did that ... it was meant to lead them to repentance
 - For its repentance that is critical for forgiveness ... not ritual and sacrifice
 - Jesus wants the Pharisees to realise that their religion, their rituals, their sacrifices ... is not the thing that makes them right with God
 - He wants them to realise they're NOT righteous
 - He wants them to realise they're NOT healthy ... but in fact they're sick and in desperate need of healing
 - ***Illustration – Man-Flu, Black Knight***
 - The Pharisees are like most men in Australia ... who refuse to acknowledge they're sick and go to the doctors
 - Unless of course they have 'man-flu' and they will confine themselves to bed for a week and insist to everyone who will listen they are knocking on deaths door
 - It's like the Black Knight in Monty Python sketch – Holy Grail [SLIDE]
 - King Arthur comes along and is confronted by the Black Knight who won't let him pass
 - In the course of their sword fight, ARTHUR chops the BLACK KNIGHT's left arm off
 - BLACK KNIGHT: 'Tis but a scratch.
 - ARTHUR: A scratch? Your arm's off!

- BLACK KNIGHT: No, it isn't.
- ARTHUR: Well, what's that then?
- BLACK KNIGHT: I've had worse.
- ARTHUR: You liar!
- BLACK KNIGHT: Come on you pansy!
- ARTHUR chops the BLACK KNIGHT's right arm off
 - BLACK KNIGHT: Come on then.
 - ARTHUR: What?
 - BLACK KNIGHT: Oh, had enough, eh?
 - ARTHUR: Look, you ... you've got no arms left.
 - BLACK KNIGHT: Just a flesh wound

- Pharisees were like this
 - They refused to see the position they were in
 - Like a cancer patient in denial
 - They refused to see they were equally in need of healing as the 'sinners'
- And this is obvious by the way they speak about and look down on those who are eating at Matthew's house
 - The Pharisees don't think they're sinners
 - But those other non-religious types are

- The Pharisees bring their sacrifices, their tithes and their moral obedience and they think they're righteous
 - And they look down on those who don't
 - They think they're better
 - They think they're morally superior
- And Jesus tells them
 - You need to learn all that doesn't make you right with God
 - You're just as much a sinner as they are
 - Unless you realise you're spiritually sick and in need of healing ... then you will not be saved

- **Application**

- Jesus interaction with Pharisees make it very clear ... God is not after our sacrifices
 - There is nothing that we can bring to God that is going to make us right with him
 - Our prayers, our giving, our church, our roster service, our morality
 - They count for nothing when it comes to standing righteous before the Lord
- And when we fall into the same trap as the Pharisees ... it leads to two problems
- The first is ...
 - We think that God owes us ...
 - We think ... I live a good life therefore I deserve a good life
- The problem is ... when life doesn't go as we expect
 - we get disappointed with God
 - we get angry with God
 - with think he's let us down
 - we think he doesn't care
- You want to know how to work out if you're relying on your sacrifices and thinking God owes you?
- How you react when things go wrong in your life?
 - Do you think life is unfair?
 - Do you often feel like your life isn't going the way you want it to?
 - You go to church and study and Bible study but life's not working out and there is this low level anger at the way life is panning out
- The second problem of relying on your sacrifices for your righteousness ... is it makes you self-righteous
 - That is .. you end up looking down on those who aren't as

- Religious as you
- Morally upright as you
- Hard working as you
- Conscience as you
- Sacrifice as much as you
- And like the Pharisees, you think you're better than others

- Jesus is saying ... you need to realise you're morality and religiosity doesn't make you righteous
 - Because when you stand before the Lord you're just as much a sinner in need of saving as the next person
 - You need to admit your moral failures
 - You need to see you're sick and need my healing

- You know the best way to work out whether you truly understand your true position before the Lord
- When people tell you they've done something really bad
- Or when you discover your kids have done something really bad
 - How do you react?
 - How do you treat them?
 - Are you impatient, indignant, judgmental, self-righteous, condemning?
 - Do you say things like ...
 - "How could you do that"
 - "I can't believe you would do that?"
 - If that's your response you're self-righteous
 - You're thinking you're better than them ...
 - You're forgetting you are no better than them and that you're a sinner as well

- So you see when you think life is unfair ... when you think you're better than others and therefore more deserving of God's favour ... then it shows your heart
 - It shows you don't understand your moral failure and your desperate need for a saviour in Jesus

- So friends ... you and I need to understand our real moral position
 - There is no room for self-righteousness before God or other people
 - Because our sacrifices are meaningless when it comes to winning God's favour or overcoming our moral failures

- Following Jesus means we need to recognise that we
 - We're sick in need of healing
 - We're sinners in need of forgiveness

- Because its only when we humble ourselves and recognise our low position that we will hear Jesus call and his offer of forgiveness and salvation
 - We were sinners when we came to Christ
 - We continue to be sinners each and every day
 - We shall find ourselves to be sinners at the hour of our death

- And so we remain utterly dependent on Christ's death and resurrection at that moment, just as much as the day we first believed

4. Following Jesus means—Rejoicing in your salvation [SLIDE]

- Final point we see from these verses is following Jesus means rejoicing in your salvation

- Such was the impact Jesus had on Matthew, Matthew has him over for dinner
 - Not just a 1:1 with Jesus > 'many tax collectors and sinners came'
 - You see ... even though Matthew was a religious outcast ... he wasn't a social misfit
 - He has lots of friends who are in the same boat

- So after being called by Jesus ... Matthew invites all his mates over
 - He throws a party
 - Fires up the BBQ
 - Puts beers in the esky
 - Gets out the cheese and biscuits
 - ... because he wants to celebrate

- He's so excited that Jesus has called him and come to him
- Deep down Matthew would've known he was a sinner in need of forgiving
 - He's so excited that the King of God's Kingdom would call **him!**
 - He's come to know the one who has all power and authority to forgive sins

- **Application**
- See here's the thing
- When you hear Jesus call to come and follow him
 - And you recognise you're a moral failure in desperate need of saving
 - Jesus comes and eats with you
- In other words, he's your friend
 - You're in fellowship with the one who can save you

- And so you don't need to worry about your sacrifices to make yourself right with God anymore
 - Because Jesus is in effect saying ...
 - Don't look to your sacrifice
 - Look at my sacrifice
 - Look not at what you think you can do for me ... look at the what I have already done for you on the cross
- I've take away the uncertainty of you doing it for yourself
 - I've dealt with all your sin
 - I have the only healing available for your spiritual sickness

- And I did it all at the cross

- So like Matthew ... we can rejoice
 - Because Jesus Christ eats with sinners
 - He forgives sinners > he dies for sinners
 - And in doing so His righteousness becomes your righteousness

- Btu if you say "you owe me" – he says "I have nothing for you"
- But when you say Jesus "you owe me nothing" ... he rushes in to eat with you
 - *For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners*

PRAY