



Follow Me
Part 3 – Jesus and Matthew
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We're in this series Follow Me. We're in Part 3. Today we are looking at Jesus and Mathew and I want to start with just a few quick questions. Have you ever had an uncomfortable church experience? At another church. None of these imply anything going on at this church. Have you ever walked into a church and thought to yourself *I don't belong here?* Or worse... *They don't want me here.* Maybe you've thought to yourself walking into a church, *These people are weird. A little odd.* We took this survey in the first gathering, and we are going to take it in the second. I was shocked by the results. But a lot of us grew up in churches where a part of the service was to shake hands with total strangers in the middle of it. How many of you wish we would go back to shaking hands? Now, old people, be prepared for something. Turn around and look. How many of you do not want shaking hands as part of the service? It's the majority of the room.

Alright, let's leave the church alone for a second. Have you ever had a family member, maybe at a family gathering, look down their nose at you and think they're better than you? I want you to think about a place that you've been where you didn't feel like you fit in, didn't feel welcomed, or didn't feel comfortable.

I've shared a little bit about this but I need to share more because I have so many friends that visit Branson. You know we've become a golf destination. For years and years, I've been stiff-arming my friends sometimes. *I'm not golfing with you, I'm embarrassed by my golfing; I can't do it.* So, I've decided to stop fighting that. I've decided to take up golf. If you were to look at me on the golf course, not my swing, but the way I'm dressed, I look like I just played the Masters. I'm going to be honest with you. I decided to go all in with Polos and vests and pants and shoes. You're like, *this guy is a scratch golfer.* Then you watch me play and you're like hmm.

I don't know if you know golfers. Some golfers can make you feel very uncomfortable because they are awesome. They know the etiquette. I know the etiquette, but there is a lot I just don't do very well. I'm trying to get better. There's a golf driving range by our house and I can see it every time I drive by. I always look to see if there is anybody there. If nobody is there, that's my time. I was driving by a couple of weeks ago and I saw there was only one guy at the far end. I parked and went to the far end on the other side and I won't hit or bug him or anything. I go to get my clubs, I'm walking and I look. This guy has a bag with his name on it. That's how you know you're awesome. You've paid money to embroider

your name on a golf bag. I didn't even look at him. I just kept walking by. I want to be left alone, I don't want to bother him. I go all the way to the far end. I start swinging and I start hitting.

He walks over. There are only two of us out there and I ignore him. I sit there. I'm not hitting great. I think the problem is I probably need to stretch. My back is probably tight, right? The first word out this guy's mouth is "Preacher." Now I have to engage and do what a lot of you are doing today. I turn around with a big ole smile. "Hey, what's up? How are you doing? Good to see you." He walks over. You want to know who it was. The name is not important. His name is Tommy Bean. He's a pro at Ledgestone for those of you that are out there. Can I just tell you something? Tommy, if you're here... I don't know what gathering you go to. I just want to say thank you. You did that day what we try to do here every week. You didn't look down your nose at me. You're awesome, Tommy. We all know you're awesome. Your bag says you're awesome.

He goes, "Ted, you've got a pretty good swing." I was like, "Thank you. It's a lie, but thank you," he said, "Can I show you a couple of things?" I got a free \$150.00 lesson. And Tommy, you are the very embodiment of someone who is gracious and kind and caring and is able to help someone out and walk along with someone. Do you know what you don't have, Tommy? It is a hoity-toity attitude. I've met the hoity toity attitude on the golf course and you ain't got it. We have a lot of golf pros in our church that are awesome and I don't know any of them with the hoity-toity attitude. They are probably at First Baptist, I don't know. Just kidding. You know we love Jeremy.

He gave me his card and said, "Call me anytime, Ted, I live out here. I'll give you lessons?" I'm like, alright, we're in. I'm probably going to the Masters in 2026. That's how he made me feel.

That takes us to Matthew 9. We are going to see a very short story, but a very powerful story of Matthew following Jesus. We get that in one verse. And then in the very next verse, he throws a dinner at his home. Because now that he follows Jesus, he wants his co-workers, friends, and other people to know about Jesus. He shows hospitality to Tax Collectors and Sinners. What you need to know is that in that day, tax collectors, to their people, were traders. Sinners were seen as unclean. Not only did you not spend time with them, you most certainly wouldn't eat with them. The problem was Matthew didn't know all the rules of what it meant to follow Jesus at that point. Sometimes, if you've been in the church for a while, we've created a lot of man-made rules. Just like I don't know all the rules for golf. There is so much to getting your muscle memory to have a great swing and I think I'll pick it up, but I was just grateful for someone to walk alongside me.

In this text today, I hope you're encouraged with what it means to go on mission with Jesus. Some of you want Jesus to save you. You know Jesus loves you, we sang about that today. You sang, "Jesus loves me" In church growing up and in Sunday school. The question for all of us today is, "Are you on mission with Jesus? Are you on mission as Christ was on mission to seek and to save the lost?"

We'll pick up in Chapter 9: ***9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth...*** In that day, it would be on side of the road, the side of the highway, and they would collect tax on goods that were traveling through. And here's why they were traders to their people. They collected more than what was required and pocketed the difference. They were hated,

despised. Last week, we looked at Simon and Andrew. They dropped their nets to follow Jesus. Today, that's not the livelihood of Mathew in our story. Mathew is a tax collector, but he drops his booth. He walks away from the only gig he knew and the only gig that provided for his livelihood. He was sitting at the tax collector's booth and this is all we get... ***"Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.***

We don't get that Matthew took an evangelism course or read an evangelism book on how to lead people to Christ. But in Verse 10 what we get is he hosted a dinner. ***10 While Jesus was having dinner... Luke actually calls this a Great Banquet in his gospel. ...at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked... Luke doesn't say "asked," Luke says complained. his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"***

The Pharisees are like, "Not only do we not spend time with these people, you wouldn't catch us dead having dinner with them. No way. We wouldn't be around them."

I have a dear friend of this church. You know him. He's probably the most loving, kind, gentle, pastor I've ever met. I love this guy. We were talking last year when he was here and having a great conversation. I remember him saying, "Ted, you wouldn't have liked me during my pharisee phase" I was shocked. I've only known him for the last few years. I said, "What! You have a pharisee phase? No way." He said, "You know how when we read the bible we put ourselves into the story? And when I'm reading this story, of course, all of us want to relate to Jesus and Matthew, right? Showing hospitality to those who are lost. We want to invite them in. but it was in the moment I was reading this text that the holy spirit convicted me saying, "You are the Pharisee in this story." He said, "At that moment, I realized our church had become a place where sinners were not welcomed. Everything about our programming, our teaching, the way we set up Sunday mornings, and any time we gathered as a church, it was all about believers. And when a lost person showed up, we were like, "What are you doing here?" There's a certain way to act, a certain way to dress, there's a certain way to behave, there's a certain way to vote. And if you don't do it all just like that, this is probably not going to be the place..." He goes, "I just realized I was the pharisee."

And then I said, "And god did a work in your life because he turned you into this. Someone who is saying, "Come, follow Jesus as I follow Jesus. I've met one who changed my life. I want everyone, traders and unclean people... This is probably a good point in the story for us to be reminded ***for there is none righteous, no not one. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of god.*** We're all sinners in this story. The difference between me and the seeker here today who doesn't walk with Jesus is just that. I'm a sinner saved by grace. You're a sinner in need of a savior. I'm not standing up here with the hoity-toity attitude. I never want the hoity-toity attitude.

Jesus said this about the Pharisees in Matthew 23 :4, ***They tie up heavy burdensome loads and lay them on men's shoulders. But they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.*** You have to know this. Jesus and his disciples were constantly questioned for the way they showed hospitality to sinners. They were not only questioned, but they were accused. We read in Matthew 1: 10 of Jesus they said this" ***Here's a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.***

So rest assured if you go on mission with Jesus, you follow Jesus, and you go on mission with Jesus and you try to reach people with the good news of Jesus Christ. And you may even get a little creative in the way you do that to show your hospitality. Let me explain something to you. You'll be accused of all sorts of stuff. You will be slandered online like nobody's business. They will come after you. You're like, "So we have to avoid being slandered." No, you have to reach people for Jesus.

12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

So, when you follow Jesus and show hospitality to sinful people, you are going to be accused of all sorts of stuff too.

So, just to cast a little vision for our church... These are terms that go back to the 90s. This is really when we started using these terms. These terms are going to bug some of you and there's no better way to say it, but just lighten up a little bit on this. Everybody is too tense in the church right now and just the gossip and the rumors and the slamming of this church and slamming of that church.

Here are the terms. We describe ourselves as a church, even though you don't hear it a bunch, as *Seeker-Sensitive*. A lot of people hate that term because it comes out of Saddleback. And we're not allowed to mention churches anymore. You know we are not a church... If somebody speaks truth and says something that's true, we can quote them without starting off with, "I don't agree with this person on everything." I don't walk into parties with my wife and go, "Hey, I don't agree with her on everything, but this is my wife." That's a terrible way to introduce people. People have left our church because I quoted someone speaking truth that they didn't agree with on another issue. I think we're a little bit more mature than that as believers, aren't we?

Here's what seeker-sensitive means – When we're preaching and teaching... Last week, Adam was up here and Travis was up here, Shay, Scott, and all that. We're speaking to believers. We're opening God's Word and we are preaching truth, disciplining and equipping the Saints for the work of ministry. But we understand that in the crowd this morning, there will be seekers, people who are seeking but they don't have a relationship with Jesus. We are mindful of all that. That's all that means. We understand they are here, we don't need to use language outside of scripture like the traditions and stuff they wouldn't understand. We're just mindful that they are here.

Last week, on campus, we had 2,900 people. We'll probably be close to that number again today as I look around. I just want you to know that in a crowd that large, there are people here who don't know the Lord. We're mindful of them being here and we're talking to them today. Not just that, we want them to feel welcome here. We want them to step in and feel welcome.

Then in the 90's another term that kind of pitted against this was Seeker Oriented. There were churches that said everything about our program and when we preach and teach, it's going to be to the seeker. So, our church primarily speaks to believers, but on Sunday in a way that seekers understand. This term was dropped because this term really came out of the Church at Willow Creek. I was at a church 23

years ago where this was kind of a debate and one of the reasons I was brought before the church to be removed. But I was more seeker-sensitive. They were looking for someone more seeker-oriented. They wanted more of an evangelist. That's the difference between me and Alex Himaya. If you know Alex Himaya, he is an evangelist. You're getting saved again. But he's passionate about communicating the gospel and calling people to salvation.

But then there is a term that I kind of coined about maybe 10 to 15 years ago. I called it Seeker-Goofy. This is why: I get to visit close to 50 churches a year and I've been doing this for 15 to 20 years, so I've been taking my kids with me. My kids have been in every denomination, every shape and size of church. My children, from the time they were very small, they've been in hundreds of churches around the country. There are times we are standing in a service and something happens and Carson, at six years old, would look at me like, "What is going on?" and I, in my Dad voice, would be like, "We'll talk about it in the car. Participate, act normal."

I was at a church once and I'm getting ready to come up on stage. The pastor said, "Don't take the Bible up there." So, I put the Bible down and afterward, he was like, "Yeah, we don't want the Bible up there..." It was almost like the Bible was an offense. This is where I came up with Seeker-Goofy. It's assuming things about seekers that just aren't even really true. I think if you are a seeker today and you came to a church and you see a bible, you're not going to be shocked. I think almost every seeker coming to a church would assume there would be a bible. Even if they don't agree with what's being said, they know there's a bible. We don't want to be seeker-goofy. We're not seeker-oriented. We want to be mindful that seekers are here.

Let's finish the story because Jesus welcomed... And now you get the mission in Verses 12 and 13.

12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. May this always be a place for the sick, the sin-sick, to feel welcomed and know that it's going to be dealt with. They are going to receive truth and they are going to get answers. **13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice...** Now, what he's going to use here is very important to understand. He's going to use terms that when you see it, you like, "That doesn't make any sense because he's not using the term as you and I know the term, he's putting the term back on the Pharisees because it's what they perceive. **"For I have not come to call the righteous, (to you who are self-righteous or perceive yourself as righteous.) Jesus' whole ministry was driven by people who were seeking him and knew their need for him. He says, "I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners."** And Luke, as in his gospel, **to repentance.**

He says, "I've come to bring sinners to repentance." And to this day, Jesus welcomes sinners because he wants them to repent and believe in him. And at this church, we always want to be a place where we are on mission and a people on mission.

Luke 19: 10, For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. May that always be true of our church. Following Jesus means going on mission with Him. Matthew follows Jesus and in the next verse we read, there is a dinner at his house... Think about this. Think about the freedom there. He has Jesus right there. "I just want you to meet him. He's going to do most of the talking. He's going to share."

“I want you to know him like I know him.” We do this each week. We open the Bible and we’re like, “This is what Jesus says. This is what the Word of God teaches.”

So, we are inviting you. Go on mission with Jesus. Don’t just say you worship him, don’t just say you love him. Don’t just say... And we sang about it today. He loves us. He wants you on mission with him. And being on mission with Jesus. Following Jesus means welcoming sinners. So, how do we do this?

Showing hospitality to sinners can be very messy, it can be awkward, it can be exhausting and the bigger we get, the more mess there is. The harder it gets, the more confrontations there are. I hope you understand **bigger** doesn’t mean easier. But we continue to be a place, I always want to be a part of of church where those who feel like outcasts feel welcome, who feel like there is no place that would receive them. Today, let’s just spend a couple of minutes looking at a few ways to embrace the mess. You can’t get rid of the mess. If you are going to show hospitality to sinful people, there is going to be a mess. The tension will never go away.

1 Avoid hoity-toity attitudes. Each one of us... We get a great example in James that fits today. Thousands of years later, you’re like that could be written for today. We read in James 2: 1-4 **My brothers and sisters** (so speaking to believers), **believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism.**

The church is not about haves and have-nots when it comes to money; when it comes to status. The church is made up of born-again believers. That’s the church family. Inviting those who do not know the Lord. And we do not look down our noses at people. We say come one, come all. Jesus invites you today. He wants a relationship with you. We get this example. **2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes... Think about it. You know he’s got money and he’s doing well in life... and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in... May this always be a church where the wealthy feel welcome and the homeless walking down 76 feel welcome. May they be greeted with the same generosity and hospitality. May it never change in this church.**

I know it’s hard. I know it’s difficult. It used to be a burden to be a part of all these meetings going on in town to end homelessness in our community. I prayed “Lord, take that burden away from me.” I’m not called to fix the big problem. What I’m called to do is how I treat the homeless person when I meet them. We say it around here all the time. Do for one what you can’t do for all. So, somebody wealthy and somebody poor. **3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you...” “I can get you right down front. I love this gathering. You have Joe and Al back there. I was watching from down here. Al is one of the most gentle guys we have. I sometimes have to tell him, “Let’s remind your face a little bit, Al” But we’re just making room for people. But you say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?**

May the only time we should be looking down at someone be when we are reaching down to help them up. That is Christian hospitality. That is on mission with Jesus. That is following Jesus. We want to warmly welcome our guests. I can brag on this church because you do this so well. I heard a guy, years

ago, tell me “You know how to invite me to church, but do you really know what to do with me once I’m there?”

That reminds me of that Seinfeld car rental counter episode where he says, “I have a reservation for a mid-sized car.”

She says, “Yeah, we have your reservation. Unfortunately, we don’t have a car.

He says, “I don’t understand. I have a reservation.”

She says, “I know how reservations work.”

He says, “I don’t think you do. The reservation holds the car and the hold is really the most important part of the reservation.” “Anybody can take reservations, but it’s the hold...

All of us can invite people to church. It’s what we do with them once they are here.

Do you know what we want at this church? I call it grand opening enthusiasm. Have you ever been to a grand opening? You’ve been to a grand opening where it’s like everybody is there, they are greeting you, they’re excited and doing their job. You’re like where are we going to be in a year? I go up to them and I go, “Hey, I love what I’m seeing. Keep it going. Be this awesome a year from now. Be this awesome two years from now. Be this awesome three years from now.

We turn 22 years next month on Mother’s Day. May we have the same enthusiasm for welcoming sinners into this church as we did when we started in a movie theater 22 years ago. Can I just say, when I asked in the beginning if you had an awkward church experience... I’ve had them. My kids will tell you. We’ve walked into plenty of churches where the moment we walk on campus, they’re like what’s going on here? And I’m like, “I’ll get the story, but I’m sure it’s a rough one.” We’ve been in churches without a pastor for three or four years. We’ve been to churches where they just went through a church split and why they are doing a comedy event, I have no idea. They’re not in the mood for that and I don’t think that’s going to fix the problems they have going on right now.

And I know they didn’t start that way. That we would maintain enthusiasm. A friend of mine from Eagle Brook church said something that I love, Jason Strand. He said, “I’ll put up with all the mess and awkwardness that comes with welcoming messy people. And I’ll do it until the Lord calls me home.”

Romans 15: 7, ***Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you for the Glory of God. Reminding ourselves that there are none righteous, no not one. For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of god.***

Offer hospitality without grumbling. This is the mess, the awkwardness, this is the frustration that comes with the messy people who step foot on this campus. You know what grumbling is. It’s complaining under your breath. We do it all the time.

I like to have a little fun on campus on Sundays because my brother and sister-in-law work in that coffee shop out there. You know we don’t take orders. We just have everything ready to go back there. There are no specialty drinks. A lot of people walk up to the window with their Starbucks orders and it’s like

“Well, this is what we’ve got.” I’ll go out there because I’ve got to entertain myself a little bit on Sunday. I’ll stand behind a pillar near the window. These are people who are guests, brand new to our church. My brother is the one serving the coffee out the window. I’ll whisper to a brand new person in our church. Order a Vente Caramel Macioto with an extra shot. They walk up to the deal and they order it. My brother goes, “Oh, I’m sorry, we don’t have that” I can usually do two or three before my brother's head comes out the window looking for me.

We read in 1 Peter... Peter is clear. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Leaving the parking lot, coming into the parking lot. Dealing with a mess of a crowd even. That we would do it and say, “Thank you, Lord for what you are doing here. Continue to do it.”

Dan Cathey, when he was the CEO of Chick-fil-A, the Lord’s Chicken, I remember him telling me once that we get our word *restaurant* from the French word meaning to restore. And when you come to Chick-fil-A... I have to remind everybody that Chick-fil-A is fried chicken, So, why do we feel so wholesome when we leave? We’re like, *I did a good thing. Yes, I had chicken tenders and French fries, but I could run a marathon right now. I feel pretty healthy,* Why do you feel that way? It’s because you’ve been restored because of the hospitality. Aren’t you mad I brought up Chick-fil-A on a Sunday... Now I just put it in your mind. And you get to drive by it and curse them like you do every Sunday.

He says, “When you leave Chick-fil-A, we want you restored 30% in your stomach, but 70% in your soul. I experience that all the time at Chick-fil-A I tell them almost all the time when I go through there. There are some other places that could learn about hospitality.

I’ll end with this quote by Max Lacado on hospitality without grumbling. It’s my favorite quote on hospitality. “It’s no accident that hospitality and hospital come from the same Latin word for they both lead to the same result – Healing. When you open your door to someone, you are sending this message – ‘You matter to me and you matter to god.’”

And that is why we open our doors here on campus. I’m looking around this room of people that I know open their homes regularly and invite people in. Many of you in this church have been saved, not on a campus, but in someone’s home because they met you here and led you to Christ.

Last week, I heard the story. I’m excited to tell Adam in the next Gathering. A lady left to walk up to the info desk. This is the story I heard. She just simply said, “What do I need to do to get saved.” Let us always be opening our arms, our doors, to people who are far from god, so that they repent and believe. Good hospitality prepares for our guests, treats them well while they are here, and sends them home knowing they matter to God and they matter to us.

Father, for the times we find ourselves as the pharisee in the story, may we be reminded there is none righteous, no not one, for all have sinned. That salvation is a gift of God through Christ Jesus our Lord. And we receive that gift today. For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, the seeker today, who is here among us, that they would understand we’re not trying to grow an organization, we’re not trying to build something other

than the church that you have called us to. And we continue to go on mission with you, welcoming people who are far from you so that they would hear the good news of Jesus. Open these doors wide. We want everybody leaving today knowing how much they matter to you and how much they matter to us. I pray for salvations across this campus and online today. We are grateful for what you continue to do here. We pray all this in the name of Jesus and everyone agreed and said... Amen