



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 9:9-13

KEY POINT(S): Jesus mission is the same as ours – to reach lost sinners.

FOR LEADERS

- **Available Resources!** – Just as a reminder, we have a number of resources available to leaders at Emergence, including these discussion guides, but also podcasts, blog posts, topical sessions, Coaches, development curriculum for apprenticeship and other potential leaders, and much more! For all things Communities, check out www.emergencenj.org/weeklyresources! If you have questions about anything else, reach out to your Coach or shoot us an e-mail at Communities@emergencenj.org!
- **Baptism!** – We’ll be having another Baptism coming up soon at Emergence! If you know someone who would like to be baptized or is considering baptism, have them reach out to us and we’ll get them signed up!

GETTING STARTED

[1] Icebreaker – “What did you do this week to celebrate Mother’s Day?”

[2] Communities Video - Watch this week’s Communities video!

[3] What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly impactful or eye-opening?

HOPE FOR ALL SINNERS

In our passage this week, Jesus surprises everyone by calling Matthew the tax collector to be a part of his inner circle. Ryan went on to explain how Jesus’ actions here show that he cares not just for the oppressed, but for the oppressors as well.

- [1]** Who do you think are the “tax-collectors” of our day? Who are those that are notoriously despised and/or looked down upon as selfish or evil?
- [2]** When was a time where you, personally, witnessed callousness towards such people? Have you ever found yourself harboring ill feelings toward these people in your own heart?
- [3]** Share about someone you know whose life was absolutely transformed from a place of hopelessness to becoming a committed follower of Jesus. Who and/or what did God use to bring about this transformation?
- [4]** In what way does a tendency to look down on certain people as “worse sinners” reveal a skewed perspective and misunderstanding of God?
- [5]** Why do you think that so many churches today inadvertently become known as unaccepting or closed off to the lost? Do you think this criticism is warranted? What can you do to personally counter this?

Leaders: As Ryan made clear on Sunday, Jesus came to save, “not the righteous,” but the “sinners.” In other words, He came to save us all. The problems occur when we religiously and arrogant look down upon others as more sinful than ourselves, and it shows a very arrogant ignorance of our own need for salvation. We must all be careful that we do not accidentally draw distinctions between our need for salvation, and our own sinfulness, to that of others that, for some reason or another, we look “down upon.” Many churches today have fallen victim to this and they have become hyper religious or legalistic, closing themselves off from all those who don’t “fit” the mold.





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TAKING THE INITIATIVE

In the sermon this week, Ryan pointed out that Jesus did not wait for Matthew to come to Him, but rather took the initiative to approach him and call him to a life of discipleship. He went on to explain how this should reflect the heart of all believer and followers of Jesus, as expressed in the Great Commission (Matthew 28).

- [6]** In your opinion, why do you think Christians so often adopt a posture of passivity when it comes to approaching people about Jesus? Do you ever find yourself identifying with this? What needs to change in your life to better reflect Jesus?
- [7]** What are some practical steps that you can take in your own life to have more of a Gospel impact to those around you?
- [8]** What do you think the Church could do better to reach people with the truth of the Gospel?

Leaders: Call it what it is – Christians in our culture today are afraid of sharing their faith. Whether it’s a fear of being laughed at, looked down upon, potentially losing friends, being seen as “fanatical,” or fearing “saying the wrong thing,” there is often something in the recesses of our hearts that holds us back. If we really stop and think about it though – the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is alive and at work in us – His Church – right now. Jesus’ holy Spirit is alive and at work in you as His child, and is already at work in those whom you love and long to see know Jesus. Moreover, Jesus tells us that the gates of Hell cannot prevail against us...so what is it that’s holding us back? Try to focus on both the spiritual reservations we have, as well as practical ways of being more a more effective missionary in our culture today.

“IN” BUT NOT “OF”

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 9:10-13

Here, Jesus is judged for eating with “sinners” and being friendly or welcoming to those that the religious people considered “unworthy.” In so doing, Jesus was essentially making it known that it was these people – the sick, the needy, the broken and sinful – that were “his people.” Pastor Ryan explained how there are essentially two camps in Jesus’ statement: 1.) Those who recognize their own sinfulness, and 2.) Those who see themselves as righteous.

- [9]** Would you, personally, expect to be looked down upon by your more religious family or friends for associating with “certain” people? Why or why not?
- [10]** Ryan explained that, as Christians, we’re called to be “in” the world, but not “of” the world. In your own words, what do you think this distinction from Jesus means? Do you have any examples of how you’ve tried to exemplify this in your own life?
- [11]** Ryan also warned us to be careful about being courageous enough to take the initiative to form a relationship with an unbeliever, but then never actually tell them about Jesus. Have you ever struggled with this personally? What can we do to overcome this reluctance?

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that God would give us the same heart that He has for the lost. Pray specifically for unbelievers in our lives and that God would use us – you and me – to build bridges and call them to himself. Lastly, pray that Jesus would make you a catalyst for welcoming people in Jesus’ name, no matter who they are, what they’ve done, or what their background may be.