

This Man Receives Sinners

Sunday, May 5th, 1987

Luke 15:1-2

“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”

I have a message for you this morning that I want very much for you to hear (I mean really hear). This is an unusual message; it is a different message; it is not the ordinary message that you hear on television or from the pulpit.

The message is entitled: “THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS.” I’m turning to Luke Chapter 15: verses 1 and 2. Will you open your Bible please to Luke 15: verses 1 and 2? *“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes (the religious leaders) murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”*

Who is “*this man*” and who are these Pharisees talking about when they say, “*This man receives sinners?*” Who is this man? He is God Incarnate. John says, “He is the Word made flesh.” He is the exact image of the Heavenly Father. He is the brightness of God’s glory; He is the promised Messiah and He is God’s Christ. He is the Redeemer of His people.

When the disciples asked Him to show them the Father, He said; “*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; I and My Father are one.*” So, who is this man? This is none other than God incarnate in human flesh. “*This man receives sinners!*”

Who are these people who brought these charges? Who are these enemies who accused Him of eating with and associating with sinners? These are the Pharisees, who were devoutly religious and self-righteous; they were the moral men of their day. They were the men who sought acceptance with God through their works, through their deeds and through their religious affiliation. These men were very devout, religious leaders.

The Pharisees said, “*This man receives sinners.*” What was the charge? What charge did they bring against Christ? They said, “*He receives sinners;* (He associates with sinners and) *He is the friend of sinners.*” They continually repeated this charge again and again in God’s Word.

Let me read you a few places where it is mentioned: First of all, it is mentioned in Matthew 9:10-11; “*And as Jesus sat at meat in the house, many Publicans and sinners*

came down and sat down with Him. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples; Why does your Master eat with Publicans and sinners? (Why does your Master associate with sinners)?”

In Matthew 11:9, they call Him a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. They said, *“Why, He’s the friend of publicans and sinners.”* In Luke 19:7, when He went to the house of Zacchaeus, they all murmured saying; *“Well, He’s gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”* Who is this man? He is the Lord of Glory; He is God in human flesh. He is the Son of God.

What was the charge they brought against Him? *“He is the friend of sinners;”* He associates with sinners; He walks and talks with sinners. Who are the people who charged Him with this? These people were righteous, moral, devout and religious people. They were the self-righteous men who were seeking acceptance with God, not by grace, but by their own works and their own deeds.

These enemies of grace sought to brand Him with shame. They were not complimenting Him when they said, *“He receives sinners.”* The Pharisees wouldn’t associate with them; they had nothing to do with publicans and sinners.

They were holding up Christ’s name to ridicule Him. What they meant to be shame was the very glory of Jesus Christ. Thank God that He loves sinners! I say, thank God that Jesus Christ is the friend of sinners. I say, thank God that He does receive sinners for this is what makes the Gospel good news. This is what makes the Gospel glad tidings, Jesus Christ is the friend of sinners.

Men who truly know themselves rejoice in Jesus Christ being the friend of sinners. Listen to Paul, he says in 1 Timothy 1:15; *“This is a faithful saying and is worthy of acceptance (by all men), that Jesus Christ is come into this world to save sinners of whom I am the chief.”*

Listen to David, *“Let Israel hope in the Lord for with the Lord is mercy. God is plenteous in mercy.”* Listen to John in First John 1:9, he says; *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Men who knew themselves to be sinners (Paul, James, Peter, James, John and David) rejoiced that Christ receives sinners and associates with sinners and loves sinners.

My friend, what I am pointing out to you is this; this is no sham or fake Gospel that I am preaching. This is a real Gospel for real sinners. I’m talking about real grace for real

guilt. We preach no Gospel of reward for mortals who are dressed in fig-leaf aprons of self-righteousness. We preach no Gospel of merit for phony moralists and hypocrites.

We preach good news of mercy for the sinner, mercy for the miserable, mercy for the man who is nothing, has nothing and can do nothing.

The hymn writer put it this way:

Come ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,
Jesus ready stands to save you,
He's full of pity, love and power.

Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor a fitness fondly dream,
All the fitness that God requireth,
Is for you to feel your need of Him.

Come ye weary, heavy laden,
Bruised and mangled by the fall,
If you tarry til you're better,
You'll never come at all.

Not the righteous
Sinners, Jesus came to call.

I said, those who know themselves rejoice that Jesus Christ is the friend of sinners. Those who know their guilt rejoice that there is grace for the guilty. Those that know their inability and helplessness before God rejoice that there is help for the helpless and hope for the hopeless.

Let me tell you something else; those who know God, those who are intimately and personally acquainted with the living God and those who are designated to speak for God, when they describe the mission of Jesus Christ to this earth, listen to what they say.

You know the angel spoke for God. You know that the angel came and appeared to Joseph and told him about the child that Mary would be bringing into the world. Listen to what the angel said; (these are angels of God), ministers of God. They are sent to them who shall be the heirs of salvation.

Let's hear how they describe the mission of Jesus Christ. We heard these Pharisees say, "He's the friend of sinners; He's a gluttonous man, a wine bibber; He associates with sinners." They thought that He would ridicule and bring shame upon them. Those who knew themselves were glad that He was the friend of sinners. They were glad that He associates with sinners and were glad that He loved sinners.

Let's listen to those whom God commissioned and God sent into this world to describe the mission of His Son. Listen to the angels; they said, "*Joseph, thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins.*"

Listen to what our Lord Christ Himself is speaking; this is in Luke 19, "*The Son of man is come.*" We know that, "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" Why did Christ come into the world? He came into the world to "*save sinners.*" Why did Jesus Christ leave Heaven's glory and clothe Himself with the "*likeness of sinful flesh?*" Why did Jesus Christ come into this world and obey the Law, (tempted, tested, tried and in all points as we are, without sin)?

Why did Jesus Christ go to the cross and suffer such agony? Why did He do this? The reason was to "*seek and to save the lost.*" He said, "*I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. You go learn what that means.*"

Listen to Paul in Romans 5:8, "*But God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" Watch this verse in Romans 5:6, "*Christ died for the ungodly.*" Jesus Christ died for the ungodly.

There were those who knew God and there were those who were commissioned of God to announce the ministry of our Lord. John the Baptist said; "*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.*" There were the angels, our Lord Himself, and the apostle Paul. "*Christ died for the ungodly.*" My friends; I rejoice to say this that God's Gospel of free grace is addressed to sinners like you and to sinners like me.

There are plenty of people who are too good to be saved: there are none too bad. There are plenty of people who are too good to be saved and there are none too bad; Christ died for the ungodly. "*Christ came to save sinners of whom I am chief.*"

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is addressed to sinners. Now, you listen to the Gospel. The Scripture says, "*Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden and I will give you rest.*" Who is invited? Those who labor under the load of sin, and those who are heavy laden with the burden of sin, are invited. If you are heavy laden and burdened with sin, He

said; *“You come to Me: I will take your burden; I will take your load and I will give you rest.”*

Listen to this, *“Come; let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, though they be red like crimson, though they be as scarlet, they will be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* Listen to this, *“Ho, every one that thirsteth; come to the waters. Come without money; (come without merit), come without price.”* Come without your works; come without your deeds. *“Come and buy wine, milk, without money, without price.”*

Everyone who is not a sinner should turn this program off right now. My friends; if you continue to listen, you will only add to your condemnation because the Gospel is for sinners. Salvation is for sinners, grace is for the guilty, mercy is for the miserable and help is for the helpless.

What I am saying is this; a man will never be filled with the grace of God who has never, first of all, been empty. Second: I am saying that a man will never be saved who has never been lost. Christ came to save the lost. I am saying that a man will never be healed who has never been sick. I am saying that a man will never be exalted with Christ who has never been humbled and made contrite by the Spirit of God.

A man will never hear the good news from Calvary until he has first heard the bad news from Sinai. He will never lay hold upon Christ. *“Christ receiveth sinful men.”* That is what these Pharisees said. They saw Him go to the house of Zacchaeus and said, *“He’s gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”*

They saw Him sit at the table with publicans and sinners and said; *“This man receives sinners and eats with them.”* That is true; that is the best news that you can hear. That is the best news that any sinner can hear.

Christ receiveth sinful men,
Even me (and even you) with all of our sins.
Purged from every spot and stain,
Heaven with Him, I enter in.

We sing these songs all of the time but do we hear them?

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emanuel’s veins,
Sinners plunged beneath that flood,

Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in His day,
And there may I though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave this example; He gave this to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. That is the way that it is preceded with these words, *“And the Lord spake to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.”*

He also said, *“Two men went, up to the temple to pray.”* We’ll use an example like we are living today; “Two men went to church; one of them was a devout, moralist, a legalist, a separationist. He was a man who was very religious. We’ll hear him talk in a minute and tell a whole lot about him.

He went all the way up to the front of the church, right up to the altar. He began to pray and he began to tell God of all of his good deeds. He said, “Lord; I thank You that I am not like other people; I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all I possess; (I’ve been tithing ever since I was a boy). I give alms to the poor.”

“God, I thank you; I’m not an adulterer; I’m not an extortioner; I’ve never been an unjust man. I’ve always paid my bills; I’ve always treated my neighbor right. I thank you Lord; I’m not like other men.” How did God react to this man’s statements? The Scripture says, “God didn’t hear him; he prayed with himself.

Now, the other man was a publican, a sinner. He knew he was a sinner and everybody else knew it. He didn’t come down to the front; he stayed back in the back. He wouldn’t lift his hands, even his hands to heaven. He wouldn’t even lift his eyes to heaven but he smote on his breast.

This is his prayer; “O God be merciful to me the sinner. Be merciful to me; let your blood be propitiation for me on the mercy seat. Forgive my sins, pardon my iniquities, be reconciled to me the sinner.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ said in His own words, “This man who confessed his sin, who faced his sin, who confessed the reality of his sin, the man who sought mercy and cried for grace, went home forgiven, pardoned, justified rather than the other.”

That is what I am saying. What are you trying to say preacher? This is what I am saying and I believe that Christ said, I am saying what I believe that we need to hear in this generation. I'm trying to say that today's Gospel of good works, today's Gospel of morality, self-righteousness and legalism, today's Gospel of reward for good deeds is not the Gospel at all.

Today's Gospel is "*another gospel.*" Today's Gospel is not the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel of Christ is that "*Christ died for sinners.*" Christ intercedes at God's right hand for sinners, that Christ saves sinners, that Christ invites sinners, real, bonafide, and genuine sinners to come to Him for eternal life.

Our Lord is the friend of sinners. That is not being said today. A sinner is a hard thing to find; did you know that? I mean a genuine sinner, a man who is a sinner. I mean a man who is without help, without hope, without strength and without God.

I mean a man who is guilty before the Law of God, guilty before the holiness of God, guilty before the glory of God. I mean a sinner who has "*sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" I'm looking for one who can say, "*I am not worthy; who am I? I am less than the least of all the saints; I am the chief of sinners.*"

Brethren, Christ came to save such people. I don't come to you to prove His love for sinners; I come to declare it. What these Pharisees said in a derogatory manner was the best news that you ever heard. What these Pharisees said, hoping to ridicule and bring shame upon the Master, was the best news that you ever heard also.

If He doesn't save sinners, He will never save you or me. He needs no human lawyer. His Words and His actions prove His love. Let me give you about five things in proof of His love.

His incarnation is proof of His love for sinners. This man received sinners; His incarnation proved that; "*The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*" God became a man. He came into this world in human flesh. That is what the Word says; "*The Word was made flesh.*"

He was numbered among sinners, became one with the transgressors. He became our Representative. "*He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation.*" Who is He? Is He the Carpenter? "*Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*"

“Do you teach us; you’re not 50 years old,” the Jews said. They also said, *“How can you know Abraham?”* *“He made Himself of no reputation. Took on Himself the form of a servant; took on Himself the likeness of sinful flesh.”* That proves His love for sinners.

He came down here and became one of us. *“He knew no sin; He had no sin;”* yet, He bare our sin in His own body, He became a man. He was subject to every trial, test and temptation that man was subject to.

His association with sinners is proof of His love. You don’t find the Master standing afar off from sinful people issuing laws, commandments and statutes to them, daring them to touch Him. One of the Pharisees said when the harlot was bathing His feet with her tears, said; *“If that man was a prophet He wouldn’t let her touch Him. He would know what manner of woman she is.”*

You don’t find the Lord standing far off aloof from sinners. You find Him associating with Him, walking with Him, eating with Him and talking with Him. That is what brought this charge; *“He is the friend of sinners.”*

His birth was in a manger, not in a temple. His office was in a carpenter’s shop, not a synagogue. His disciples were fisherman and laborers, not theologians. His followers were publicans and harlots. He even died between two thieves.

He never spoke more kindly than when He spoke to a sinner. He never spoke more harshly than when He spoke to a legalist, a self-righteous religionist. He called their generation, *“a generation of vipers.”* He called them hypocrites. He said, *“You shut up the Kingdom of God to yourself and others. You won’t go in or suffer anybody else to go in.”*

Our Lord’s incarnation shows His love for sinners. His association shows His love for sinners and His sermons, just listen to His sermons, they reveal His love for sinners. Listen to the Sermon on the Prodigal Son.

There was a man who had two sons. One of them said, *“Give me what is coming to me; I am leaving this place.”* He took his inheritance and went out and wasted it. He threw it away and lived wickedly and rebelliously. He disgraced his father’s name.

That father never did quit loving him, quit looking for him or quit wanting him to come back. The prodigal son said one day; *“I’m going to go back home. Even the hired servants in my father’s house are better off than I am.”* The Lord said, *“When that father*

saw him a long ways off, he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” He kissed the rebel!

He said, *“Put a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet and a robe on his back. Kill the fatted calf, this, my son who was lost, is back home again; rejoice with me.”* Christ said, *“Let Me tell you something; there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth.”*

Listen to Him talk about the lost sheep, how the shepherd went out to hunt one lost sheep. Listen to Him talk about the shepherd agonizing over a sheep until he found him. He brought it home with him on his shoulders and said; *“Rejoice with me; my sheep was lost but now it is found. Likewise, there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth.”*

Our Lord at the Last Supper, took bread and brake it and gave it to His disciples and said; *“This is My body broken for you.”* He took wine and said, *“This is My blood shed for you for the remission of your sins.”* Yes, our Lord sermons revealed that He loves sinners.

Listen to our Lord’s prayers; *“Peter, you will deny me.”* Peter said, *“Lord; I will die for you. These other fellows may quit You but I will stand with you until the end.”* He said, *“No Peter; you will deny me three times before the cock crows that you ever knew Me, but I pray for you.”*

Listen to Him on Calvary’s cross as He looks down into the faces of those men who drove those nails in His hands and put the crown of thorns on His brow and spit on His face and plucked out his beard. He moves His eyes from one to the other and says, *“Father; forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

Does He love sinners? Oh, He loves sinners! He is the friend of sinners. John said this, *“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.”* Who has an Advocate? Does the moralist, the self righteous, the religious, the legalist, the separationist, the hypocrite? Who has an Advocate? The man who sins has an Advocate with the Father.

You do what you want to with that; that is good news to most folks that are listening to my voice.

Last of all: His death proves His love for sinners. *“He was wounded for our transgression; bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him and by His stripes we are healed.”* Peter said, *“Who His own self bare our sins in*

His own body on the tree that we being dead to sin might live unto righteousness; by His stripes we are healed.”

My friends:

When I survey the wonderous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did ere such sorrow and love meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

His death was a real death for real sinners. His grace is real grace for real guilty men. His call to repentance is a genuine call to every lost son of Adam. *“Come unto Me and I will give you rest.”*

If I could pull my chair up beside you right now and look you in the face, I would declare unto you what God has been pleased to reveal to me from His Word. There are four things and I want you to listen to them:

1. Almighty God (the God of the Bible, creation and salvation) is holy, righteous and a just God. He must punish all sin. He will by no means clear the guilty.
2. We are sinners and guilty creatures before God; in the flesh no man can please God. Our righteousness is filthy rags in His sight.
3. God sent Christ to save sinners, to redeem, to justify and to sanctify sinners by one offering. *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* Christ Jesus is the only way to God, He said, *“I am Way, the Truth and the Life no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”* Not by baptism, church membership or good works.
4. You are called to faith in Christ alone, you are not required to produce a righteousness but to receive one in Him.

That is my message to you, this is good news of the gospel, *“This man receives sinners.”*