

# Minster Bethel Congregational Church (MBCC)

27/06/2021 -- Matthew - Disciples in Question 10

## Matthew- The Sinner of the Group



WHY DOES THE BIBLE SPEAK  
**NEGATIVELY**  
ABOUT TAX COLLECTORS?

Today is "Church & Chat"

A short church reflection with a hymn, reading, (children's activity), prayer, "thought for the week" and then a time to chat. If you need help to join please ask any deacon

All lockdown services can be found at: [www.mbccs.co.uk](http://www.mbccs.co.uk)

But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. **Psalm 5:11**

### Good morning and welcome to this week's thoughts.

Our first hymn for today is: "I've got that Joy Joy Joy Joy down in my Heart"

[I've got that joy, joy, joy, joy! Down in my heart! - with Lyrics - YouTube](#)

1. I've got the J, O, Y, joy,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart;  
I've got the J, O, Y, joy,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart to stay.

*And I'm so happy,  
So very happy;  
I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.  
And I'm so happy,  
So very happy  
I've got the love of Jesus in my heart.*

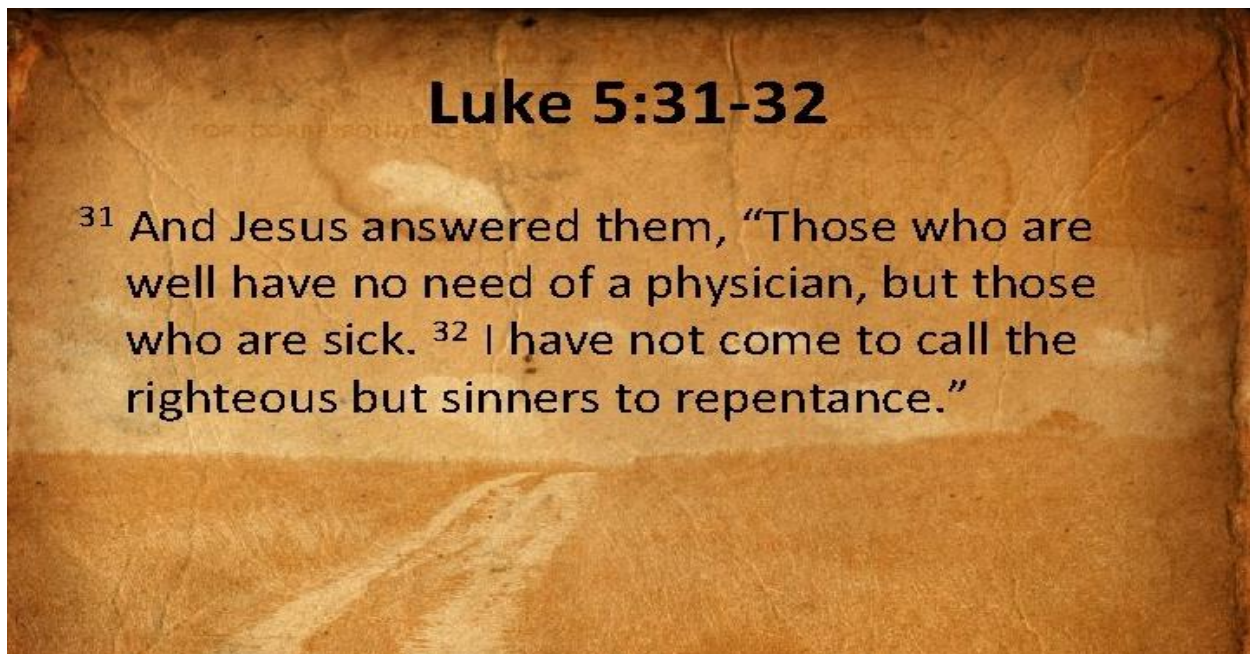
3. I've got the peace that  
passeth understanding,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart;  
I've got the peace that  
passeth understanding,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart to stay.

2. I've got the love of Jesus,  
love of Jesus,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart;  
I've got the love of Jesus,  
love of Jesus,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart to stay.

4. For there is therefore now no  
condemnation,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart;  
For there is therefore now no  
condemnation,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart to stay.

### The reading today is Luke 5:27-32

[Luke 5:27-32 NIVUK - Jesus calls Levi and eats with sinners - Bible Gateway](#)



## **Matthew – The Tax Collector**

Matthew was a brother of another disciple, James son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14).

Matthew, Mark, and Luke have parallel accounts of Jesus calling a tax collector to become a disciple. Interestingly, Matthew calls this person Matthew, and Mark and Luke call him Levi.

As we have seen Jesus chose the Twelve from the least likely of candidates. Perhaps Matthew had more money and education than the rest, but in all likelihood, none of the Twelve were as notorious a sinner as he.

Matthew or Levi as he was called here, was a tax collector for the Roman occupational government.

The Romans collected their taxes through a system called “tax farming.” They assessed a district a fixed tax figure and then sold the right to collect taxes to the highest bidder. The buyer then had to hand over the assessed figure at the end of the year and could keep anything he gathered above that amount. The tax collector could inspect the goods of travelers and levy a tax on the merchandise. Since the tax rates were not always clear, it was easy for an unscrupulous man to make himself rich. But even if the tax collector were honest, his fellow Jews still despised him because they were considered lackeys of the Romans. They were considered a traitor because of their connection with the government of Romans oppressors.

Tax collectors were excluded from all religious contact, because according to the religious thought of the day, there was no hope for a man like Matthew. Perhaps of all the people in Capernaum, Matthew was the most publicly unacceptable candidate to be a disciple of Jesus.

He was a man who was despised by the Romans because he was a Jew and despised and rejected by Jews because he was considered a traitor. But Jesus saw beyond a life disfigured with sin and “saw” a future recorder of the gospel, an evangelist and rescuer of souls.

So a strange decision by Jesus, but Matthew’s decision to follow Christ demanded a choice. Matthew’s response to Jesus was immediate and drastic

“ So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.”

For Matthew, following Jesus would have been substantial sacrifice, if this venture was a failure he could not go back. One did not give up collecting taxes for the Romans and expect to return. He gave up his job and all the monetary riches he was receiving.

Matthew did follow Jesus for the rest of his life.

Having decided to follow Jesus, Matthew wanted to tell others about Christ. Having experienced the joy of having his sins forgiven, he wanted to tell others the good news and he chose to throw a feast.

Why did Matthew invite tax collectors and other lowlifes to this feast? Because they were the only kinds of people that he knew. The reason of the feast is very apparent. Matthew’s friends and associates have to be astounded by his decision to leave his lucrative business and follow Jesus. The occasion gave him the opportunity to explain his decision and more importantly to introduce his friends to Jesus, and let them learn for themselves what kind of person could have produced such a dramatic change in Matthew’s life.

To the religious leaders people were divided into two groups, “righteous” and “sinners.”

The “righteous” were those who kept the rules, did the right things and associated with the right people. The “righteous” saw them selves as right with God because of what they did not do, where they would not go, and with whom they did not associate.

The Pharisees didn't like this they wanted to know why Jesus' disciples were able to enjoy life, while we they the righteous endured it. The comparison is not very favourable. The sinners are celebrating and the religious leaders are complaining. The sinners are happy, the Pharisees are sad.

The misery of the Pharisees attracted no one. The question for today is; What kind of picture are we giving of being a Christian?

Christian believers can forget that they are sinners too, weak and vulnerable and Church can appear to some as an elite club that few on the outside want to join even if they could.

Jesus answers the criticism of the Pharisees,

‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’

Jesus indicated there are no good people and bad people –only those who know that they are bad and those who do not. The scribes and Pharisees saw Levi and his friends as condemned “sinners,” but Jesus saw them as spiritually sick “patients” who needed the help of a physician. The first step toward healing the “sin sickness” is admitting that we have a need and that we cannot heal ourselves.

Those who were “well” or at least think themselves so, did not feel they had need of His help. But these people, who he is associating with did not suffer from the delusion that they were without spiritual needs. Jesus had come to call those who would acknowledge that they were “sinners” not those who thought they had no sin.

Because of all of this Matthew never got over what Jesus had done for him. In Matthew's gospel when he lists his name among the Twelve chosen by Jesus he attaches the label, the publican. It is a characteristic of his humility that he added the record of his unflattering past to his name.

We can be certain that when Matthew got up from his tax table, he never dreamed that he would record the first gospel account of the life of the LORD Jesus. His gospel met the need of the early Christians for a written record of the life of Jesus.

In spite of the fact that he could not attend services in the synagogue, Matthew knew the Old Testament very well. He quotes the Old Testament ninety-nine times in his gospel, more than Mark, Luke and John combined.

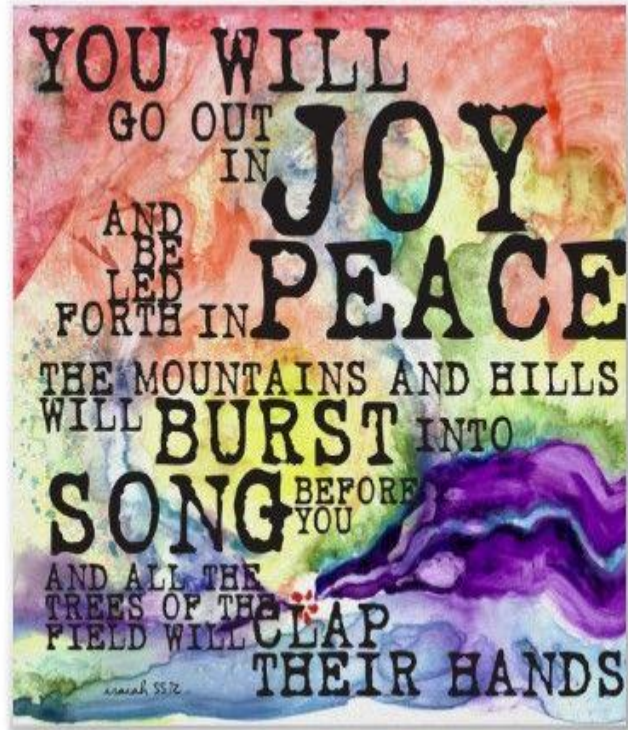
Matthew demonstrates to us that God didn't send his son for the elite but for everyone, and like Matthew we have the chance to drop all the things that would dis-please God and follow Jesus, with the same joy Matthew showed his friends and associates.

## Our second hymn for today “You Shall Go Out With Joy”

[The Trees of the Field - CCS 645 - The Beyond the Walls Choir - YouTube](#)

You shall go out with joy  
And be led forth with peace  
The mountains and the hills  
Will break forth before you  
There'll be shouts of joy  
And all the trees of the field  
Will clap, will clap their hands

And all the trees of the field  
Will clap their hands  
The trees of the field  
Will clap their hands  
The trees of the field  
Will clap their hands  
While you go out with joy



### Today's Pray:

Dear God. We thank you that you sent your son to earth for everyone. Help us to drop the things that dis-please you so that we can go out into the world with great Joy in our hearts.

Amen.

