

Series: “NSAC Missions Month” **Week 4, January 29, 2017 Pastor Dave Sattler**
Text: Matthew 9:1-13, “Friend of Sinners” Sources: NIV Life Application Bible;
 Commentaries: Keener, Wilkins, & N.T. Wright; Books: Aldrich & Pollock; Articles: Brisco,
 Byassee, Hirsch (CFV), Strong (MOI), & Warkentin (C&C); Song: Casting Crowns c.2014.

<Slide> **Review & Introduction:**

- Good morning, everyone. Welcome to church! I’m Dave Sattler.
- This is our 4th Sunday of “NSAC Missions Month” with focus on our core value, Missional Living: Q: “We will go **into our neighbourhoods** and around the world to express the **love & hope of Jesus.**”
- God is on mission. And invites us to join Him in the work He is already doing.
- Jesus says to His Church, “Go and make disciples of all nations.” (cf. Mt 18:19)
- God continues His work in other peoples’ lives now through us . . . proclaiming, embodying, sharing the life-changing love & hope of Jesus.
- So far, our spotlight has been on tribal missions — faraway: the call to GO to the ends of the earth — to unreached people groups in limited-access regions of the globe. Today we focus in closer to home: on family, friends, & neighbours right here in our city.
- ILL - Reaching out to people in our growing metropolis has become increasingly more challenging. A 2013 Vancouver Foundation report suggests:
 - Q: “Most people can’t name more than 2 neighbours.”
 - <Slide> Coupled with this lack of meaningful connections is the cynical perception towards Christianity in Vancouver. When questioned about it, long-time Vancouver Sun religion columnist, Douglas Todd said:
 - Q: “People just see prominent Christians being jerks, or they hear about the abuse by Catholic priests, and it doesn’t take much before the negative stuff starts to dominate their minds. I also think a lot of religious people are very shy and quiet about their religious beliefs and practices. At a certain level, there is an anti-religious bigotry here and people don’t want to get caught in the cross-hairs of it.” - Todd in Warkentin.
- As cultural sentiment turns, I find it harder and harder to befriend non-Christians.
- Because of their perception of me. Or, maybe it’s just my perception of their perception of me? I want to be accepted — want people to like me.
- And this often holds me back from talking about Jesus.
- <Slide> This morning we’ll look at Matthew 9:1-13. I invite you to turn there now in your Bibles or on your electronic device, or p789 or p963 in the blue Bibles, you can find in the seat rack in front of you.
- “**Friend of Sinners**” was a name given to Jesus. Today we like the sound of it, but it was a derogatory term back then — ascribed to Jesus by His worst enemies.
- Still, probably no other name captures the heart of Jesus’ mission better than this one!
- Messiah wouldn’t come and take up office looking down from some ‘ivory tower.’
- No, the mission of Jesus was to get intimately involved with real people.
- 1st Century literature supports the absurdity of His mission. One source says, Q: “Jesus’ act of **actively pursuing sinners** as a human teacher was unheard of.” - Keener, p297.
- “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save [those who are] lost.” Luke 19:10.
- “Friend of Sinners.” ‘Risky business.’ This is our mission too. Casting Crowns sings, Q: “Oh Jesus, Friend of Sinners, break our hearts for what breaks Yours.”

- <READ> PRAY: “Lord, move me out of the way. Come, speak to us by Your Spirit. We’re hungry to hear from You.”

Narrative Outline:

- The authority of this man Jesus is different than anything the world has ever seen.
- Jesus has authority to forgive sins, to heal, to transform people from the inside out.
- To do what normally only God could ever do.
- And surprisingly, His power doesn’t come from a big, tough army backing Him up.
- Not violent, His power is all to do with the compelling spiritual forces of transformation, love, & hope. It’s why people holding onto power get angry, while others ...

1. <Slide> Bring Their Friend to Jesus (9:1-8).

- This takes place in Jesus’ “own town” (v1). On the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee, not far from Nazareth where Jesus grew up.
- Capernaum, a highly-populated fishing port at the crossroads of several trade routes — east on the Silk Road to Asia, and west to the business centres of the Roman Empire.
- Daunting Roman presence here made life difficult for the average Jew.
- Between taxes to the government and tithes to the temple, residents of Capernaum were forced by authorities to surrender 30 to 40% of their already-meagre annual incomes.
- You’ve likely heard this story . . .
- Some men have a friend who is paralyzed. They’ve heard about Jesus, or perhaps they’ve met Him before. Regardless, they know Who Jesus is and what Jesus can do; and devise a plan to deliver their immobile friend to Him.
- Other accounts, in Mark & Luke, further illustrate the friends’ perseverance.
- Because of the crowds, they’re forced to “dig” a hole in the roof big enough to “lower” their friend through it to get him to Jesus.
- This all happens, and interestingly, the first thing Jesus sees and responds to is the faith of the friends. Somehow their faith impacts Jesus’ response to their paralyzed friend.
- Jesus forgives the man’s sins (v2) and heals him so he’s able to get up and walk home praising God (v6-8)! Radical transformation and freedom.
- ILL - A few years back I received an email from a childhood friend.
 - He was from a non-Christian home and we met in grade 6 when our family moved into the neighbourhood. 30 plus years later, he wrote:
 - Q: ‘Dave, today my wife and 4 kids and I all know Jesus and I want to thank you and your family for the example of faith you were to me when I was a teenager and for inviting me to church. I can’t imagine how my life would be different if it wasn’t for the faith I saw in you and your family.’
- APP - Here’s the point: Our faith affects those around us.
- We may not realize it or even feel like we have much of it, but our faith rubs off on others.
- Simple faith can have a lasting impact.

2. <Slide> “Follow me,” Jesus Says (9:9) ...

- To one of the most hated characters in town — Matthew, a local tax collector.
- Unpopular — for being in cahoots with the Jewish elite, for selling out to Rome, for lining his own pockets with people’s hard-earned cash.
- Traitor. Matthew’s life could not have been easy.

- Like some of you, he’s in a high-stress-high-return job. Long hours. And, though financially lucrative, his job demands he treat people harshly. In public, people probably hurl insults at him while he shops for groceries or buys his morning coffee.
- The company he keeps, likely, are people just like him — fellow swindlers in the tax system.
- It required a certain abandon for Matthew to leave behind his old life.
- No turning back. And there’s a little autobiographical gem here that amplifies it:
 - It says in v9, “Matthew **got up** and followed [Jesus].”
- Interestingly, writer Matthew uses the exact same words just a few verses earlier to describe the paralytic who “**got up**” off his mat (v7) — miraculously healed by Jesus.
- And it’s the language of resurrection!
- The refreshing words of Jesus came to him that day: the invitation for Matthew to follow, to belong to something new, bigger than himself, more powerful than the Roman machine. And up from his tax collector booth he gets!
- Must’ve felt like a resurrection: Jesus raises Matthew to a whole new life.
- ILL - This week, I was at my favourite spot on Lonsdale for coffee with a friend.
 - I ordered and the girl at the till asked, “How are you doing?”
 - I said, “Good!”
 - She shot back, “Why are you ‘good’? You always seem so happy?!”
 - Caught off-guard, I tried to figure out what to say. Internally I’m thinking, ‘I don’t feel that happy or like I come across that way very often.’ Obviously she’s seen something in me over the months she’s worked here.
 - I responded, Q: “Well, life isn’t easy right now, but I have joy. I have Jesus with me. I know He loves me and gives me strength to face all I’m going through. I get to preach this Sunday (she knows I’m a pastor). And, I get to have coffee here with my friend today!”
 - Her eyes widened, she smiled, and went off to make our drinks.
- APP - Christ-followers, let us never lose the wonder . . .
 - That we have been raised to new life in Christ!
 - Yes, life will be difficult. We won’t feel joyful all the time.
 - But imagine life without Jesus in the picture? Not pretty.
- New life in Christ is always worth celebrating. And worth telling others about too.
- In the very next scene, we find Jesus at Matthew’s house,

3. <Slide> Eating with “Sinners” (9:10-13)

- Now, did we miss something here?!
- Surely Matthew went to church first, joined a small group, got disciplined, took an evangelism class, went off to Bible College. Oh, and he probably got baptized some time in there too — after he’d gotten Christianity all fully figured out. Only then, would he be ‘qualified’ to gather his friends to tell them about Jesus. Right?!
- No! Immediately, Matthew invites his colleagues and friends, along with Jesus and his disciples, to dinner at his place (v10).
- Excited about what’s just happened, and, rather than keep his new life & old life separate, Matthew brings his friends to Jesus. Or, more accurately he brings Jesus to his friends.
- ILL - And I know many of you have this same vision.
 - Men, you’ve invited friends to play in our church hockey and soccer leagues.

- Others, I've been at your dinner parties when you've brought your 'worlds' together: had workmates & neighbours in with your church friends. Very cool. I've joined in. Meaningful connections happen at gatherings just like this.
- To eat at Matthew's house hurt Jesus' reputation.
- Aghast, the Pharisees challenge. But Jesus remains unfazed.
- Q: 'It's the sick I've come for,' Jesus says to the pious Pharisees (v12) — who are sick too, but just can't see it, or humble themselves enough to admit it.
- When truth is: we are all sinners. And the only thing that makes us sinners "righteous" is acknowledgement of our need and humbly turning to Jesus.
- APP - Key with people who don't yet know Christ is that we not take the 'I'm-better-than-you' tack. Jesus calls religious leaders on it:
 - Q: 'I see your religious fervour, but where's your mercy?' (v12).
 - First, I have to say, climbing up on a Christian 'high-horse' is never the right thing to do. And there's actually no such thing. Like I said 2 weeks ago, we can never be 'good enough' to please God with a righteousness of our own.
 - Second, 'Christian superiority complexes' only embitter and turn people away.
 - This is not to say we shouldn't stand up for truth or seek to follow God's moral standard. But, having a heart of mercy for others, driven by the conviction that "there but for the grace of God go I" — and I need Jesus as my doctor . . . this is correct posture for mission to family, friends, & neighbours in our city.

Applications:

- A few application points to 'land to plane' on the message today . . .

1. <Slide> The Power of Influence.

- Jesus eating with sinners turns the Jewish OT understanding of holiness upside-down.
- Instead of living separate from the world, Jesus embraces it. It's clear Jesus was far more passionate about influencing others than He was fearful of becoming contaminated.
- APP - And I wonder, 'Have we Christ-followers conceded too much?'
- I know the Christian voice has been stymied in our city — and not just stymied, but seriously challenged, mocked — even laughed at. But in response, have we simply 'folded the tent' and given up — retreated to the 'safety' of our comfortable homes and churches?
- Matthew was quick to respond to the call of Jesus.
- And this can be a hard spot to find yourself in — new to faith, few Christian connections, old friends might treat you different — think you're 'crazy.' Where do you spend your time? Who do you hang out with to best move forward in your new life with Jesus?
- Some Christians find it hard to be around non-Christians.
- Or, simply easier to lead 2 lives — one at church, or with our Christian friends or family members, and the other, at work or school, where we're just like everyone else.
- Still I believe, with Jesus in the picture, the influence can flow the other way.
- Jesus was willing to go to the dark places to bring light to the darkness.
- Today, most Christians are willing to go to the dark places too.
- But, instead of bringing the light, we extinguish it, just outside the door, and allow ourselves to succumb to the darkness. To blend in, we 'check our faith in at the door.'
- And, instead of being influencers, we're the ones being influenced by the people, the values, & the culture all around us.

- Romans 12:2 warns,
 - Q: “Do not let the world squeeze you into its mold.” - Living Translation
- A HQ to ask is this: Are you influencing your world or is your world influencing you?
- With the power of the Spirit, let us bring God’s light to influence dark places in our city.

2. <Slide> A Place of Belonging & Healing.

- I’m struck by who’s there and what’s happening at each of the two gatherings in our story.
- At the first, probably Peter’s house in Capernaum, we have Jesus, His disciples, a paralyzed man and his friends, large crowds; and there, lurking in the background are the nay-sayers — “the teachers of the law” (v3).
- At the second, Matthew’s house, substitute the paralyzed man & his friends for Matthew & his tax collector-buddies. And the Pharisees — critics like the two old men in The Muppets, are up there in their booth, shooting down everything that’s going on below!
- And this is the ‘beautiful mess’ of church: committed Christians, and seekers — some on a mission to find Jesus, others invited, some dragged, brought — even ‘carried in’ by friends. And there will always be the detractors [they are welcome too].
- And then there’s Jesus. Right in the middle of it all! Making all the difference.
- For the paralyzed man, church is a place of profound healing - spiritual & physical healing in the presence of Jesus. For Matthew, church is a place of authentic belonging - relational healing in the presence of Jesus. Healing ... a central part of Jesus’ mission.
- <Slide> ILL - One of the theological pillars of our denomination is **Christ Our Healer**.
 - The belief that — both over time, and in the miraculous — Jesus heals.
 - Early on, our movement’s leaders acquired properties in cities and out in the country where people battling addiction, illness — physical, spiritual, mental, & emotional, could come to stay and find healing in Christ & community.
 - The first “Healing Home” was started by A.B. Simpson in downtown New York in the 1880’s. It’s the same idea behind our “NSAC Community House” started a year ago down on Keith Road. Got 3 of our guys living there right now!
- <Slide> ILL - One of our metaphors at NSAC is Church = Hospital.
 - Where “sick” people find healing from the Great Physician.
 - And, an awesome story this past year came on a Wednesday Coffee Time.
 - Through a translator, an Iranian woman asked for prayer for a cancerous tumour in her abdominal area she was needing to have surgery to remove.
 - The day after we prayed for her, she miraculously passed the tumour, and brought it with her to her doctor’s appointment!
 - Her doctor was incredulous. Never seen anything like that before.
 - The woman told her doctor Jesus had done a miracle.
 - She came the next week and told us she was praising Jesus for healing her.
 - Very exciting. God is healing people to draw them to Himself.
- <Slide> This week I came across a quote I read many years ago in Bible College,
 - Q: “If your church cannot accept the wreckage of broken homes and shattered dreams, it is not a place where Jesus lives. Your church should be the greatest garbage dump in town. A place where broken, oppressed, misplaced, abandoned, and unloved people can come and find ‘family’ where they are accepted and loved ... as is. ‘As is’ people are Jesus’ kind of people.” - Aldrich, p180-181. Love it!

- We've got a ways to go still, but this is the kind of church God is making right here.

3. <Slide> A Life of Invitation.

- Mother Theresa once said, Q: "I don't do big things. I do small things with big love." - in Hirsch. You don't need a theological degree, or to have it all together spiritually to be involved in God's mission. It's just about doing what you do ... for God.
- In fact, the basic elements of missional living are likely already present in your life: your passions, your job, your possessions.
- But it takes a 'Jesus-change of heart,' for you to realize those things are not just for you.
- They're God's that He's given you. And meant to be shared. Or offered up for His use.
- ILL - I spoke with a friend this week who has an amazing house God has given him.
 - And he's been excited lately to offer it up to invite people in.
 - Many of you find yourself coaching or managing your kids' local sports team. Do you see the tremendous opportunity you have to touch peoples' lives through things like soccer-coaching? [Even on those bitter cold days when it seems like no one's listening or caring!]
 - Students, teachers & school staff, yes, your hands are somewhat tied in our religious climate, but do you have a vision to impact your school for Jesus?
- <Slide> ILL - It's been exciting nearly every Sunday lately to meet friends you've invited.
 - To church. Some have never been before. Ever. Way to go for asking them!
 - Two weeks back, we baptized Doug (he's the smily guy in the centre of this picture.) In his baptism testimony, he mentioned how his house-mates, Stephen Hyde & Andy Corlin invited him to Coffee Time two years back.
 - Awhile later, Doug found Jesus. And Jesus has saved his life! Literally.
 - The impact of a simple invitation.
- APP - If you're not feeling ready yet to invite friends to church or if you simply don't know many non-Christians, but you're sensing God's call to reach out, here're a few tips.
 - Think about a hobby God has given you [reading, hiking, gaming] and find others, who love it too, to do with you.
 - Or, choose a vibrant social space in your area [a library, a coffee shop, a park] and make it your spot — become a regular there.
 - Pray for God to bring people your way.
 - It may require 'logging some relational miles.' Building credibility. Walking the long journey with people till the questions start coming. Or something hard hits their life, and they want to talk to you.
- God calls us to a life of invitation.
- Consider, Q: To those who don't yet know Jesus, does your vibe, your language, your life communicate a certain 'closed off-ness' from God. Or, an invitation?
- Maybe you're a Christ-follower or a long-time church-goer, but you've never really gotten involved in missions. Your faith is your faith. Shy. You don't talk about it.
- <Slide> Perhaps God is calling you today to step out of your comfort zone: to invite a family member, classmate, friend from the office, or a neighbour to church.
- When you GO ... across your cubicle, across the hallway, across your driveway, God has a way of giving you the right words, and opening up others' hearts through your boldness.
- It's a wild ride God's mission.
- But simply the best thing to give your life to on the planet. Amen.