

Notes for 2.13–17

Observations:

- Parallel passages: Lk. 5.27–32
- Jesus continues to teach the many who follow him, this time near the sea of Galilee.
- Jesus calls Levi (Matthew) publicly to follow him, and he does immediately. Like the other four disciples already mentioned, he also was doing something (at the tax booth) when called by Jesus. It seems almost as though he was put on the spot, but his decision to follow Jesus may have surprised the crowd, because tax collectors were thought to be “so sinful.”
- Jesus has dinner at Levi’s house, just like he stayed at Simon’s house in the previous chapter. This is an honor for Levi, and goes against social convention; he befriends sinners. Levi has invited many of his friends and acquaintances. It seems as though Jesus makes it a point to spend time with those who are close to his disciples.
- The discussion with the scribes of the Pharisees seems to be indirect. They weren’t present at the meal, but heard about it, then approached Jesus’s disciples rather than approaching Jesus directly. Perhaps Jesus dined with “tax collectors and sinners” on several occasions.
- Jesus can associate with sinners without being a sinner himself. He is always “set apart” (holy), never just “one of us.”

Definitions:

- Tax collectors (publicans): Minor officials who examined goods and collected tolls on roads, bridges. They were collected at Caesarea, Capernaum, Jericho. Paid a set amount to Rome and were permitted to keep the rest, so they were hated for being extortioners as well as renegades, sell-outs who demonstrate Rome’s power. Because the taxes went to a pagan ruler, they were seen both as a civil and religious wrong. Treated with the same disgust as prostitutes.[1]
- Pharisees: “One of a sect or party among the Jews, noted for a strict and formal observance of rites and ceremonies and of the traditions of the elders, and whose pretensions to superior sanctity led them to separate themselves from the other Jews.” [2] ISBE has an enormous amount of information on them.

References:

- Sharing a meal with someone implied accepting them, a bit like eating lunch with people in middle school. 2 Samuel 9.6–7: “And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, ‘Mephibosheth!’ And he answered, ‘Behold, I am your servant.’ And David said to him, ‘Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always.’ ”
- 1 Kings 2.7: “But deal loyally with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from Absalom your brother.”
- Righteousness in the OT:
Ps. 14: “The fool says in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one. Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the LORD? There they are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous. You would shame the plans of the poor, but the LORD is his refuge. Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.”
- Ecclesiastes 7.20: “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. ”

- Righteousness is almost equivalent to holiness, following holy principles and attitudes, and conforming to God's law.[2]. The ISBE has a lot of information about righteousness.
- Lev. 19:2: "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them,(A) You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."
- Lk. 19.9–10: "And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.' "

Questions:

- Why do the Pharisees care who Jesus associates with? He makes them look bad because he isn't one of them. They were looking for their image of righteousness (the one they were practicing), and Jesus didn't match up with their priorities.
- What does it really mean to be healthy or righteous? Part of righteousness is reaching out to those who have fallen.
- With whom do we refuse to associate?
- Can we navigate between the two evils of condoning sin by participating in it on the one hand, or being "holier than thou", arrogant and aloof from sinners on the other hand? To which evil do we more readily fall? How is Jesus different from those who try to be "cool Christians"?

Notes for 2.18–22

Observations:

- Parallel passage: Lk. 5.33–39
- Jesus uses the celebration of wedding guests with the bridegroom to illustrate the relationship between his disciples and himself. This seems to imply an attitude of rejoicing in Jesus' presence. This is the first time he compares himself to a bridegroom.
- Jesus references a day when he will be with them no longer, then his disciples will fast. Something will change in the way the disciples exercise their faith.

References:

- The type of fasting that is pleasing to God: (Is. 58.1–9)

Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; *x declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps *x of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not *x to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, *x and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away *x the yoke from your midst, *x the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness ...

This illustrates that fasting is more than just a discipline (the Pharisees were quite disciplined), but about true spirituality: empathizing with the suffering of others, actively doing good. Fasting also seems to be a way to connect with God, as long as we aren't being hypocrites at the same time.

- Reference to God as a bridegroom: (Is. 62.4–5) “You shall no more be termed *x Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called *x My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so *x shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so *x shall your God rejoice over you.”

Questions:

- Is the spiritual discipline of fasting something we are familiar with? According to scripture, what is it for and why is it done?
- Have we ever done something spiritual, but really been a hypocrite in the process?
- What is Jesus trying to explain with his discussion of the old/new wineskins and the old/new cloth? To some extent, the old and the new cannot be joined together: a new patch cannot be sewn on an old garment and new wine cannot be stored in old wineskins. With both examples, the old item is left basically unchanged and the new is simply either a repair or an addition. Jesus seems to be saying something about the type of person that will receive his teaching; his doctrine is not just a “minor modification” that can be put in the “container” of Pharisaical teaching. The whole garment must be changed and the container must be fundamentally made new. Lk. 5.39 (“And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’ ”) adds the additional insight that those who have drunk of the old wine (teaching) are not interested in the new stuff. The Pharisees seem convinced that they are fulfilling the requirements of the law and hence are not interested in what Jesus is preaching: repentance and “good news.”
- How does the parable of the old and new apply to us? To what extent do we represent the old?, the new? Are we trapped by our preconceived ideas?
- Just as the Pharisees were stuck in a pattern of sin that did not share God's heart for the lost and outcast, are we stuck in a pattern of sin that we are blind to? How do we know?

References

- [1] *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, James Orr, General Editor, 1844-1913 ed.
- [2] *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, C. & G. Merriam Co. 1913
- [3] *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, James Strong, 1890
- [4] *Merriam-Webster Online*, <http://www.webster.com/>, 2007