

Luke 7:18-35

Taking A Chance With Love

Good morning, it is a joy to be here with you this morning, to hear from God's Word.

If you are new here, we welcome you, as you can tell we do not have a lot of flash and lights.

That is intentional, we love God's Word, and we want it to be the focal point of all that takes place in this facility.

You will find no great personalities, not much entertainment, but we do hope you encounter the Lord Jesus each week.

If you are new here, I want to encourage to stay for at least 3 months before you decide if you will stay with us permanently.

It is just too difficult to gauge a work in one or two weeks.

You will be able to catch the vision and get to know the wonderful people here by then, and if you stay for 6 months, please fill out an application to serve in a ministry here.

I remember inviting an old friend of mine to church here, and he has been a believer for a while.

And he responded, "Oh, I have heard of all that God is doing there in Victorville, and it all sounds wonderful, but I know if we commit to your church, it will be hard

work, I want to stay where I can just sit with my family.”

Now his assessment, although it was painful to hear, as it speaks to our post-modern Christian mindset, his assessment is true.

You see if God has called you here, this neighborhood is a mission field.

Now the leadership and I, we will do our best to feed you God’s Word each time you come to church, and we hope you and your family can grow in Christ here.

But as my old friend said, this ministry is a place to get your hands dirty, and get busy for Jesus.

I have people tell me that they want to go to other churches, because those churches fulfill their needs better, they have better women’s events, they have men’s hikes, they more entertaining worship, the pastor is better dressed.

And that may be true, and if those things are important, than you will be troubled here.

But what we do have is opportunity for you to live out God’s Word, not just hear it.

This neighborhood is difficult, this ministry is hated by Satan, we are a light in a very dark area, and the spiritual warfare is intense.

We have two Muslim Mosques right across the street, a mason lodge over there, and every now and again,

we are privileged to have the Black Hebrew Israelites marching up and down our street during service chanting their slogans.

But there is no place I would rather be, then here where the Gospel is needed the most.

Christian's are called to go, to take up their cross and follow Jesus, we are not called to take up our feather beds and take it easy for Jesus.

To park in a pew week after week, ours is a doing faith.

So, I am not sure if you have ever been welcomed to a church like that, but I believe if you are called here, it is because God is done having you be a pew sitter, and He has a place to use you in His Great Work.

Just so, you know, we are work boot kind of ministry, loafers are cool, but they might be a little scuffed up once you get engaged.

Now, there is something very difficult to consider about our world, and the ministry we are in here.

You see, every man and woman has a choice, they have freewill, endowed to them by their Creator.

And this makes ministry difficult, and trying, it is painful at times, and we can get weary.

How much easier would it have been if God just made mankind with no choice in our response to Him.

If He made us into His subjects, and like robots without any thought at all as we worshipped and lived for Him?

But because God took a chance with love, over force, it makes this life dangerous and uncertain.

Love is the more dangerous way for sure, verses a creation that automatically responds to its Creator.

And this difficulty of choice, sometimes it makes it difficult for people to stay the course, or keep their hands to the plow in the work of God.

Because not every child in our classrooms will respond to God's Grace, few people we evangelize will respond, and many will reject God's Grace, some will mock it, or simply not be affected in any way by it.

But God does not want robots in humanity, He desires a True Love's response back toward Him.

And for us His messengers, this makes our task at hand a lot more challenging, but this is the way God wants it.

And as we will see in our text this morning, Jesus did not come at His first advent to bring a sword, and to take a throne, and force humanity to be His loyal subjects, He instead came at first to reach us with His love.

There will be those that are NOT happy with this way, and even are confused by Jesus, we will see even a notable godly man, John the Baptist was mixed up.

The Jews on a whole were waiting for a Military Leader, a Messianic Hero, a Conquering King, they

wanted Freedom from Rome, and were ready to get behind their Commander and establish His throne on earth.

I heard about the new abortion law in New York that passed this week, how they can now legally murder babies in the final months of pregnancy, there is no rights for the babies, and I cannot get over how wicked humanity is, and I am tempted to think it would be easier if Christ just came back now, with His fire and winnowing fan, and judged this earth.

But, that time has not yet come, today in our dispensation, we are called to Go, and reach this lost world with God's Loving Gospel.

Today humanity has a choice, and this choice comes with a cost, and people can choose evil and rebellion toward their Creator.

But for the sake of those who will respond to His Love, we go, and our Kingdom today is not built with military might but with the Power of God to Salvation found in His Gospel Message.

This is our dispensation, it could end any day, but this is how we work today, with Love and Grace.

Understand soon, humanity will not get this privilege of choice, there is coming a day, that every proud knee will bow, and every boastful mouth will confess Jesus as Lord, be it in hell or on earth or in heaven.

But today is the Day of Grace.

So let us get into our teaching this morning, we are studying through Luke, and we are in Chapter 7 verses 18-35 this morning.

Let us pray...

Remember last time we were together, Jesus performed one of His greatest miracles, in raising the Widow's son from the dead there in the city of Nain.

Remember after this took place the news about Jesus and His ministry began to spread all throughout Israel.

Now, at this point in Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner and prophet, was imprisoned.

Remember back in **Luke 3:19-20** we read....

19 But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20 also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.

John the Baptist was no respecter of persons or titles, he was a man bound to truth, and he did not shy away from calling Herod's affair with his brother's wife sinful and wrong.

His commitment to truth has led him to the gloomy fortress Machaerus, a prison within the palace of king Herod.

His imprisonment was very grim and horribly lonely.

Understand how troubling it would have been for the Baptist, who had known only of a life in the wilderness, free from any societal confines.

He was a man who was free, and led by the Spirit in his journeys throughout the wilderness of the Jordan Valley.

This man, who has only known freedom and fresh air, is now bound in a dark isolated place.

Why was he sitting in prison if the Messiah had come?

Why was Rome still ruling the land, why are the taxes still being levied?

Why is the dreaded fox Herod and his scandalous wife Herodias still in power?

Remember in John's introduction of the Messiah, he pointed the oppressed Jews to their long awaited King of kings.

Luke 3:16-17 John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

Where was this unquenchable fire to disarm these heathen Romans?

John, as he is sitting in prison has gotten word of all Jesus' miracles and of His great teachings, but where was the sword?

Maybe John had missed something, maybe there was more, or someone else, maybe Jesus was only another forerunner?

So, we see next John sends some of his disciples to find out what was going on.

Look at verses 18-20 of Luke 7 with me...

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus(Matt 11:2-19)

7:18 Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. 19 And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

20 When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'"

We see here now, as John languishes in prison, he is casting doubts about Jesus.

This is the wonderful thing about the Bible, it presents its heroes in an honest light.

Do you ever have doubts about your faith? Do you ever struggle in your walk with Jesus? Do you ever let the horrible circumstances of your life block your view of how mighty our God is?

Well, guess what, so did this great prophet of God.

In fact, we will see later on, that Jesus will say there was no greater prophet than John the Baptist was.

And John was troubled greatly here, John announced that Jesus was the Lamb of God, sent to take away the sin of the world.

John made it very clear, at the height and success of his ministry that Jesus was the Coming One, John announced he was not even worthy to unloosen his sandal strap.

It says in **John 1:32-34** **And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."**

John was certain at one point that Jesus was the Deliverer.

Now he could reconcile the miracles as Messianic, but what about the rest of the message God gave him to announce.

Why was He not cleaning out His threshing floor?

Disappointment and confusion have overtaken the Baptist.

Now many people try to save the beloved John the Baptist's reputation.

It is interesting how uncomfortable people get when their heroes are revealed to be human, like everyone else.

But some have endeavored to explain that John was not worried, and it was his disciples that were troubled.

And in order for them to be secure in their faith, John sends his troubled disciples to Jesus.

But again, this is only an attempt to make John the Baptist into a spiritual giant.

When in reality, he was a man, like you and I, and understand as we will see, Jesus sends these disciples back to John to relay a message back to him, to comfort his doubting heart and mind.

Understand John's purpose has been completed and he has faithfully ushered in the New Era of Christ.

John will die soon, his head removed from his body.

But the story of man's redemption was not centered on John.

And John, who once held all Judea captive, who had thousands coming to hear him preach, who had the ear and even the respect from some of the religious leaders, he now sits alone in prison, with only his uneasy disciples coming to visit him.

Please understand, as difficult and harsh as it sounds, none of this, none of the ministry of Christ's church hangs on one man.

We all we come and go, we may pass on some legacy to our children, but our names will all fade quickly, if we are doing this right.

There should only be One Name that is remembered from this ministry here in Victorville, and if we are doing it right, people will talk about what Christ is doing.

Because once a man, tries to hold onto any of the glory, any of the prestige or honor, that ministry is heading to uncertainty and doom.

The Biblical narrative never lets us lift man too high, it only exalts One Name, it is all about One God, and it lifts Jesus' Name above all names.

Our lives are but a bleep in the scope of things.

I like what the songwriter Johnny Cash wrote at the end of his life, "And you can have it all, my empire of dirt!"

But this is the thing, this is the secret to leaving the greatest legacy for others.

Live your life to the glory of God, you decrease and let Jesus increase, and you will find the greatest possible life that you can live here in this world.

Now, John's woes are understood, there is no way we can judge him as though we have never thought about the things he is pondering.

All of us, I imagine, have hoped God would send His righteous wrath to this earth upon evil doers.

Or especially evil doers that do evil toward me!

We want to pray sometimes like the Psalmist, **Ps 11:6**

6 Upon the wicked He will rain coals;

Fire and brimstone and a burning wind

Shall be the portion of their cup.

This is how John thought, and how we think sometimes about our unjust world.

Now, John had received revelation that Jesus would one day Judge this earth.

But he did not understand that there were two comings spoken about in the scriptures.

Jesus, first came as the suffering servant spoken of by the prophet Isaiah.

Jesus came once as the sacrifice for man's sin.

And Jesus, will come again, a second time as Judge of all the earth.

John pressed the two comings together as one.

And he was greatly confused.

So, Jesus puts forth the evidence now, of His ministry next, as He showcases the love and mercy of God.

Remember God chose to first give man a chance through love.

21 And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight.

22 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. 23 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

John's representatives arrived at precisely the right time.

Jesus was in the midst of demonstrating the healing power of God.

Notice in verse 21, Luke records in that very hour Jesus cured many of infirmities, affliction, and those tormented by evil spirits, and even to the blind, He gave them eyesight.

These people were suffering, the afflicted here, speaks of the painful condition that they were subject too.

The doctor Luke records Jesus cured them all, apart from any medicine or modern science.

Even the evil spirits that controlled their hosts fled at the word of Jesus.

It truly seems that the Holy Land was overwhelmed with demonic activity at the time of Jesus.

Clearly, Satan has pulled most of his resources to Israel at this time, to oppose the work of our Savior.

But they were no match for the Son of God.

Jesus tells John's messengers to go back and report the things that they saw and heard to John.

Jesus knows John's troubled heart will be comforted as he ponders the Messianic Scriptures being fulfilled in Jesus.

Isa 35:5-6 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.

Or even the prophecy Jesus opened His own ministry with when He read *Isa 61:1*

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,

Because the Lord has anointed Me

To preach good tidings to the poor;

He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,

To proclaim liberty to the captives,

And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

The messengers would bring back word to John, and in verse 23, Jesus sent a blessing back for John, "Blessed is he who is not offended because of me."

John could peaceably wait for his fateful death, knowing that his ministry was not in vain.

He truly was the herald of the Messiah.

Now, it is interesting, Jesus waits for the messengers of John to leave.

And perhaps the crowd that is left with Jesus is a little troubled that the revered John the Baptist even had doubts, maybe some of Jesus' disciples were wondering about the stature or validity of John the Baptist now.

Surely, there seems to be some doubt in this crowd, because Jesus addresses them about the Baptist.

24 When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is he of whom it is written:

'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'

28 For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

Jesus displays His own tender love in His defense of John.

Jesus honors John, and explains, that John is a man, and only man, yet John was a special man.

He challenges the crowd, and asks them what did you go out to the wilderness to see?

Did you go all the way to the Jordan River, to see the reeds swaying in the wind by the water?

No, they went all that way to see a man, who was set apart.

Who was not shaken by the blowing demands and pressures of this world.

John was born into a priestly family, and he could have lived a life in those soft priestly robes, in the decorated apparel of a priest.

Clothes that make the statement that he was accepted and respected by man.

The finer the apparel the higher in society you would be, and the corrupted priesthood most definitely rubbed shoulders with the royalty of Rome.

But John forsook this worlds system and way altogether, these people went out to the river to see a

prophet, a man not corrupted by this world's pressures or comforts.

No one could bribe John the Baptist with money, or pleasantries, he chose to live in the wilderness eating locust and honey, he had no fleshly motives.

And because of his commitment to preaching truth untainted with false pretenses, he called out sinners and even the religious, and prepared the way for the Lord Jesus.

He like a king's messenger prepared the roads and the people for his Master's arrival.

John's preaching broke down the mountain peaks of pride and lifted the valleys of despair, and prepared the hearts of Israel for Jesus.

John was not just any prophet, he was more than a prophet, because he was the prophet that the Old Testament prophets spoke of.

The very last prophet from the Old dispensation, Malachi, in chapter 3, spoke of John's arrival, that he was a sign that the Messiah was soon coming.

Jesus says John is the greatest of all the prophets, because his life meant that one chapter was being closed and another dispensation was here.

John was the final prophet of old, and he made way for the Era of Christ.

All the old prophets spoke of this day, but could not see it clearly, John, vividly saw the Spirit descend upon Jesus, and he was the culmination of the days of prophets.

Now this world would have the Word in Flesh, Jesus is here now, and this world has never been the same.

John's departure and Jesus' arrival divided history in two.

B.C. determines the time before Christ, and A.D. Anno Domini means the year of our Lord.

Even history speaks of the greatest moment, and this wonderful time we live in, this is the day of Christ.

Modern historians try to conceal this truth by changing B.C. to BCE, Before the Common Era, and CE Common Era.

Interestingly, it is still divided at Jesus' arrival to this earth.

Jesus gives John the greatest honor among all the prophets, and yet He says something even more incredible.

In this new era that was being ushered in, the Christian Era, the Era of Grace, the Church Age, Jesus says the least in the kingdom is even greater than John the Baptist.

Later in our study of Luke Jesus will make another incredible statement about the privilege of our Era.

Luke 10:23-24 Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; 24 for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

This Church Age is the Greatest Age to be born in.

Here today is offered to humanity the opportunity to be born again.

We have the written Word, revealing the Truth of Jesus, we have the testimony of the early disciples and 2000 years of history to look upon and see the effects of that Gospel of Love and Grace has had in our world.

We have the full revelation of God's Word, and even those of us who only understand the simplest message of salvation, we have a greater revelation and knowledge of God than even John the Baptist.

If your doctrine goes no further than the songs you sang in Children's ministry, that "Jesus Loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

You are greater than the greatest prophet of old.

That is something to be excited about and to ponder this morning.

Jesus loves you, His Blood washes you clean, if you have Jesus this morning, then you have everything.

And yet with this great privilege of our Era, there is a great danger, God took a chance with this demonstration of love toward us.

Because now man must choose to Love God back...

We must make a decision to love and follow Jesus, or reject Him.

And this is the great challenge of our age, that an all-powerful, all-knowing God, entrusts each and every one of our fickle and wicked hearts to choose for ourselves.

The God who by a word could destroy everything that He created with a word, calls each finite man and woman to make a choice.

He did not, does not have to do this, but this is way that He has determined, a True love desires a True loves response back.

And as we will see next, this means salvation for some, and tragedy for others.

29 And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. 30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

Jesus has shown that John was a great prophet, and God spoke through John this Divine message.

Remember John's message was repent, and bear good fruit worthy of repentance.

In this Era to be converted, repentance and faith are needed.

For which the tax collectors and sinners heard and believed, and were moved to demonstrate their changed hearts in John's baptism.

They justified God, or declared God to be just.

But the Pharisees and the scribes stood indignant at the moving of God's Spirit.

They came to watch John, and were in awe of this Elijah looking prophet.

But they could not humble themselves, they were too dignified to accept that they had to go down to that filthy Jordan River to be baptized.

They thought as many do today, "I am religious, I am a good person, I am traditional, me and God are good."

They rejected the plan of God, and in their arrogance, they looked down cynically on all those sinners coming to repent.

When the common people heard John's message, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee the wrath to come?"

They were not offended, no, they knew they were wicked, they knew sin reigned in their hearts and minds, and they responded in humility.

But the religious, who prided themselves in living according to the Law, they were content to rest their hope on the merits of their own works, and refrained from humiliating themselves in baptism.

They rejected God's Way, they rejected God's love, and they rejected salvation.

They had a professional familiarity with God and they were faithful to church, and they knew scripture.

There is a huge danger in those who are familiar with religious life, who can speak Christianese, who have known church life, and become mindlessly blinded to their own need for salvation.

If someone asks you, "Are you a Christian?" and your reply is, "Yes, I go to church, I was raised in church, I rarely miss church." And if this is your statement of faith, you might be in great danger.

If you watch other sinners come to the altar to seek God's Grace and forgiveness, and are dull to your own need for repentance, you are in grave danger.

When was the moment, that the Spirit revealed your vial heart to you, when was the time you became aware that God was a Holy and Just God, and you are a wretched man or woman?

When was that moment of desperation, when your sins were illuminated to you, and you ran to God and asked for Mercy?

The danger of being familiar with religion, is this vital reality never enters your heart, and thousands today go strolling along into hell with their good religion.

A good test, a check for your own soul, is to consider how you react around sinners, those who are blatant and brazen about their sin.

Do you look down upon the sinner, in arrogance, in a repulsive way, do you hold your religion so high, that you can't but help confront them, and demean them.

Do you thank God that you are not like them?

If you do, then you are hopelessly lost.

But if you see the sinner with pity, with the understanding that there is nothing separating you from that adulteress woman, those fornicators, those heathen, that there is no merit of your own that holds you above the murderer, the liar, the thief, the enraged.

When you look at them with the understanding, that if they don't receive the same Grace that changed your heart, they will perish.

If you are converted, you will not just want to see the drunkard sober, the adulterer faithful, the fornicator pure, if you are a true convert you will not just simply want to see the liar honest, the thief working.

You understand that in yourself, you are all of those things, but your hope is the sinner finds salvation, not that he just stops his or her behavior.

The legalist is focused on changing behavior, the converted want to see others come into contact with God's wonderful life changing Grace.

We cannot look down upon the sinner, because we are the sinner, and only one choice separates us from them, we responded to God's love.

And His Spirit came in us, and by His power and by His strength did we overcome any sin.

The religious focus on the outward appearances, the truly converted focus on conversion.

The religious people of Jesus' day had no need to humble themselves, in their eyes, they were good, and today the religious are still among us.

So next, Jesus will expose the foolish hearts of the rejecter of His Gospel, and the foolishness of religion.

31 And the Lord said, "To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying:

'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not weep.'

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' 34 The

Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' 35 But wisdom is justified by all her children."

Jesus changes His style of teaching to stress the importance of what He is trying to say here.

Jesus uses parabolic language again, and He paints a picture for His listeners.

He pictures an empty market place, and as we know, when children see a big wide-open area, it becomes a place for imagination.

My kids, when no one is here in the sanctuary turn this place into a wonderland in their hearts and minds.

Their imaginations come alive.

So when you see them running around the church here like crazy animals, it is because they are here more than any other place than their home.

They are perhaps a little too comfortable, running around here.

But they are only going to be little for a little while, soon they will be 13, with their arms crossed sitting in the back of the sanctuary.

So don't be too bothered by the little ones running around here, we will just let them enjoy their childhood.

So Jesus pictures these little children playing games in a wide open space.

He starts out by saying, “what shall I liken this generation too?”

They are childish.

They are like kids remembering the beautiful Middle Eastern weddings that they have seen.

And it was such a great event that they want to pretend wedding.

“Johnny you will be the groom, Lacy you will be the bride, Jenny you will be the maid of honor, and you are the dad, and we will play the flutes and dance.”

But others stood opposed they just recently went to a funeral, and the memory of it all is fresh, and that is what they want to play.

They protest, “No, Johnny can be the dead man, Lacy can be his wife crying, and Jenny can be her friend comforting her, the rest of us will play the mourners!”

They are scolding one another because they are uncooperative and not going along.

This petty quarreling develops as they go back and forth.

“You are never happy, you always get to pick, and you never care what I want.”

Not only are these kids bickering and irritable, they are fickle and inconsistent.

They are discontent and unhappy with any scenario suggested to them.

Then Jesus explains this is how this generation is acting, they are being childish.

They are acting foolishly and immature.

They are never satisfied.

John came living the ascetic life, he sacrificed the finer things, and these intellectuals reasoned 'he had a demon.'

He was too rigid and legalistic, an extremist and his message too harsh and too austere.

Yet Jesus came preaching Grace to the sinners and associated with the lowly and the outcast.

He ate and drank with the lost sheep of Israel with the hope of saving them.

And these bratty critics said "he was a glutton and winebibber."

"He was not strict enough, His message was too soft and too lenient."

"Jesus demands self-denial of others, but look He hangs out with tax collectors and sinners."

They are never happy, and Jesus points out in verse 35, that wisdom is justified by all her children.

Truth will prevail over these unfair and immature critics.

The wisdom of John the Baptist, when he insisted conversion, and of Jesus, when He held out hope of salvation even to those who in Israel which were despised, their messages shown to be justified in the changed lives.

Those who allowed themselves to be guided by Wisdom were the proof of the Truth of John and Jesus' message.

1 Cor. 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption

Jesus and His message are the wisdom from God.

Whoever puts their faith in Him and His Truth will forever be a Child of the Most High God.

John proclaimed the Good News and Jesus not only proclaimed it, He came to the world that there might be good news.

Don't you find it fascinating, that still today, in our generation, we find the same reaction to Jesus and His message?

The disparaging accusation laid against Jesus, that He is a friend of sinners and Tax Collectors, is still used.

People look at the church, filled with outcasts, with nobodies, with the weak and debased of this world.

They look at us who have responded to His love, and they scratch their heads, at how such a group of misfits has been so influential in our world and history.

Yet, it is because those of us who have our hearts open to True Wisdom, we take by faith the Grace freely given to us, we find that same disparaging statement, "Friend of sinners and Tax Collectors," well, we see it as a one the most hope giving, soul stirring statements.

They mock at Jesus being a friend of the lowly, yet we who are lowly rejoice at the news of Jesus being a friend to the outcast.

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

We are sinners, we are wretched, weak, and despised, but God took a chance on this world with Love, and when we see ourselves honestly, and we see His love clearly, and we believe in Jesus, we are saved.

But the chance He took, comes with huge consequences, because the rejecters are many.

The childish critics abound, the mockers jeer, and they are condemned eternally.

The tribe of even the Pharisee lives on today, those who find fault with this doctrine, no matter how it is

presented, if through Grace or Fire, they see it of no bother for themselves.

They claim one sermon does not have enough doctrine, and another they say it is too weighty.

That church is too emotional, or that church is too serious, they see Christians as dull and claim some are too rigid.

Nothing pleases the heart that does not have an awareness of its own wretchedness.

But what relief, what Joy, what peace, to know your own need.

What Grace we can understand when we are able to mourn over our own sin with disgust, and confessing them honestly before God.

Then we can dance and celebrate “to the music of heaven.” Hughes

If you have never grabbed ahold of this Divine Wisdom, do so today.

Wisdom is justified by her children... you can take by faith what John and Jesus preached, and experience New Life.

Understand God took a chance with love, but for the sake of the few who choose to respond, for Him it is worth it.

There are only two options in regards to eternal salvation, you can come to Jesus, or you can reject Him.

And when you hear that this morning, your heart is responding in one of two ways... **1 Cor. 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

This morning if you have decided to respond to God's Love, and receive His Grace, there will be men up here that desire to pray with you, make your way up to them, and pray the prayer of salvation this morning.

Abandon the delusion of self-sufficiency and receive Christ's righteousness.

Also, for the rest of us, God took a chance on us with love, may we shine this same love to others.

Love is messy sometimes, it can be heartbreaking, and so difficult, but this is our calling.

May we love others fearlessly as we have been loved so greatly from our Father in Heaven, Amen?

Let's pray...

If you have any prayer needs please come forward and pray with one of these guys, don't leave here with the burdens you came in with.

You are loved....