



► *Mercy Extended* ◀

JESUS SHOWS MERCY TO ALL WHO COME TO HIM IN FAITH.

MATTHEW 9:10-19,23-26

Suffering is everywhere. Hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and wild-fires are in the news frequently. Add to that cancer, heart disease, dementia, and broken relationships. Overlooking the suffering of others is easy to do when each of us is facing our own form of suffering. We often neglect to extend compassion to others when we ourselves need compassion. Thankfully, Jesus never overlooks the suffering we face. He shows compassion and mercy to all who come to Him.



In what ways can we show mercy in our everyday encounters?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

MATTHEW 9:9-38

One feature of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is the repeated reference to Jesus’s authority. Matthew used the word *authority* nine times (see, for example, Matt. 7:28-29). Following three chapters of authoritative teaching, chapters 8–9 contain stories of Jesus’s authoritative power in healing. In each narrative of healing, the compassion and mercy of Jesus is a predominant feature.

Chapter 9 begins with the story considered in last week’s study of the paralyzed man brought to Jesus by four friends. Immediately following that narrative, the writer of the Gospel gives us a glimpse into his own calling to be a disciple. While Mark and Luke also record the calling of Matthew, in those two Gospels he is called Levi, which was his Hebrew name. Matthew was his Greek name. He was a tax collector for the Roman government. He mentioned the fact that he was sitting at a tax collector’s office or booth in verse 9. This would identify him as one who most likely collected taxes from the many commercial boats that landed at the shore area near Capernaum. Many of these boats were owned by Gentiles. Thus, Matthew was despised not only because he was a tax collector but also as one who was defiled from frequent contact with Gentiles. No doubt Matthew included the story of his calling to point to the fact that Jesus extended grace even to those considered to be outcasts.

After his calling, Matthew gave a banquet in honor of Jesus. This banquet contributed to a growing conflict between the religious leaders and Jesus (vv. 10-13).

Following the confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus performed additional acts of compassion, including the healing of a chronically ill woman, the resurrection of a young girl from the dead, giving sight to two blind men, and delivering a demon-possessed man (vv. 18-34). Chapter 9 concludes with a summary statement of the compassionate healing ministry of Jesus.



Review Matthew 9:10-19,23-26 in your Bible. Summarize and contrast the attitudes of the Pharisees to the compassionate attitude of Jesus.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

JESUS'S MISSION (MATT. 9:10-13)

¹⁰ While he was reclining at the table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² Now when he heard this, he said, “It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

VERSES 10-11

Luke 5:29 indicates that this dinner was in honor of Jesus. Matthew’s life had been so impacted by the call of Jesus that he threw a party in his home. Those invited were his fellow *tax collectors* as well as other *sinners*, likely including criminals, prostitutes, drunkards, and others who were offensive to the social and religious elite.

Obviously, the Pharisees were not invited to this banquet. But they knew what was going on. They *saw* the kinds of people with whom Jesus dined, which brought immediate criticism. This could have been the first time Jesus was criticized for being “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matt. 11:19).



What does it mean that Jesus was a “friend of sinners”?
What does it look like for His followers to be friends of sinners?

The Pharisees raised an objection with Jesus’s disciples: ***Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?*** In this question was an implicit rebuke of Jesus. The Pharisees hated Him because He didn’t do things “their way.”

This pattern of questioning the disciples rather than confronting Jesus happened from time to time. Perhaps the reason was the religious leaders’ fear of the people. The Pharisees were motivated by hatred for Jesus, but their actions were often tempered by fear of the crowds and the potential reaction of people to their criticism of Jesus.

VERSE 12

Word reached Jesus of the Pharisees' question. How this happened is uncertain. This verse simply states, ***now when he heard this***. He may have overheard the question being asked, or the disciples may have repeated it to Him. Jesus responded to the Pharisees on behalf of the disciples. For Him to answer the question rather than the disciples may have been disconcerting to the Pharisees. Often, these confrontations between the religious leaders and Jesus ended with the Pharisees being embarrassed in front of the crowds.

Jesus was aware of the intent of the Pharisees but refused to take the bait. Instead, He answered the question directly by quoting a well-known proverb of the day. The proverb stated that it is sick people who need a doctor. The Greek historian Plutarch quoted this parable from a Spartan king named Pausanias: "It is not the custom of doctors to spend time among people who are healthy, but where people are ill."

Jesus, however, shifted the meaning of the proverb away from physical healing. He had already demonstrated His power and His willingness to heal physical maladies. Spiritual healing was Jesus's focus as He addressed the Pharisees. The religious leaders missed the point that sinners needed spiritual healing. Because of this, His ministry among them was essential.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Man*

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 1:21-22.)

VERSE 13

Quoting Hosea 6:6, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their uncaring attitude. It was obvious they cared only for themselves. ***Go and learn what this means*** was a double slam to them. Using a phrase that was common in rabbinical writings, Jesus spoke of the Pharisees not as teachers who should know the meaning of the law but as beginning students who needed to start at the beginning to learn the ways of God.

Jesus did not come to call the ***righteous, but sinners***. Of course, all are sinners. But in the Pharisees' mind, they were spiritually healthy. Therefore, they saw no need for what Jesus offered.

The tax collectors and sinners, on the other hand, knew that they were not right with God and needed what Jesus offered.



How would you summarize what Jesus came to do?

JESUS'S WORK (MATT. 9:14-17)

¹⁴ **Then John's disciples came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"** ¹⁵ **Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests be sad while the groom is with them? The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.** ¹⁶ **No one patches an old garment with unshrunk cloth, because the patch pulls away from the garment and makes the tear worse.** ¹⁷ **And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. No, they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."**

VERSE 14

Jesus was criticized by the Pharisees because He associated with outcasts. In verse 14, He was criticized by disciples of John the Baptist. Their criticism, while sincere in contrast to the Pharisees, concerned the fact that Jesus's disciples did not *fast*. This gave John's disciples the impression that the commitment of Jesus's disciples was not deep.

This is the first mention of *John's disciples* in the Synoptic Gospels. The fourth Gospel mentions John's disciples prominently in the first chapter (John 1:35-37). Andrew was a disciple of John who began to follow Jesus. John the Baptist had said, "[Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Yet some of his disciples continued to follow him. In fact, those who called themselves John's disciples continued long after John was executed by Herod Antipas. Paul even encountered them in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:25; 19:3).

To *fast* was to forego eating in order to fully concentrate on devotion to God. John had promoted it as a sign of repentance in preparation for the coming Messiah. Now these disciples wanted to know why Jesus wasn't promoting that lifestyle as well.

VERSE 15

Jesus's response to John's disciples was simple: the Messiah was present; therefore, it was time for celebration not fasting. To make His point, Jesus used the illustration of a wedding celebration. Joy and celebration are a fitting description of new life in Christ.

Note that the central focus in the wedding illustration is ***the groom***, who represents Jesus. His presence required celebration. After He departed, there would be time enough for fasting.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are over 70 references to fasting in the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments teach its value. Notable examples include 2 Chronicles 20:3; Ezra 8:23; Nehemiah 1:4; Psalm 69:10; Matthew 4:1-2; and Acts 13:1-2.

VERSE 16

Jesus continued to press the emphasis on a new approach to living in relationship with God. The life of freedom He offered stood in sharp contrast to the rules and regulations of the Pharisees and even to the austere lifestyle of John. Jesus illustrated this by contrasting ***unshrunk cloth*** with an ***old garment***. *Unshrunk cloth* refers to cloth that has not been cleaned or combed to remove the oils in the fabric. Such fabric when it is washed shrinks quickly. One cannot sew the new piece onto an old piece of cloth that has been washed frequently. The new way of grace that Jesus brought was incompatible with the legalistic ways of the Pharisees.

VERSE 17

The same principle applied to ***new wine*** being put into ***old wineskins***. The soft and pliable leather of ***fresh wineskins*** will adequately hold new wine that is continuing to ferment and give off the fumes of fermentation. But to put that same new wine into wineskins that were old, dried, and stiff ran the risk of the skins bursting with the ongoing fermentation.

Again, Jesus was offering that which was new—far removed from rules, rituals, and regulations. It was a radical departure from man-made efforts to put oneself in right relationship with God. Instead, Jesus came to put us right with God by grace through faith.



What does Jesus offer that religion does not?

Jesus was offering that which was new—far removed from rules, rituals, and regulations.

JESUS'S COMPASSION (MATT. 9:18-19)

¹⁸ **As he was telling them these things, suddenly one of the leaders came and knelt down before him, saying, “My daughter just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”**

¹⁹ **So Jesus and his disciples got up and followed him.**

VERSE 18

At the end of chapter 9, Matthew wrote that when Jesus “saw the crowds, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd” (v. 36). Jesus’s compassion is clearly demonstrated in verses 18-34.

The miracles of Jesus frequently started with an interruption, as in verse 18. As Jesus was responding to John’s disciples, He was **suddenly** interrupted by the plea of **one of the leaders** begging Jesus to come and give life back to his **daughter**. Both Mark and Luke identify this leader as Jairus, a chief official in the local synagogue (Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41). In their more detailed accounts, Mark and Luke indicate when Jairus first approached Jesus, his daughter was not dead but at the point of death.

What is significant is the reverence and faith of this father. He **knelt down before** Jesus. He also expressed belief that, with just a touch of Jesus’s **hand**, his child would **live**. In putting the life of his daughter in Jesus’s hands, this leader was bucking the religious establishment of which he himself was a part. He turned to the only One who could give life back to his little girl.



What prompted the leader to approach Jesus? Why should we take our concerns to Jesus?

VERSE 19

With compassion, Jesus rose to accompany this grieving father to his home. Jesus knew that, sometimes, interruptions are divine appointments. The disciples also followed, and according to Mark, “a large crowd was following and pressing against him” (Mark 5:24).

Sometimes, interruptions are divine appointments.

JESUS’S POWER (MATT. 9:23-26)

²³ When Jesus came to the leader’s house, he saw the flute players and a crowd lamenting loudly. ²⁴ “Leave,” he said, “because the girl is not dead but asleep.” And they laughed at him. ²⁵ After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶ Then news of this spread throughout that whole area.

VERSES 23-24

Arriving at the house, Jesus discovered ***the flute players and a crowd lamenting loudly***. These were professional mourners. Their presence indicated that enough time had passed since the daughter had died to summon them.

Jesus dispersed the mourners. When He declared that the girl was ***not dead but asleep***, they ***laughed at him*** in disbelief. By saying she was asleep, Jesus was indicating that the girl’s death was not permanent. The term *sleep* is used as a synonym for death throughout the New Testament. (See John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:6; 1 Thess. 4:13.)

VERSES 25-26

The words ***put outside*** implies more than simply inviting them to step outside. The terminology points to a forceful eviction of the mourners from the house. The presence of mourners was a time-honored tradition. So in the crowd’s mind, Jesus rejected tradition once again by demanding they leave the house.

Once the scene was calm, Jesus brought the girl’s parents and three of the disciples—Peter, James, and John—into the room (Luke 8:51). Taking the child by the hand, He raised her from death. Both Mark and Luke record Jesus’s words, “get up” (Mark 5:41; Luke 8:54). Jesus touched her and spoke gently to her.

These gestures demonstrate His compassion toward those in need. His example serves as a strong encouragement to all His followers to extend compassion to others.

As with many of Jesus’s miracles, news of this miracle quickly *spread throughout that whole area.*



How does it impact your faith when you read of Jesus’s miracles and power?





BIBLE SKILL: *Use a concordance and/or Bible dictionary to learn more about a feature of Israel’s religious life.*

Use a concordance to find references to fasting in the Bible. Read the article about fasting in a Bible dictionary. What are the different forms of fasting in the Bible? What biblical purposes of fasting did you discover? Consider how fasting can benefit you spiritually. How can you incorporate the discipline of fasting into your life?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + We can trust that Jesus came to offer salvation to sinners.
- + We can rejoice in the truth that salvation is not based on religious works or rituals.
- + We can know that Jesus cares and will respond to our needs.
- + We can trust that Jesus has the power to transform lives.

 **With your Bible study group, list the different types of needs of which you are aware in the lives of people around you. (You may choose not to use names but categories instead.) Discuss ways your group can work together to extend compassion to someone represented on that list.**

 **Consider your daily actions. Would your attitude and actions be characterized as compassionate? What are some steps you can take to develop greater mercy and compassion toward others?**



Memorize Matthew 9:12.

Prayer Needs
