

August 11, 2020

Go learn this...

Then you'll know why Christ came

Matt 9:12-13

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

The Pharisees were righteous...at least they thought they were. Among the rest of the Israelite population were many others who diligently honored God in their lives, believing in his provision of forgiveness through faith. Many in this religious segment of society felt the BEST way to live for God was to follow the rules, go to the temple, offer sacrifices and fulfill the law. Their opinion of those who chose not to honor God, or in some way had been cast out already...too bad for them. Jesus could have felt the same, and they thought that he should.

However, Jesus knew he had a higher calling; calling the sinners to repentance.

No doubt there were many faithful Hebrews in Jesus' day mixed in among the white washed sepulchers known as Pharisees. Their assumption would be that Jesus, a man wanting to honor God, would do as they did and attend synagogue, mix with them and be part of the religious crowd. He did go to the temple or synagogue regularly, but he also desired to show mercy to those sinners that had never been shown mercy by the arrogant religious. This aggravated them, and led them to believe that he did not understand God's demands for holiness. IN contrast, their attitude aggravated Jesus because they did not understand God's love, grace and mercy. God does demand holiness, but he's also provided a way for his grace to be offered to those who need a second, third...another chance. (Aren't you personally glad for that!)

Religion can become very selfish very fast. Questions like, "What can I do for God that will make him love me?" or "How can I get more blessings from my obedience?" have problems. God already loves you, and my love for him motivates my obedience, not his blessings.

There is nothing overtly wrong about expecting God to bless us when we are obedient. He's promised to do so. But when my motivation to be "religiously obedient" is to gain for myself, I've missed the mark. The life of a Christ follower must follow him out of the church and into the world.