

Being More than the Tax Collectors

In **Matthew 5:46-48** Jesus is teaching the Jews about being more. In Matthew 5,6 and 7 Jesus offers a radical sermon. It taught us all about a new way of living. Not following the Old Covenant, but instead a new Covenant. A new kingdom was at hand (**Matthew 4:17**) and the need for repentance was required. Here Jesus laid out the plan for us to live by. During this sermon Jesus points out to us that we need to be more than what the tax collectors were.

Let us think about this for a minute. There are many things that I think sound right and good and the same goes for you. But is it truly, right? We cannot guide our own footsteps (**Jeremiah 10:23**). We need help in this life. We cannot solely base what we deem is right and okay and sounds good. We can be easily deceived by our own logic.

What about how we love? What about loving those who love us back? Do we love them only? What about those who do not love us back? What about those who are mean, ridicule us, make fun of us, and do not love us in return? Do we love them? Are they not our neighbor (**Mark 12:31**)?

A greater question to ask is who our neighbor is (Luke 10:29-37). The Samaritan was an enemy of the Jews. The one who you thought who kick the one down and "finish the job" was the one who showed compassion and went beyond the call of duty. As continue to read into this parable we see what it means to be more than like everyone else. The "enemy" helped this man and continued by make sure he made a full recovery. He was not like everyone else nor did do just the bare minimum which would have been satisfactory. He was letting that light shine even brighter.

How have the tax collectors been viewed? They are scum, lower than low, thieves, etc. They were viewed as likable people. Nor are they today too. But look they will love those who love them, they will also greet those who greet them. As Jesus is pointing out they are willing to do what their belief. That is to love their neighbor and hate the enemy (**Matthew 5:45**). They (the Jews) did the things that seemed right and okay. They were doing the same as these tax collectors.

But Jesus taught something more. Jesus was a radical in the eyes of many during these times. He taught against the grain. He challenged people to think and used so many ways to get the Jews to understand using parables. Some were not willing to listen and would not make sense and for others that would listen the seed would grow and produce fruit!

We cannot be selective in who we love, in who we greet, and in who we share the gospel with. Jesus first taught us in **Mark 16:15** to go and preach the gospel to everyone! There is no holding back with the gospel message. Jesus taught us to love our neighbor (**Mark 12:31**). There were no specifications on who the neighbor was. We are reminded that we are to do our duty as a Christian (**Romans 12:15-21**). It depends on us to love and to receive love. Be a neighbor in the way Jesus described (**Luke 10:25-37**). That is to show it to all even to the one who may not expect it at all.

Keep your eye on the prize (**Philippians 3:12-16**). To be more than tax collectors or even the world. Be Christians! (**I Peter 2:9-10**). Daniel N Sanders