

# Wounded Healers

On Sunday we wrapped up our September focus on the consequences of the fall of humanity by asking: If sin and disobedience messed everything up, how to we ever get it back to good?

1. Warm-up question: Sunday's sermon began with a joke about good nurses who go to heaven and bad nurses who don't. ☺ Tell us about the best – or worst – nurse you've ever had?
2. Stop 20 people on the street and ask them each, "What does a person have to do to be right with God and get into heaven?" Almost all will say something like, "You've got to live a good life. Good people go to heaven; bad people don't." Jeff called that way of thinking the single most dangerous, damnable religious myth of all time. Yet the myth is pervasive. Centuries of the best human religious thought have been based on that myth. Virtually every religious system is built on that myth. But then along came Jesus and turned everything upside down. Read Mark 2:13-17.
  - a. In Jesus' culture, tax collectors and prostitutes were considered the ultimate example of bad people. They were deemed "unclean" and shunned. No self-respecting religious leader would associate with them. So what do you think "good people" thought when Jesus showed up are a party filled with tax collectors and sinners?
  - b. Note the last phrase in verse 15, which says, "There were many [tax collectors and sinners] who followed Jesus." That's a surprising statement. We'd expect it to say something like, "There were many tax collectors and sinners who were considering following Jesus, but had not yet made that decision, which is why they were still tax collecting and sinning." Can a person be a legitimate follower of Jesus while still being a "tax collector and sinner?"
  - c. In verse 16, Jesus says, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." Later in Matthew 21:31, Jesus told the religious elite, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of heaven ahead of you." When we put all that together, what was Jesus trying to say? In Jesus' view, were the religious elite "well" or "sick?" What did he mean by saying tax collectors would enter heaven ahead of the religious leaders?
  - d. In Matthew 23:15, Jesus says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross the sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves." Have you ever seen religion make someone worse? How so?
  - e. Read Matthew 12:43-45. What does this parable of Jesus mean?
3. Romans 3:23 declares, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." In Romans, Paul makes clear that this statement applies to the religious and nonreligious

alike. So if do-good religion and self-reformation are not the answer to our human brokenness, what is? Jesus points us in a radical new direction – grace! The New Testament teaches that grace, and grace alone, can save us (Ephesians 2:4-6).

- a. How would you define “grace?”
  - b. In your own mind’s eye, imagine what it was like as Jesus entered Levi’s dinner party filled with tax collectors and sinners and began mingling with them. If you were depicting the scene in a movie, describe what we would see?
  - c. How do you think the tax collectors and sinners were impacted by the warm, loving presence of Jesus at their party? What do you think they felt and experienced? How might this have affected them?
  - d. John 1:14 says, “The Word [Jesus] became flesh and lived among us. . . . And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” What does that phrase “grace upon grace” mean to you?
4. In Sunday’s sermon, we saw the news story about a 21-year-old supermarket shelf stocker who spent 30 minutes letting an autistic boy help him stock the shelves. For the autistic boy, it was a dream come true. How do you suppose this act of grace affected the stocker? How might it have affected the autistic boy? How do acts like this affect us who witness them?
5. Jesus’ ultimate act of grace went much further than sharing his warm, loving presence at a dinner party of religious outcasts. His ultimate act of grace was death on the cross. Jeff compared what Jesus did on the cross to what John Coffee does in the movie “The Long Green Mile.” There, Coffee heals a deathly ill woman by sucking the cancer out of her and breathing it into himself. In another scene in the movie, Coffee (filled with the sickness of others he’s inhaled) expels all that sickness from his mouth in the form of hordes of flies. Jeff used this as an analogy for what Jesus did on the cross.
- a. Do you think that’s a good analogy? Why or why not?
  - b. Read Isaiah 53:4-6, a prophecy of Jesus’ work on the cross. What do you hear these verses saying?
  - c. Grace does us no good if we won’t or can’t receive it. Why do we tend to resist God’s grace?
  - d. As best you understand, how does a person make a beginning in receiving the grace of Jesus?
  - e. As we continue to walk with Jesus, what are some ways we continue to receive grace upon grace?