

## **The Boundless Christ: "Get Used to Different."**

### **Matthew's Call to Follow: Matthew 9:9-13, 10:1-4 (Luke 5 mentions the party at Matthew-Levi's house)**

Luke 6:1-11; 7:1-10; 8:1-3; 15:1-7

Matthew 10:1-4: Matthew lists himself as a tax collector - a hated IRS agent.

### **Jesus calls Matthew to follow and says to Peter, "Get used to different."**

In other words, "I do things differently than what you expect, so don't be offended."

Different for Jesus means being boundless; that is, crossing man made boundaries to show God the Father's love and grace.

Peter protests Jesus calling Matthew to follow.

Peter, "I don't get it."

Jesus, "You didn't get it when I chose you either."

Peter, "But this is different. I'm not a tax collector."

Jesus, "Get used to different."

\*Matthew's tablet is for recording Jesus' words and deeds.

"Get used to different" means Jesus crossed man-made religious boundaries to show God's love: Luke 6:1-11; 13:10-17.

Christ was not bound by religious tradition. How to treat the Sabbath was a major point of contention between Jesus and the Jewish religious establishment. Jesus Christ honored the Sabbath but defied man made traditions that inhibited the flow of God's mercy and compassion; traditions that distorted the image of God. Jesus didn't defy Sabbath laws just to be different, be a radical, get attention, or because he wanted to rebel against the status quo. Jesus defied these religious laws because the Father's heart of compassion demanded it.

6:1-11: Harvesting grain was illegal on the Sabbath. Jesus wasn't stealing someone's grain. People were permitted to help themselves if hungry: Deuteronomy 23:24-25: "If you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your bag. If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain." This scripture was a provision for traveling Israelites and foreigners.

Times have changed. You can't just walk into the Neighborhood Walmart and eat some fruit and a bun from the bakery. You can't just take a tomato from your neighbor's garden because you're too lazy to go to Walmart.

When Jesus and his disciples did this they committed four distinct breaches of the Sabbath in one mouthful. They violated Sabbath law by doing the three stages of **harvesting**. First, plucking the heads of grain broke the law which prohibited **reaping** on the Sabbath. Second, rubbing the grains in their hands broke the law which prohibited **threshing**. Throwing away the husks broke the law which prohibited **winnowing**. Fourth, eating the kernels of wheat showed that they had prepared food on the Sabbath.

Jesus broke Sabbath law because he valued the needs of people over religious rules.

13:10-17: Jesus healed a sick woman deformed by an evil spirit (or just a physical disability). The pastor of the church (ruler of the synagogue) said, "You can't get healed on Sunday. Come back on Monday if you want to be healed." Do not idolize religious traditions that keep people out of your church.

Jesus made a comparison between untying an ox or donkey to lead it to water or getting your son or an ox out of a well on a Sabbath day to untying a woman Satan had tied up for 18 years. "If you can untie your animal and lead it to water on the Sabbath, then I can untie this woman whom Satan has bound with sickness on the Sabbath." **Jesus reasoned from the lesser good to the greater good**. If you can do the lesser good (help an animal) on the Sabbath, then you can certainly do the greater good (heal a person) without violating the Sabbath.

Somebody said, "I have no problem with churches, so long as they don't get in the way of God's work." What religious traditions do we have that hinder the flow of God's love? What boundaries do we create for people seeking God? If our church has religious rules or traditions that get in the way of helping people then we need to get rid of them.

"Get used to different" means Jesus crossed ethnic (and enemy) boundaries: Luke 7:1-10.

Jesus, a Jewish rabbi, was willing to risk defilement and criticism to show God's love to a Roman centurion. The Roman soldier understood Jesus' predicament and offered the faith for a long-distance healing by command.

When Jesus responded to the needs of these Gentiles, he was doing "show and tell" to his disciples; teaching his disciples to be boundary crossers.

"Get used to different" means Jesus crossed gender boundaries: Luke 8:1-3.

Right after mentioning the 12 disciples, Luke adds 3 women - Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna.

"One of the astonishing features in Jesus' ministry was the presence of women disciples. Women accompanying Jesus and his disciples would have been completely contrary to Jewish customs." Jesus was the only rabbi with female disciples.

The status of women in Jesus' time was not unlike that of women in Saudi Arabia or Taliban Afghanistan. A man could divorce his wife, but the wife had no right to divorce her husband. Women were not allowed to testify in court. Jewish tradition at the time was to not allow women to be taught. Rabbi Eliezer wrote in the 1st century: *Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman... Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her obscenity.*

Jesus treated men and women as equals. Jesus violated numerous OT regulations which specified gender inequality.

Jesus elevated the status of women in a room full of insensitive men. Luke 13:10-17 - When Jesus healed the disabled woman on the Sabbath, he referred to her as a *daughter of Abraham*, thus implying that she had equal status with *sons of Abraham*. The expression *son of Abraham* was commonly used to refer to a male Jew, but *daughter of Abraham* was a unique parallel phrase created by Jesus to show equality.

Jesus removed 7 demons from Mary Magdalene. (This is one of the most powerful and compassionate scenes in *The Chosen*.) "Seven is a mystic number suggesting 'completeness,' implying that when the evil spirits dominated Mary the suffering was extremely severe." Mary must have suffered from severe emotional or psychological trauma. She was battered and bruised, injured and in agony from the suffering demon possession entailed. Mary lost all control, and dignity, along with everything she knew

in her previous life. Jesus crossed a gender boundary to set her free. Jesus also ignored the cultural and personal prejudices of others to make her his disciple.

The women helped to finance Jesus' ministry. Some of these women were also the first witnesses to Christ's resurrection. Luke mentions them and accepts their testimony (Luke 24:10) at a time when a woman's testimony was not accepted in court.

Here's a story of Jesus crossing both ethnic and gender boundaries: Matthew 15:21-28. The disciples want her gone because she's a Canaanite woman. At first Jesus seems like a Jewish racist. Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." In other words, "*I don't heal Gentiles.*" She was persistent and Jesus healed her daughter because of her faith.

"Get used to different" means Jesus crossed socio-economic and political boundaries: Luke 8:1-3; Matthew 10:1-4.

Mary Magdalene and Joanna were social opposites. Mary Magdalene was a social outcast and belonged to the social group referred to as "tax collectors and sinners" by the Pharisees. Joanna was a social elite, the wife of King Herod's household manager. She had wealth and social connections. Only Jesus could bring these two girls together.

Only Jesus could bring together two men with opposite political ideologies. Simon the Zealot was zealous for the Law of Moses and Jewish independence. He wanted to overthrow the Roman occupation of Israel. Matthew the tax collector worked for the Roman government and supported the heavy taxation of his own people. They were ideological opposites. This would be like bringing together a liberal Democrat and a conservative Republican. (The liberal Democrat would need to repent of his/her lies and crimes.)

The boundless Christ crossed social status boundaries to show God's love.

Christ crossed the greatest boundary between heaven and earth to save us: Philippians 2 - Christ's *kenosis* (self-emptying, self-humiliation).

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, **2** complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. **3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Demonstrate “Jesus emptied himself” with two glasses, one labeled “God (full of water)” and the other “Man” (empty). Pour out the “God” glass into the “Man” glass. Christ’s divine nature poured into sinless human nature.

The boundless Christ crossed geographical and ethnic boundaries during his tour on earth even though his ministry was primarily directed at the Jews. The boundless Christ was not bound by religious, gender, or social barriers. He crossed man-made boundaries to show and tell God’s love and we should be ready to do the same.

**When you follow Jesus Christ you must “get used to different.”**

I went to High Point Climbing on Tuesday. I wanted to be alone. But I’m getting used to different. The Holy Spirit had someone for me to talk to - Tyler who is a restaurant manager for Mellow Mushroom.

You are here. There’s a person who needs God’s love over there. In between you and the need there’s a boundary. It may be a religious, or social, or cultural, or ethnic, or a gender boundary. Sometimes the boundaries we have to bust are in our heads, like mental or emotional boundaries of fear. We need to cross boundaries of fear and let God’s love flow through us to touch the lives of others.