

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

March 24, 2024

SPEAKER

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SERIES

This Is Jesus

PART

7

TITLE

Friend Of Sinners

SCRIPTURE

Mark 2:13-22



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Providence family. It's so good to see you. I hope that you have had a good week. And if you're a guest with us, we're thrilled that you have joined us. If you have a Bible, if you would turn with me to mark chapter two, in a few moments, we're going to start reading in verse 13.

But it is really good to see you on a really significant Sunday, palm Sunday. And next week is Easter. And with that, I want to make an appeal to you, to us, for you this morning. And that is, it is perhaps, when it comes to a holiday, one of the more frustrating, empty feelings when you know something is important intellectually and everyone else around you seems to be feeling the impact. And you, however, walk through something you believe is intellectually important, but your heart is far from it because you haven't taken the time, the necessary time to prepare your heart to be able to worship and celebrate.

And that can happen not only at all holidays, but in particular Easter. We have one every year. Most of you assume you're going to have another one after this one, but there will be somebody within this room. This is your last Easter.

Even if it wasn't, even if we all had a bunch left, they're all limited. And even if they weren't limited, we should all long, deeply long for us to be able to experience all that's intended. And so there's some things that I want to tell you about the next week, but primarily, I want to encourage you to prepare your heart. I do not want for Easter to come and go and for me to be unmoved. And I don't want you to be unmoved either.

And so there's three things that you can do this week to prepare. Tonight at 06:00 there's a prayer and worship service right here. We're going to come, and we're going to pray, we're going to sing, we're going to worship. We are going to take the Lord's supper tonight. It's one of the most special services all year.

Because what we do is with intentionality, think about the courage that it took for Jesus to announce that he's going to Jerusalem, to set his face, to go into the city, knowing precisely what awaited him in the brutality that he would receive in order to save us from our sin. It's one of the first steps that's needed for us to be able to celebrate his resurrection is for us to admire his courage before his sacrifice. The second thing I want to encourage you to do is something you're going to do every day this week, and that is to read the Bible. If you don't have a Bible, there's bibles in the chairs in front of you. And if you don't have one of your own, take that home as a gift.

Now you have a Bible. And if you don't know where to start this week in this little reading guide, which is located, they're free. They're just out in the lobby. There's a week of readings. And these readings for this week are tied specifically to the last week of Jesus before his cross, highlighting some of the most significant things that he did or said in that last week in the hope that it would warm our heart and that we would be ready to celebrate and worship.

And so I urge you to read the Bible this week a little bit each day. And third Friday is good Friday.

It's only good because it's good for us. It was definitely not good for him. Jesus is the only person in the history of the world who lived without sin. He deserved suffering less than anyone, and yet no one ever suffered more. We call it good because he did it in our place so that we wouldn't have to.

And we have this thing, it's called the Good Friday experience here, providence. On this Friday it's going to be from 11:00 a.m. Until 07:00 p.m., now, we're not asking you to be here for 8 hours, okay? It's a self guided tour where you can come at any time and you can go through it as fast as you would like. Most people, it takes 30 minutes, sometimes an hour, all depending on your pace.

It's kid friendly and adult friendly. You're going to go through five different rooms. In each room there's going to be things for you to read from God's word, to be praying about, to be thinking about. And that time will culminate here in this room in the hope that you are going to feel the weight, the beauty, the sacrifice of Jesus' love for you. And that leads us to Easter next weekend, Saturday Sunday and Monday.

We're going to have six services, two on Saturday night, three on Sunday morning, and one on Monday night. And this is where I have to turn to announcement man and make a simple appeal. Really. It's a plea. And it's not for me.

It's actually for one another. I would ask you mercifully, humbly, like nobody wants to sign up for church, okay? I know you're allergic to it. We all are. The idea of signing up registering tickets, all those words with Easter, it's sort of a repellent, but it's a way to serve one another.

That's all it is. Okay, if you would please go to Easter@providence.com and simply tell us which service that you'll be going to. The intent is simply to tell the rest of the congregation where seats are still available.

It happens two times a year, Easter and Christmas Eve, where we have an influx of people in addition to people who call providence their home. And we want to make sure that there's seats for everyone. And so if you would serve us in that way, that would be a great help. So let's pray. Father in heaven, we bow before you, and as we come to your word, we plead that you by your spirit would fill this room and expose our hearts before you, that we would be made whole.

We are sick, and you're the doctor. Would you please show each one of us where we're sick so that we can trust you in faith and receive the healing that you provide? And I pray, Father, that the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts would be pleasing to you. Would you please move in our lives today? Would you please prepare our hearts for the celebration of your resurrection?

Once again, we pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. So, providence, every day we see and feel the teeth of a cancel culture. That's a culture that boycotts or shames a person for offending the sensibilities of those who

imagine that they have wakened up from a nightmare called objective truth in the hope that they would be able to punish the offender and dissuade the masses from emulating the offense. We're used to it.

You say the wrong thing in our culture, and people can be canceled. That's an interesting thought. What if Jesus came today? I believe if Jesus had come here and now instead of there and then the first time, I imagine that he would be canceled for being too intolerant because he said things that just don't go over so well in our culture. Things like, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Well, the Pharisees were the standard bearers of righteousness. And so that begs a question. What then is the standard? To enter heaven? And Jesus goes on in Matthew, chapter five, verse 48, he says, you therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect.

That's the standard. To go to heaven. You know who goes to heaven? Perfect people. You say, there's no way.

And so Jesus says, I am the way and the truth and the life. And no one comes to the father except through me. You say, but I have another way. I'm religious. I have spirituality.

I'm sincere in my beliefs. So sincere that I believe that what I am worshipping makes me a child of God who is my father. To which Jesus would respond, if God were your father, you would love me.

Ironically, when Jesus did come to the earth, he was canceled for being tolerant. The religious leaders of the day, they looked at him and they said, look at him. Friend of tax collectors and sinners. This is the scandal of Jesus' life. When you open up the Bible, is that the holy one, the sinless one, was a friend of sinners.

While preaching repentance, he sternly warned religiously good people. And he warmly ate with irreligiously bad people. And, you know, those two categories make up every single person in this room. We may be both of those things from time to time. But typically we're one more than another.

Typically, we lean in our sin nature. Towards being self righteous and religious and moral, or we lean towards immorality and impurity and rebellion. It's interesting, in each of those two categories, there's a different side effect that we begin to experience in life. And so let me just say this to you, because there's hope today. There's hope today that if today if you feel the emptiness of religion, or today if you feel the shame of guilt of things that you've done in the past, you have no greater friend than Jesus.

And he desires to be with you. He's the friend of sinners. He's my friend, and he wants to be yours. And this is confirmed in Mark, chapter two. Look what it says.

Starting in verse 13. He went out again beside the sea. And all the crowd was coming to him. And he was

teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth.

And he said to him, follow me. And he rose and followed him. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. For there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. Now, John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, why did John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast? But your disciples do not fast?

And Jesus said to them, can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them. And then they will fast. In that day, no one sews a piece of untrunk cloth on an old garment.

If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old. And the worst tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wine skins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins. And the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins.

But new wine is for fresh wine skins. Providence. This is Jesus.

Every week we're walking verse by verse through the gospel of Mark. To see a different facet of the diamond that is Christ. Every week we see something different. His brilliance, his holiness, his maturity, his laughter, his sense of humor, his personality, his wisdom. And I want to show you a few things that are true about Christ.

That come from the verses that we just read. The first is that Christ Jesus calls the immoral and irreligious to follow him. We're told in verse 13 that as Jesus went by the sea, a great crowd began to form. And he began to teach them. And as he was teaching them, we get to verse 14.

And it says. And as he passed by, he's walking. As he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at his tax booth. Levi is his Jewish name. Matthew his Greek name.

Same man.

And Jesus saw him. It's interesting when it says that Jesus saw him. He not only saw him physically, he also saw what he could become. For this Levi or Matthew became one of his twelve disciples. And not only one of his twelve disciples, but he became the author of the first gospel that we call the Gospel of Matthew.

This Levi is that Matthew.

Jesus saw him. But not everyone wanted to see him. Because he was a tax collector. You see, Rome sold tax franchises to rich Jewish men who were willing to buy them. And any money that that tax man could extract from the Jewish people above what the Romans required.

Became personal profit for the collector.

And so tax collectors, or Matthew was a hated man. He was a traitor to his people. He was also a hunted man. There was a group of extreme Jewish people called the zealots. Who were zealous for Israel.

And so what they did is unsuspecting Roman soldiers or any sympathizers of Rome, which included tax collectors. They would try to attack and even kill.

Interestingly, when we get to Mark chapter three, we're going to have the list of the twelve disciples. One of them is Matthew, the tax collector. The other is Simon the zealot. So we got the hunted and the hunter, all in the groups with Jesus.

No one wanted to see him because everyone hated him. Tax collectors, because of their traitorous behavior, were grouped in with the most vile, evil, and wicked sinners in all of Israel.

Another way to say it is to see it, and that is that Matthew was a stain on society. Like wet paint. You put your hands on it, and suddenly, by default of association, you were just as defiled. He was a stain that soiled the status, the reputation of anyone who was willing to associate with him. And I imagine that in a room this large, that there's someone, even if that's not who you are, maybe you feel that way.

Maybe you feel ostracized. Maybe you feel alone. Maybe you feel like if anyone actually knew me or got near me, is that they would be defiled by association. That was Matthew. And Jesus saw him.

And then Jesus spoke and said to him, follow me. I am not afraid to associate with you. You know, every one of us in this room want to belong. My personality, I'm more of an introvert, which means that I enjoy a little time each day and a little time each week alone. But I don't like to be lonely.

Nobody likes to be lonely, because we weren't made to be lonely. We were made to live in community. Every now and then, I need about 15 minutes in the day where I shut the door on all of community. But I'd need community. We all do.

We all need to belong. We want to belong. And every group in the world has the same pathway generally for how to belong to them. And it's this change. And you can follow.

Live this way, you can follow. Dress this way, you can follow. Vote this way, you can belong. Give money to this institution, you can belong.

Change your life, and you can belong to us. And Jesus comes along and he says, follow, and you will change.

Just be with me. Allow my wisdom to spill over you, my holiness, to spill over you, my love and mercy and compassion to spill over you, and you will change. And you can imagine at this moment, the disciples angst. At this moment, we know that there was four, okay, four fishermen. Andrew, Peter, James, John.

Professional fishermen who up until this time were business fishermen living under the extortion of Matthew's tax franchise. They hated him.

And suddenly when Jesus said, follow me, following Jesus for them became much more difficult. And isn't it true for many of us in the room? What begins with, is Jesus worth the path of difficulty moves to? Is Jesus worth associating with the crazies who also associate with Jesus? The people I don't want in my tribe, the people I don't want to be associated with.

Like if you open your eyes, you can find people who are associated with Jesus that you don't necessarily want to invite over for lunch.

And now all of a sudden, following became so much more difficult. It's amazing, this Matthew, he heard, he had to, at least in my mind, I can only imagine is that Jesus has been in Capernaum many times, teaching, maybe from a distance. Matthew was able to hear some of the messages. Maybe he was able to see Jesus' winsomeness and his wisdom. And he thought, man, it'd be amazing to be able to follow, because all of a sudden Jesus follow.

And it says that. What did he do? He says he rose and he followed him. Luke's account of the same story adds a little different dimension. It's a beautiful dimension.

It's a sacrificial one, it says, and leaving everything, he rose and followed him. Why is that important? Because for the first four disciples who were fishermen, they go follow Jesus. And the thing with Jesus doesn't work out. They go back to the lake and there's still fish.

But you leave your tax franchise and it is sold to the next highest bidder. But not only that, tax collectors lived under the protection of the roman sword.

So now Matthew was going to be a hated man and an unprotected man. But Matthew said, he's worth it.

And so Matthew invites him over for lunch. In the other gospels is very clear. It's Matthew's house, it says, and as Jesus reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. This is just amazing. You see, these words recline.

It happens twice. He's doing it and then they're doing it. In other words, Jesus sat so comfortably with the immoral, motley crew of all of these sinners that they began to sit comfortably with him. And notice this word disciples. You see it?

I'm standing in the way. You see the word disciples. Disciples. This is the first use of the word disciple in the gospel of Mark. Now we hear the word disciple, we think, oh, it's just one of the twelve.

No, that's not how they thought of it. The word disciple was somebody who followed another in order to learn from another, in order to emulate their way of life. And so notice what's happening. Mark is placing the word disciple, a learner that emulates someone's way of life in a story for the very first time that says this is that we, as the followers of Christ, have the privilege and responsibility to live in such a way so that the motley crew of irreligious sinners in the world can sit comfortably at our table because we are comfortable around them. Let me ask you something.

Depending on how you vote, would a Democrat or a Republican enjoy lunch at your table?

Prostitute, pimp, drug dealer.

Would people who are sick sit comfortably in your presence because you sit comfortably in theirs?

A disciple. The second thing I want you to see is that Jesus calls the moral and religious to follow him. You can only imagine, right, that the scribes and the Pharisees are just so perplexed in this very moment. You see, for these religious individuals, they view religion as a ladder that's propped up to heaven, that you climb in your own effort in order to impress God. And one of the rungs of that ladder is isolation from other sinners.

They even had a verse, sometimes just read psalm one. One, blessed is the man. And the third clause is, who sits not in the seat of scoffers.

So they're looking at Jesus sitting with all of these tax collectors and sinners, the worst of society. And they ask the question, why does he do this? Why does Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners? How could he be unstained? It's amazing to me.

Of course, they're asking this not in the room, but outside the room, because isolation from sinners was a requirement for their religion. And Jesus, in the beauty of all that he is, he is emotionally present in the room with all of these sinners. And he is intellectually aware of what is being asked about him out on the street. So intellectually aware that he answers the question in front of the sinners. And he says, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. See what he's saying?

Every single sinner in the whole world needs a doctor. And every single person who has navigated journey of life without any sin, they do not need a doctor. The Bible says that all of us have sinned and fallen short of his glory, which means we all need a doctor. And Jesus is the doctor. And just like a light of ray or a ray of sunlight that lands on a huge pile of garbage.

Jesus was not defiled by all of these sinners. There was a missionary to China named C. T. Studd who said, some people want to live within the sound of a church or chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.

No one did this like Jesus because he was the doctor that we all need. He was pretty clear to describe our universal need when he told a parable in Luke 15 where he literally looks at all of humanity and he says, pretty much you all fit into two categories. And then he framed those two categories in a very popular parable. Let me paraphrase it for you. You can read it on your own.

Luke 15 says that there was a dad, had two sons, and the younger son came to his dad and said, I wish you were dead, but you're not. So let's act like you are and just give me my inheritance so that I can go and celebrate with those resources. I need your blessing, but I don't need you. I need your things, but I don't need you. I need your money, but I don't need you.

And he takes all of that resource and he goes and he squanders it off in irreligious, immoral living. He gets to the end of his rope. It's like, what am I going to do? And he begins remembering, man, even like the servants in dad's house, they got pillows and beds and I got nothing.

So he prepares his repentance speech. This is what I'm going to say. I'm going to get there, and this is what I'm going to say. He begins walking. The father sees him from a distance.

He runs out to him, and he begins his speech. The dad says, shh. No more. He cuts him off halfway through, and he puts a ring on his finger, and he gives him sandals for his feet, and he takes a robe and he covers him to cover up all of that ratty clothes from all that sinful living in order to bring him home and minimize his

shame in front of the rest of the family.

The older brother, who's never left the house, gets angry, really angry, and he says, I don't get it.

I have been near your house my whole life, and you've never given me the fatted calf so that I can leave you and go celebrate with my friends. This is Jesus' way to say you have two sons who represent two kinds of humanity, all of humanity. And both sons are far from home, one in irreligious, immoral behavior that is noticeable to everyone, including that son, and one that is marked by religion and morality, who's staying close to home but wish he could leave.

Every one of us has probably experienced a day or significant seasons, maybe in both camps, but typically one of those represents us a little bit more closely than another. Truth be told, I've spent more time of my 50 years around a church than far from it. And so I can tell you with a sense of honesty that I believe that it is more risky to be the older brother who is lost in religious. And there's a reason for it. When you're in irreligious, immoral sin, you know it and everyone else knows it.

But when you are in religious lostness, religious sin, hypocrisy and self righteousness, you escape your own self examination because you hear a sermon and you think, that guy needs to hear this. And you also escape the christian witness of people who have the gospel, who could share it with you, but they're convinced that you already know it. And as a result of that, what you find is religious behavior masquerading a spiritual life.

And Jesus said in Matthew, chapter 23, woe to you, Pharisees. You are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within or full of dead people's bones.

Are you born again?

I don't care if you know amazing grace if you have a Bible with your name stamped on the front of it. Jesus told a parable of ten virgins. All ten carry a lamp. All ten are called to light the lamp. When Christ returns, five of them have oil within the lamp, five of them don't.

From the outside, they all look the same. They all go to church, and they all carry their lamp. They sound the same, they look the same. But when it's time to light the lamp, for half of them, there is no holy spirit in their heart to be able to light a lamp.

Have you been born again?

I know there's people in the room whose life is characterized primarily as the younger son. You go, I just need a doctor. I need a doctor right now. Where's the doctor? I get it.

But there's many people who are around you who struggle to imagine, even today, they really need a doctor.

Do you see? You need a doctor today. And have you found that doctor in Christ?

You know, the people sitting next to you right now? Some of them, they need to hear about Jesus from your mouth.

Ask them.

I know this. Always. It's so interesting. This happens every palm Sunday. Talk about religious people, because that's where the text lands.

I know that the vast majority in this room. You know Christ. I know you do. I see it. But eternity is too long to get this wrong.

Have you been born again?

The third thing I want you to see. Is that Jesus brings a gospel. That provides new life for all. Jesus, of course, is eating with these sinners and tax collectors. And at the very same time, there were other people, religious people.

Who were fasting from food, not eating food. And so the question comes to Jesus in verse 18. Why is it that John's disciples, John the Baptist disciples and the Pharisees disciples. They're all fasting, but your disciples, they don't fast. Now, in the Old Testament, fasting is always tied to praying.

And fasting does not get God's attention. It's important you hear this, okay? Sometimes we think, okay, I'm going to pray. But if it's really serious, I need to fast. Because then God will see it.

No. Fasting gets your attention.

You say, I'm going to fast today because I have this spiritual need. This person has cancer. I don't know what it is. There's a burden upon my heart. So I'm going to fast.

What happens is you get hungry. And every time you get hungry, you're reminded of why you're hungry. Oh, it's because I'm praying for this person. But it's interesting. By the time Jesus came around.

The Pharisees have said, you know what we should do? We should fast two days a week. And we should do

it all as a show. And so Jesus says in Matthew, chapter six, he says, when you fast. Do not look gloomy like the hypocrites.

For they disfigure their faces. That their fasting may be seen by others. Is this not a show? And so Jesus wants to answer the question. Why is it that your disciples are not fasting when others are?

And he says, can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them. And then they will fast. What are you saying?

Well, most of us have been to a wedding. So just imagine you're at a wedding. You're at a beautiful wedding, right? And there's laughter, and there's joy and all kinds of stuff. But there's this guy.

There's this guy who's sitting over in the corner. He's just miserable. He happens to be the friend of one of the bride or groom. And so the bride or the groom, they go up to him and say, man, what's going on? I'm so sorry.

He looks just so miserable. And they're like, oh, no, don't worry. I'm just fasting, man. Poor timing, okay? Poor timing.

That's what Jesus is saying. He's saying, do you understand how many people have longed for this day, for this wedding? When the Christ to come, when the people get to be with him, when they get to hear his wisdom, when they get to laugh with him, when they get to understand his real personality? Do you understand that this is the day, and there is a day coming very soon that I'm going to leave? And then my followers will fast.

Why will they fast? Because by then, they will have tasted new life, and they will long for me to return so that they can be with me forever. Every time you see Jesus talking about fasting in the New Testament, it's always tied to our longing for his return.

Have you ever gone without food one day or even a meal in order to tell yourself, not him, yourself, I can't wait to see him.

He's coming.

And so he wants to tell two little illustrations to close of this newness that he brings. And he says, no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it and new from the old, and a worse tear is made. In other words, if you sew a new, untrunk patch on an old, already shrunk pair of pants, the patch, when it shrinks, is going to tear away from the pant. This is Jesus' way to say, the gospel that

I bring is not a patch for an old religious system.

It is a complete replacement. And then he doubles down and he says, no one puts new wine into old wine skins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins. If you put wine, new wine into a skin, it begins to ferment and then expand.

But if that skin that you put it in is old and brittle, it will break. This is Jesus' attempt to say, you cannot pour my gospel into another religious system because they are completely incompatible.

When the gospel of Jesus Christ is poured into our heart, whether that heart is religious or irreligious, it causes it to be born again. All things are passed away that are old and all things are new. We get a new mind, and over a period of time, everything begins to change.

That is what we are celebrating this week. Because of his death. And resurrection, everything changes. So a couple of thoughts for you to consider as you warm your heart towards Easter. First, let me urge you to marvel in the sufficiency of the cross.

Jesus' blood is so powerful, widespread and effective that it can remove all sins, religious and irreligious. It can literally cover everyone soiled in immorality and everyone soiled in self righteousness. He is a doctor to everyone.

Second, a mirror. Just to discern the poisonous roots of religion, I could easily add to it the poisonous roots of rebellion. We typically know what that is. There's social consequence. But the poisonous roots of religion are a little bit more subtle.

In religion performance, our performance always leads to God's acceptance. And as a result of that, what we do is we try to comfort ourself by comparing ourselves to others. And as a result, religious people either become arrogant little Pharisees or anxious little Pharisees. I'm doing great. I'm not doing so good.

And our heart, all of our hearts drift towards religion. Which is why Jesus reserved his harshest and most stern words towards people who attended church. Religion says, perform and you will be accepted. The gospel says, I performed. Jesus performed so that you can be accepted when you put your faith in him.

Religion says, obey and God will owe you. And Jesus says, I paid the debt you owe. Religion sees sinners and wants to disconnect from them, saying, why do you eat with them? Jesus sees sinners and wants to connect with them, saying, follow me. Let me urge you, third, to take a next step in following Jesus, whatever that is.

For some, you're just starting the journey. This may be the first lesson you've ever heard from the Bible. Just

come back. That's your next step, right? Just return.

If you're not convinced, read the next section in Mark, think about it throughout the week and return. For others, however, maybe you have trusted Christ, but maybe it's a sin that you need to leave, or perhaps it's an act of obedience. Maybe there's something that you have a relationship with Christ. There's something he's already told you to do, but you just haven't done it. Next week we're going to be baptizing people.

Some of us have trusted Jesus Christ as our savior and yet have not done what he told us to do next. And that is to bear witness to other people that we have been changed by his grace.

And for others, the next step of following him literally means to repent the belief that you can save yourself and to put your faith entirely on Jesus Christ. Today call out to him in faith.

And finally, let's follow Jesus by reaching people. In just a moment, you're going to see a young man stand behind this curtain. Those of you who've been here a number of times, this is a young man who's going to be going to a part of the world where we can't show his face now and tell you where he's going, but he's going to take the gospel to a part of the world that doesn't have it. The only way that happens if you're convinced that this doctor named Jesus has changed you and he can change to others, and so providence, don't forget that we're following a doctor who helps spiritually sick people. And if we keep following him, the path is going to lead towards other people who are sick.

So let's pray. Father in heaven, we bow before you. We thank you for your kindness. We thank you for your amazing grace. We thank you for your holiness.

I pray for those who are here who do not have a relationship with Christ, whether they're irreligious or religious. I ask, Father, that you would expose their spiritual need and you would expose to them that you are the doctor that they need. Would you please lead them to call out to you in faith? And I pray for those of us who have that you would warm our heart once again this Easter season as we consider your courage and your sacrifice, your mercy and your love. Thank you for the people in our life who don't know you.

Would you give us the courage to reach out to them, to invite them to our table, maybe even invite them next weekend? So we love you. Thank you for answering our prayers. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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