

Thursday, July 30, 2020

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

"And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' But when he heard it, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ... For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Matthew 9: 10-13

For the past several months, we have been told to "social distance." We have been told to refrain from touching one another, and certainly to stay away from anyone who may have COVID-19. There are a group of people in our nation and around the world who have been ignoring these directives. In fact, they have been doing just the opposite. They have been getting up every day and purposely and willfully spending time right in the heart of those who are sickest with COVID-19. These people are the doctors and nurses who put themselves right into the thick of things when it comes to the coronavirus. They do this while most of the rest of us are doing what we can to stay away from people with COVID-19. This is very much like what happened on 9/11. While hundreds of people were running out of the Twin Towers, first responders were running into the buildings.

This is what Jesus meant in our reading above when he said, "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Jesus came into the world to come close to sinners. He came to put himself right in the thick of things when it comes to sin. He has not "social distanced" himself from you or me even though we are terribly infected with sin. This is because he sees this as his job, much like the healthcare workers who get up every day and go to work in the hospitals where sick people are. Healthcare workers today are putting themselves right alongside of COVID-19 patients. Why? It's what they do. It's the job they have chosen.

Jesus chose to come into the world to love and care for, to forgive, and to "make well" those who are infected with sin. That's you. And that's me! It's all of us! The Pharisees believed in "social distancing" from sinners, even though sinners need help. They wore the uniforms of first responders, but when the emergency arose, they ran in the other direction. The Pharisees were like someone who graduated from medical school, but never wanted to be around sick people.

How blessed we are that Jesus has run toward us. He has run into the burning building to save us. He has gone into the "ICU" in order to make sinners well. He has done this by "getting sick" himself with our disease. He took our sin upon himself and bore the wrath of God in our place when he died on the cross and the Father turned his back on him. This is why Jesus was born. The Bible says,

**"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed."**

Isaiah 53: 4-5

God's Peace!
Pastor Jim