

Learning More with
Stories of the Master

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~ **Guess Who's Coming to Dinner** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Mark 2:13-22. You can also read this story in Matthew 9:9-17 and Luke 5:27-39.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story from the New American Standard Bible and from the Easy Read Version

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Mark 2:13-22 - NASB	Mark 2:13-22 – New Living Translation
<p>¹³ And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.</p> <p>¹⁴ As He passed by, He saw Levi the <i>son</i> of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He *said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.</p> <p>¹⁵ And it *happened that He was reclining <i>at the table</i> in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. ¹⁶ When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷ And hearing <i>this</i>, Jesus *said to them, "<i>It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.</i>"</p> <p>¹⁸ John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they *came and *said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁹ And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.</p> <p>²¹ "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. ²² No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins <i>as well</i>; but <i>one puts</i> new wine into fresh wineskins."</p>	<p>¹³ Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him. ¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him.</p> <p>¹⁵ Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.) ¹⁶ But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?"</p> <p>¹⁷ When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."</p> <p>¹⁸ Once when John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, some people came to Jesus and asked, "Why don't your disciples fast like John's disciples and the Pharisees do?"</p> <p>¹⁹ Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while the groom is with them. ²⁰ But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.</p> <p>²¹ "Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before.</p> <p>²² "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins."</p>

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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

On Tax Collecting

- Tax collectors were required to pay the tax to the Romans in advance and then they would go to their district and try to collect taxes and turn a profit. This was risky, open to abuse, and often unprofitable. They would work for chief tax collectors who would often become wealthy but the regular collectors of tolls were less likely to do well financially. The kinds of people employed in this business were men who had trouble finding and holding down other kinds of jobs.
- Toll collectors sitting in their customhouses collected levies on goods entering, leaving, or being transported across a district.
- They would set up their houses at bridges, gates, or landings.
- Tradesmen, craftsmen, and even prostitutes paid taxes on all goods and services.
- Conflict would especially be acute between tax collectors and tradesmen. There would be constant interaction between these types.
- The rich despised tax collectors.
- Most tax collectors remained poor. Those who did not were regarded as dishonest. Because Matthew is able to provide a feast, he would be despised by common people.
- Sinners were people who by their observable behavior have broken the Torah and shamed God.

On Meals

- Meals could include people of different ranks but it usually implied people sharing a set of ideas and values and a common social position.
- Important questions about meals
 - Who eats with whom?
 - Who sits where?
 - What does one eat?
 - Where does one eat?
 - Who does what during the meal?
 - How is the food prepared?
 - What utensils are used?
 - When does one eat?
 - What talk is appropriate?
 - When does one eat what course?
- Some Jews joined kinship societies centered on meals for fellowship, learning, and good works but in order to avoid pollution they would not accept an invitation from an ordinary person. These people could not be trusted to serve food that had been tithed.
- Fasting was a statement against the presence of social evil. To fast at a wedding would insult the participants at the wedding and would be a statement that this marriage was evil.

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3. Answer these reflective questions.

When Jesus was teaching by the Sea of Galilee, what do you think his message was about?

There was something in Matthew that attracted Jesus to him and that caused Jesus to ask him to follow him. What do you think Jesus saw in this man?

Why do you think the Pharisees were so upset with tax collectors and sinners and why were they upset that Jesus was eating with them?

The disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus was he was feasting instead of fasting? Do you think they were satisfied with his reply? Why do you think they had not followed Jesus yet?

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Jesus used a parable about wine and wineskins and new cloth and old cloth. Explain what these meant to Jesus in his situation. How could they apply to your life today?
