

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – June 7, 2026

*Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26*

So, I'm quite often a stereotypical millennial. Slightly on the Elder Millennial side – born before the technology boom had infiltrated homes. So, you know, we played outside, came home when the streetlights came on, the neighbors looked out for each others kids, et cetera... There are a lot of pop culture moments that my generation loves to live by. The movie "Mean Girls" is one of our most loved movies. We even celebrate "Mean Girls Day" on October 3<sup>rd</sup> because that was the date the main character asked about in the movie. It was just a movie that came out right as many of us were in high school or college and was relatable and yet humorous.

If you haven't seen or heard of the movie, essentially, it's an exaggerated version of the high school experience. You have all of these cliques, and it follows along the "plastics" which were the pretty, popular girls, also, the "Mean Girls." Early in the movie, it is explained to Kady, the new girl, how the stereotypical cliques related to one another, particularly the lunch tables. Each group had a designated spot they were expected to sit and eat at based on the stereotype they fit. There was a table for preps, there was a table for varsity and JV jocks, as well as varsity and JV cheerleaders. A table for cool Asians and a separate one for Asian nerds.

Of course, the "Plastics" had their own table. And there were rules to be allowed at this table. To be allowed to sit with the plastics, you cannot wear a tank top two days in a row, you can only wear your hair in a ponytail once a week, jeans or track pants can only be worn on Friday's, and you have to wear pink on Wednesdays. If you break any of those rules, even as plastic," you cannot sit with them at lunch. Which, if you remember back to high school, lunch was the biggest social interaction time at school. And where you sat was a big deal.

And so as we heard the gospel text today, the first half at least, with the calling of Matthew, and what happened next, I couldn't help but feel like it was turning into a scene from the Mean Girls. Who is Jesus allowed to sit

with? Is he breaking one of the plastics rules by eating with tax collectors and sinners?

The calling of Matthew may be oversimplified here. Jesus comes up to Matthew sitting in a toll booth, says follow me, and Matthew gets up and goes. Whether that's the full story or not, it's what's next, that I want to look at.

Matthew throws a party. Invites over all of his fellow tax collector peoples. And they sit down and have dinner . \*Shock\* Jesus is not eating with all of the righteous people. In hindsight, we can look back at this and say that's because there are no righteous people. There are only sinners for Jesus to eat with. But then Jesus points out that he's not here for anyone who is righteous or perfect. He's here for everyone else. Those who are not in fact holy and righteous.

Something you may have noticed, when there are clearly visitors here, I will specifically say that all are welcome to receive the Lord supper. That we celebrate an open table. No requirements that have to be met . When I say the words of institution, I tend to emphasize that Jesus blood was shed for ALL people for the forgiveness of sin . As we partake in the meal, that Jesus instituted for us, tax collectors and sinners are all welcome at the table. You don't have to wear pink. And even if you forgot to wear red on Pentecost Sunday you still have a place at Christ's table. You just have to come and receive God's grace.

So, we extend this idea and ask the question of who do we let's sit at our table? And who can we welcome in? There was an image going around the interwebs and it makes its rounds every year or so. And this graphic breaks down some statistics of how people started attending church. Now, there's no citation, and I'm sure there's a Pew research poll that can either substantiate or disprove these numbers, but regardless of the accuracy of the percentages, in my experience, the point is still valid.

So, how people started attending a church:

2% said advertising

6% were invited by the pastor

6% were because of some sort of organized visit

And 86% started attending church because they were invited by someone.

**86%**

We have a calling like Matthew to invite our friends. Invite them in to dine with Jesus. The table is open, there's no requirement or checkboxes to sit at the table with Jesus, no matter what kind of pharisee may say different. We just have Jesus and a table that he has prepared for us, so that all of us who are not worthy of God's unconditional love still receive that love and grace from our great physician.

So, we go and be like Matthew. Invite people to join us. We sit with them and welcome them to the table. Jesus doesn't care who he dines with. Because he loves each and every one. All were created in the image of God. All are welcome at the Lord's table. Even the worst of the tax collectors... and sinners like you and me. Amen.