

Articles and Sermons :: But Even Jesus Hung Out with Tax-Collectors & Prostitutes," they say.

But Even Jesus Hung Out with Tax-Collectors & Prostitutes," they say. - posted by MaryJane, on: 2007/7/31 13:41

This was shared with me through email and I just thought I would share it here with you brothers and sisters.

God Bless
MaryJane

"But Even Jesus Hung Out with Tax-Collectors & Prostitutes," they say.

You have heard it said that even Jesus hung out with tax-collectors & prostitutes so how dare we judge such people. But what is not often pointed out in these appeals for loving tolerance is that Jesus expected these people to change, to repent & no longer be corrupt tax-collectors (corruption & tax-collection was synonymous at the time) or prostitutes. Thus, Jesus only hung at with them to change them. He in no way was approving of their sins. These tax-collectors & prostitutes became FORMER corrupt tax-collectors & FORMER prostitutes.

To illustrate the point even more let us look at the accounts of a tax-collector & a prostitute & Jesus' interaction with them.

Luke 19:2,5-10 NKJV

Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich...And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

We see here, Zacchaeus repenting of being corrupt & making right any wrong doing. Do we think Jesus would have remained with an unrepentant tax-collector? Do we think Jesus would have said "salvation had come to this house" if Zacchaeus was unrepentant?

Jesus DIDN'T hang out with unrepentant tax-collectors, nor did He "tolerate" & "accept" them for who they are. Jesus expected them to have a heart change.

Next we see the account of a prostitute.

John 8:3-11 NKJV

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

The point in this is that Jesus expected that this woman would NOT continue in her sin, He even instructed her to GO AND SIN NO MORE. We aren't talking about any & every sin, but specifically the act of adultery. She would obviously

still grapple with sin as do we all but to be identified as an adulteress should have been now past her.

But the way some people portray Jesus & the obligation of Christians is that of unconditional acceptance. We see just from these two stories, CHANGED people, who are accepted.

Jesus DIDN'T hang out with unrepentant prostitutes, nor did He "tolerate" & "accept" them for who they are. Jesus expected them to have a heart change.

We further see in 1 Cor 6:8-11 that Christians WERE these things but are not expected to be continued to be identified with these things:

1 Cor 6:8-11 NKJV

No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

So, next time you see some non-Christian & especially someone calling themselves a Christian espousing that we need to be more tolerant & accepting of corrupt activity, remember these stories & remember 1 Cor 6:8-11 where we see people WERE these things & only by the grace of God & His changing our hearts are we now sanctified & justified, but also expected to go & sin no more.

He was "all things to all men" as He PURSUED men without prejudice, with no intolerant regard for their background or particular "sins." He came to seek and SAVE those lost, regardless of background or "seriousness" of their sin. The Testimony of Jesus' Life is far from "fellowshipping" with those committed to sin, with no conviction or repentance. He forgave "seventy times seven" -- those who "repented." And, once a man or woman HAS turned to Him and His Spirit comes to live inside, the Presence of GOD within (the New Covenant itself) will mean that sin is now hated, not excused. (1 John 1:3) Please do not fall for the counterfeit of Biblical grace that requires no love of Jesus.

"If you love Me, you will obey Me." -Jesus

"A curse be on everyone who doesn't love the Lord." -Paul

The BLESSING is in the real thing. There is no Truth or Life in the counterfeits of grace that show no evidence of the Deposit that guarantees our Inheritance.

In His Spirit of Life and Love is the Blessing of "on earth as it is in Heaven."

Re: But Even Jesus Hung Out with Tax-Collectors & Prostitutes," they say. - posted by SaintRalph, on: 2011/11/5 7:37

Thanks for posting this. The "hung out with prostitutes" meme certainly ought to be examined before we accept it as incontrovertible fact.

A few thoughts, probably not entirely coherent:

1. John 8 never identifies the woman as a prostitute, merely as an adulteress. The incident takes place, by the way, in the Temple courts, and it's quite obvious he didn't go there to "hang out" with her. She was brought to him; he commuted her death sentence, told her to repent and dismissed her.

2. I think the meme most likely arises from the story in all three Synoptics about Jesus dining at Matthew's house with tax collectors and sinners. Mk. 2:15 seems to tell us that these people not only showed up at the house but were followers of Jesus. If that's true, we can certainly say that they "hung out" with Jesus according to his agenda. THEY followed HIM, not the other way around. According to Matthew's gospel, the theme of Jesus' early ministry was repentance, so his followers presumably would have heard him call them to repent, as the encounter with Zaccheus makes clear.

But in none of the versions of this story are the "sinners" identified as prostitutes. Mark uses *hoi hoioi*, a generic term for sinners. This doesn't rule out that some of them might have been prostitutes, but it certainly doesn't necessitate that any of them were. Their particular sins are unspecified.

3. In Mt. 21:31-32 Jesus says tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God before the Pharisees do ... because they believed John the Baptist, who also preached repentance (Mt. 3:2). Jesus' only other direct reference to prostitutes is in the parable of the prodigal son.

4. Luke 7:37 identifies the woman who anointed Jesus' feet as a "sinner," but again it's a generic term, *hoi hoioi*. It's worth noting that this encounter takes place at the house of Simon, a Pharisee, whose dinner invitation Jesus had accepted! Jesus also associated with Nicodemus, another Pharisee, and Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin. We can infer, at least, that Jesus didn't "hang out" *exclusively* with tax collectors and sinners.

5. Tradition sometimes identifies Mary Magdalene as a reformed prostitute, and also sometimes identifies her with the woman in Luke 7:37. However, these ideas are not supported in the canonical scriptures. For what it's worth, the incomplete Gnostic Gospel of Mary also has nothing in it to support the idea of her having been a prostitute.

That's pretty much all I've got. Jesus was and is a friend of all sinners, which certainly includes prostitutes. We don't know for sure whether prostitutes were among his many followers, although we cannot rule it out. Jesus did praise prostitutes for believing a message of repentance.

In the end, what bothers me about the "hung out with prostitutes" meme isn't the prostitutes, it's the "hung out"! Spending time with the sinners deemed unworthy by his society wasn't a leisure activity for Jesus, it was an essential part of his mission. He didn't always have to seek them out, either. Sometimes, like Zaccheus, they came to see him.

I Googled several pages' worth of references to this meme. I even found one blogger speculating on what there was about prostitutes that made Jesus want to hang out with them. I wonder whether it might not be better to turn the question around: What was there about Jesus and his message that was so attractive to tax collectors, sinners and (possibly even) prostitutes?