

Jesus Christ Came into the World to Save Sinners Like You!

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“If I walked into your church, pastor, the place would probably cave in.” This was the response of someone I met recently after I had invited him to come to church. I have heard responses like this many times over the years. The reason for this kind of response is that people have the wrong impression of Jesus Christ and His Church. They think Jesus is a Savior for good, decent folk, and that His Church is the place for those good, decent folk to gather. Thus, they conclude that they should steer clear, since they believe they don’t meet the bill.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus did not come to save good, decent folk. He came to save sinners. He says so Himself: “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” (Matt. 9:12-13).

Jesus says this to the Jewish religious leaders of His day. They are scandalized by the fact that Jesus is eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. In their minds, no reputable Rabbi would ever lower himself to associate with the dregs of society. Jesus should be hanging out with them, not these lowly sinners. They are the good, decent folk, after all. They meet in the synagogues and go to the Temple regularly. They strive to live good, decent lives, and are careful to obey God’s Law. They wouldn’t be caught dead associating with sinners, unless it was to speak a word of condemnation to them. If Jesus was truly sent by God, as He claimed to be, He would be spending His time with them. Instead, He spends His time with sinners.

What the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day failed to realize was their own sinfulness. That was their problem. That is what kept them from receiving the Savior sent to them. They did not think they needed a Savior. They thought they were righteous all on their own; that they were living up to the perfect demands of God’s Holy Law and, thus, earning eternal life. They may have been willing to admit that they were not perfect all of the time, but they believed they were certainly better than most and most assuredly not in the same category as tax collectors and sinners.

They were wrong. Woefully wrong! They were sinners who needed a Savior every bit as much as any tax collector ever did. But, their self-righteousness, built upon pride and vanity, kept them from seeing that truth. All they could see was Jesus in the midst of a bunch of losers, and they wanted no part of it. They would not be dragged down to those depths. And so, sadly, the Savior they needed passed them by, and they were left to rely upon themselves before God, which is not a position in which any sinner ever wants to be, whether they realize it or not.

Here’s the truth, my friends: You are a sinner. Yes, you! So am I. All people are. There is no escaping that reality. We are conceived in sin and remain sinners our whole lives long (cf. Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:23). If any preacher tells you otherwise, he is guilty of falling into the same trap in which the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus’ day fell. He is deceiving himself (and you) and the

truth is not in him (cf. 1 John 1:8-9). You are a sinner who needs a Savior. You cannot make yourself right with God. You cannot earn your way into His grace and favor. You cannot merit salvation. If you think you can, then you don't need Jesus. And, if you don't need Jesus, you don't need the salvation He has won for you by His perfect, sinless life and His sacrificial death on the cross for all of your sins.

Now, if that is the case with you – if you are perfectly content relying upon yourself before God; if you think you're good enough or, at least, better than most; if you do not see yourself as a sinner in need of a Savior – then you really have no reason to go to Christ's Church. But, if you are a sinner – if your sinfulness leads you to believe that the church would cave in if you were to enter; if you don't believe you're good enough to stand before God on your own; if you live with the misconception that others are better and more decent than you are – then you should go running to Christ's Church as often as you possibly can, for His Church is a place of refuge for sinners like you.

I told the man I mentioned above that he would fit right in at our church, since it is full of sinners. I assured him that the place would not cave in upon his entrance. After all, I enter it regularly and it hasn't caved in yet, and I readily confess, with St. Paul, that I am the chief of sinners (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15). But, thanks be to God, Jesus meets me there, along with all the other sinners gathered in His Name, to forgive and restore us, to feed and nourish us, to strengthen and preserve us, through His Holy Word and Sacraments.

So, if you are a sinner in need of a Savior, you are more than welcome to gather with us anytime. The place will not cave in. I promise!

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