

Time Audit Chronicles: Calling of Levi and Dining with Sinners

(Mark 2:13-17)

Prologue: Jesus Came to Call Sinners

It was a breezy Saturday afternoon, and the Presswood family was gathered outside on the porch. Ariel was reading through the Gospel of Mark, and Alice, as usual, was playing with Mr. Fluffernutter, pretending he was going on a great adventure.

“Daddy,” Ariel asked, looking up from her Bible, “why did Jesus choose Levi, a tax collector, to follow Him? I mean, tax collectors were really disliked by the people back then, right?”

Ryan nodded thoughtfully. “That’s right, Ariel. Tax collectors were often seen as corrupt and greedy, working for the Roman government. They were considered sinners by society because they would often take more money than they were supposed to, keeping the extra for themselves. But Jesus didn’t see Levi as a sinner to be rejected—He saw him as someone in need of redemption. Jesus’ mission was to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous.”

Ariel looked curious. “So, Jesus wasn’t just calling the good people—He was calling everyone, even the ones everyone else rejected?”

“Yes,” Ryan said, smiling. “Jesus came to save everyone, especially those who were lost or looked down upon. Let’s use the Time Audit Machine to go back and see the moment when Jesus called Levi and dined with sinners.”

The Journey Begins: The Sea of Galilee

The Time Audit Machine hummed, and with a flash of light, the family found themselves by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, in the bustling town of Capernaum. The streets were busy, with people coming and going, talking, selling goods, and walking through the markets. They could see a toll booth nearby, where Levi—also known as Matthew—was sitting, collecting taxes from the people.

“There he is,” Ryan said, pointing to Levi. “Levi was sitting at his tax booth when Jesus approached him and called him to follow Him.”

Ariel was intrigued. “He was just sitting there, collecting money, when Jesus came up to him?”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “Levi wasn’t out looking for Jesus, but Jesus came to him. And that’s a powerful part of the story. Jesus didn’t wait for people to come to Him; He reached out to them, especially the ones society rejected.”

Jesus Calls Levi (Matthew) (Mark 2:14)

As they watched from the crowd, Jesus walked right up to Levi's booth. Without hesitation, He said to him:

"Follow Me." (Mark 2:14)

Ariel looked surprised. "That's it? Jesus didn't ask him anything? He just said, 'Follow Me'?"

"That's right," Ryan said. "Jesus didn't give Levi a long speech or make him prove himself. Jesus knew Levi's heart, and He saw in him the potential to follow and serve Him. Levi was the one who had to make the decision to follow."

In that moment, Levi stood up from his booth, left everything behind, and began to follow Jesus.

"Levi immediately responded to Jesus' call," Ryan said. "It wasn't about his past—it was about his willingness to follow Jesus, no matter what his past had been."

Dining with Sinners: Jesus' Radical Love (Mark 2:15)

After calling Levi to follow Him, Jesus went to Levi's house. A large crowd of tax collectors and sinners gathered with Jesus and His disciples to dine together. The religious leaders, the Pharisees, were watching from a distance, and they couldn't believe what they were seeing.

"And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him." (Mark 2:15)

Ariel shook her head in surprise. "Jesus was eating with people who were seen as bad—people no one wanted to be around."

"Yes," Ryan said. "Jesus didn't just talk to sinners from a distance. He didn't just heal them or teach them from the outside. He sat with them, ate with them, and showed them love and compassion. That was radical for His time, and it still is today. He was showing them that no one is beyond His reach."

The Pharisees, who were known for their strict adherence to the law and their disdain for those who didn't follow it, were offended by this. They asked Jesus' disciples:

"How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" (Mark 2:16)

Jesus' Response: A Mission to Save Sinners (Mark 2:17)

When Jesus heard what the Pharisees were saying, He responded with words that revealed the heart of His mission:

"When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:17)

Ariel's eyes sparkled. "Jesus said He didn't come for the 'righteous,' but for sinners. He was saying that He came to heal the people who needed it the most!"

"That's right," Ryan said. "Jesus' mission wasn't about fixing the outward actions of the 'good' people—it was about reaching those who knew they were broken and needed a Savior. The Pharisees thought they were righteous, but Jesus knew that all people, no matter how 'good' they seemed, needed repentance."

The Heart of Jesus' Mission: Redemption for All

Ariel looked up from her notebook, thinking about what she had just learned. "So, Jesus wasn't just calling the 'best' people—He was calling everyone, especially the ones who felt like they were too far gone or unworthy."

"Yes," Ryan said, smiling. "Jesus knew that everyone needed Him, whether they recognized it or not. The religious leaders of the time couldn't understand this. They thought that Jesus should be hanging out with 'good' people—people who followed all the rules. But Jesus came to offer forgiveness to those who were broken and hurting."

Alice looked up from her toys. "Jesus loves everyone, even if they're not perfect?"

"Yes," Ryan said gently. "Jesus loves everyone, no matter who they are or what they've done. His love and forgiveness are for all people, and He invites everyone to follow Him."

Jesus' Radical Love and Compassion

The family sat quietly for a moment, reflecting on Jesus' willingness to spend time with people who were considered outcasts. Ryan continued, "Jesus shows us a different way of looking at the world. He didn't reject sinners; He loved them, spent time with them, and called them to change their lives through repentance."

Ariel nodded. "And by eating with them, He showed that He wasn't afraid to be with people who were considered unclean or sinful."

"Yes," Ryan said, "and that's one of the most powerful aspects of Jesus' ministry. He didn't wait for people to be perfect before He loved them. He loved them as they were, and through His love, He brought them to repentance and healing."

Returning Home: Living the Mission of Jesus

Back in the garage, the Time Audit Machine powered down, and the family was left to reflect on all they had seen and heard. Ariel flipped through her notes, while Alice set up a "dining table" for her stuffed animals, pretending to be Jesus inviting everyone to the table.

“Jesus showed us that He came to save sinners, not the ‘righteous,’” Ariel said thoughtfully. “He spent time with the people others rejected, showing them love and forgiveness.”

“That’s right,” Ryan said. “Jesus didn’t just preach love—He lived it. He showed us that no one is too far gone to be loved, forgiven, and redeemed.”

Ariel smiled. “We’re all sinners in need of God’s grace, and Jesus came to give us that grace.”

Alice looked up from her play, her face bright with understanding. “Jesus loves me even when I mess up?”

“Yes, Alice,” Ryan said, giving her a hug. “Jesus loves you no matter what. His love never runs out, and He’s always ready to forgive us when we ask.”

Reflection: The Love and Mercy of Jesus

That evening, Ariel read aloud from Mark 2:17:

“‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’”

The family sat quietly, reflecting on the incredible love of Jesus.

“Jesus didn’t come to hang out with people who thought they had it all together,” Ryan said. “He came to save the broken, the lost, and the sinners. That’s all of us, and He invites us to follow Him, no matter who we are or where we’ve been.”

Ariel nodded. “We don’t have to be perfect to be loved by Jesus.”

Alice hugged Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “Jesus loves everyone, even me!”

Takeaway: Jesus’ Mission to Save Sinners

In Mark 2:13-17, Jesus calls Levi, a tax collector, to follow Him, showing that His mission was not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. By dining with sinners, Jesus demonstrated His radical love and willingness to reach out to those whom society rejected. His love and forgiveness are extended to all, no matter their past or their mistakes. Through His example, we learn that no one is beyond the reach of God’s grace, and we are called to love and reach out to others with the same compassion and mercy that Jesus showed.