**THE COMMON PEOPLE HEARD HIM GLADLY**

Dee Bowman, one of my favorite preachers, is fond of saying, “God must have loved the common man, for He made so many of them.”

Not only that, He loved them so much He became one Himself.

To do that He had to leave the ivory towers of heaven where He was continuously adored by a myriad of angels singing His praises as Creator (Rev. 5), to become Himself created. Instead of choosing to be born like Solomon in a king’s palace surrounded by fame and fortune (I Kgs. 3; Eccl. 1-2), He opted for a humble beginning in a cow’s feed crib (Lk. 2:7), to be raised by a family of despised Nazarenes (Jn. 1:46), and confined to manual labor in a carpenter’s shop (Mk. 6:3). What was He thinking?

Why? Why did our Lord choose such surroundings when He could have done so much better? We learn the answer to that question when we hear what others said of Him. “*And the common people heard Him gladly*” (Mk. 12:37).

I suppose of all the many descriptions of Christ found in the Bible, that phrase is my favorite. It ranks a double high five. If I were an Olympic judge I would give it a 10.

When a confused and doubting John sat in prison, wondering if his entire ministry had been a bust, He sent disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you *The Coming One*, or do we look for another?” (Matt. 11:3). Without giving a direct answer Christ simply told them to give John this response: *““Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them”* (Matt. 11:4-5). In other words, John will put 2 + 2 together and see the Messiah had come! Not only did Jesus say He had compassion on the multitudes physically, but also spiritually. He preached to the masses who the elite rabbis scorned. With that answer John likely smiled, content, while laying his head on the chopping block.

If Mark 12:37 is ranked a double high five and a perfect 10 for my favorite phrase, then Matthew 9:9-13 gets the same scorecard for my favorite text. See if you agree.

*9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him. 10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”*

Don’t you just love that? A despised publican (by the way, that’s not a political party so please don’t “de-friend” me, or even “like” me, on Facebook), was brought into Jesus inner circle. He then proceeds to have a common meal in a house full of IRS agents and dirty riff-raff. Even though the uppity Pharisees couldn’t bring themselves to ask Jesus directly, He fielded the question Himself and forevermore became known as “The Great Physician.” A doctor worth his honored profession is not about money, but mercy. Oh, how Dr. Jesus was all about mercy. Please run to your pharmacy and get His prescription for our sin-sick society. On the bottle it reads: “Drug Name: Unselfishmyacin / Generic Name: Compassionate-Mercy / Take 3 doses morning, noon and night with prayer until empty. Unlimited refills.”

You’ll miraculously be cured of the deadly disease Selfishness and soon infect all those around you with Mercy. Now that’s a pandemic worth spreading!

The common man heard Jesus gladly. What attracted them to Him? What made them leave the elite teachers of their day to follow Jesus? Sympathy and Empathy. He rejoiced with those who rejoice, wept with those who wept (Rom. 12:15). Read how the Good Doctor took His own medicine:

Jesus attended a wedding (John 2:1-11). He helped the bride and groom rejoice by providing needed wine when they had embarrassingly run out. He rejoiced with those who rejoice.

Jesus attended a funeral (John 11). The weeping Mary and Martha, sisters to the dead Lazarus, grieved for their brother. “*Jesus wept*” (v.35) has forever touched us all.

Jesus on the cross (John 19:25-27). Of all the weeping and wailing happening at His feet He sympathetically forgets His own sorrows to seek care for His own mother by asking John to watch after her. “*Love seeks not its own*.” He was always about *others*.

The point I’m trying to make is this, the God-Man, “*God with us*” (Matt. 1:23), the “*Man of Sorrows”* (Isa. 53:3), could “*sympathize with our weaknesses*” (Heb. 4:15). He could “*be happy with those who are happy*” (NLT), and “*mourn with those who mourn*” (NIV – Rom. 12:15). He was a man of the people. The common people.

While the word “*common*” in Mark 12:37 is the Greek *POLYS* and is defined as “many, much, large, multitude,” thus technically referring to only a mass of people, it still means what we normally think it means when we see it in verses like Matthew 20:28 “*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many* (*POLYS*).” We see it again in Matthew 8:11 “*Many* (*POLYS*) *shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven*.”

Over and over again we read of “*multitudes*” (*POLYS*) swarming to Jesus to be healed and to hear Him preach (Matt. 4:25; 8:1,16,18; 9:10; 12:15; 13:2; 14:14; 15:30; 19:2; 20:29). The masses of humanity were living in the cold, harsh, ritualistic, formalistic, suffocating world of the Pharisees. There was no pulse left in their stifling religion. Suddenly Jesus appears. You can almost hear a collective sigh of relief. The world drastically changed. The common cold (religion) had a cure. Compassionate mercy forever altered the world.

It is now our good fortune during this present pandemic to be the Great Physician’s assistant and help spread His prescription to this merciless world. We are the cure. The common people swarmed to Him then because they saw He cared. Though God, He was a man “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Let us show by our life, and sing with our lips, “Yes He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched with our grief.”

Until tomorrow… “*Mercy triumphs over judgment*” (Jam. 2:13). Be the cure.

I love you. Rick