

## Eat, Drink, and Be Merry

**Matthew 9:14-17**

Many of you probably think that this sermon title has been the story of my life for the last 3 months, as I have been on sabbatical!

I read an interesting quote that captures the essence of what a sabbatical is:

*"A Sabbatical is like taking a vacation but spending it in the hospital!"*

A hospital is a place to get well, to heal, to diagnose, to treat, & to put a plan of treatment in place! That has been more of my experience these last 3 months!

I wouldn't say that to *"eat, drink & be merry"* has summarized my sabbatical experience, but I do hope it will better summarize my life and ministry going forward! Let me explain...

One of the best parts of my sabbatical experience was worshipping at different churches! We went to 13 different churches over the past 13 weeks! The Body of Christ, the Church, is truly diverse and nuanced!

Experiencing worship in this way served as a "hospital" stay for me, where unhealthiness was exposed & diagnosed! & now are hopefully being treated!

### **Diagnosis # 1 – A Misdirected Focus**

Too often I found myself focused on who was present – how many people, what types of people, who was leading, who the target audience was, etc!

*Why was I letting the people in worship distract me from focusing on the One I had come there to worship?* I needed to redirect my focus on Jesus!

It's kind of like the disciples of John, who came to Jesus more focused on Jesus' disciples, the Pharisees, & themselves, than on Jesus Himself!

### **Diagnosis # 2 – Misplaced Affections**

Too often I found myself caring more about "the stuff" of worship than about being in the very presence of my Savior and Lord!

I was creating mental checklists in my head of the "dos" and "don'ts" of worship, & it was robbing me of truly connecting w/Jesus in those moments.

I had gotten sucked into worshipping a liturgy, rather than the person of Jesus! I needed a heart/affections change! *What about you?*

Again, it's kind of like the disciples of John – who cared more about "fasting" than about being in the very presence of the Messiah!

John's disciples needed a heart change (a change of their affections) as well!

- They were still known as disciples of John! *Why?*
- They saw the need to draw the Pharisees into the conversation! *Why?*
- *Why was this question about fasting so important to them?*

*Why do we set our affections on the "stuff" of our worship (or the stuff of our faith expression) rather than on the person and teachings of Jesus?*

### **Diagnosis # 3 – Counterfeit Worship**

Too often I found myself disengaged in worship! My heart wasn't in it! I was just going through the motions!

If our faith expression (worship) is defined by only the religious activities we participate in, than we are susceptible to a counterfeit faith!

Jesus was right in front of John's disciples, and yet they were unmoved because they were more focused on fulfilling their religious obligations!

### **Treatment # 1 – Eat, Drink and Be Merry!**

Jesus' response to these disciples of John was for them to consider a wedding feast. People don't fast when they are at a wedding banquet – they eat, drink and celebrate! Isn't that what a life with Jesus should look like?

In Christ we receive & eat of the bread of life, we drink of a new covenant, & we celebrate being united to the heavenly bridegroom! *And are we still unmoved?*

### **Treatment # 2 – Let go of religion and embrace Jesus!**

Religion focuses on what we need to do to satisfy God – an unending patchwork of trying to put a new cloth on an old torn garment (vs. 16)!

With Jesus, God has already been satisfied! In Him, there is a new wine skin that doesn't leak or burst, but holds securely that which we can drink from and be satisfied in eternally – Jesus Himself (vs. 17)!

How can our focus stay misdirected, our affections misguided, our worship counterfeit, when Jesus has become everything for us? Let's eat and drink of Him, and be merry/celebrate because Jesus is our Lord/Savior/Bridegroom!