

**Sermon Series: Intentional Disciples—Purposeful Fellowship—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—
2/5/2006**

Title: “Sanctified Fun”

Text: Matthew 9: 9-17

Intro.: Ills. Are we having fun, yet?

Theme: When our fellowship with others has its starting point from our personal relationship to Jesus, the enjoyment of those friendships and relationships takes on a grace driven fun which has an eternal perspective.

Caring about who chooses me to be their friend (Print and read Matthew 9: 9-10)

- Jesus chooses us to be in his circle of friends
 1. Who are your circle of friends you choose to hang out with?
 - a. Family
 - b. Other believers/church
 - c. Work associates
 - d. Those outside the Kingdom of God
 - e. *I am a companion of all those who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts. Psalm 119: 63*
 2. Jesus seeks out sinners to be his friends when no one else would
 - a. Matthew, a tax collector, was an outcast of outcasts – Roman stooge–betrayer, hood, thief
 - b. Matthew brought Jesus to meet the “*real sinners*” of his day and he chose to have **fun** with them
 - c. Jesus invitation of friendship to you and me, **the sinners**, is simple — “follow me”
 - i. Oh yes, there really is not anything redeemable about you and me that Jesus should choose us
 - ii. *While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom5:8*
 3. The goal of Jesus relationship with us to have real fun that really lasts
 - a. **Ills.: Being Chosen**
 - b. *I have told you this so that you will be as joyful as I am, and your joy will be complete. John 15:11*
- Jesus seeks out a relationship with us so that he can change us forever
 1. Jesus invitation to join in the fun of his joy will change the rest of your lives
 - a. *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. John 15: 15-16*
 - b. **Ill.: Don Wharton and mud headers** – Are we having fun, yet?
 2. A transformation of your relationships when Jesus comes into them
 - a. A relationship which brings about a drastic make-over of my life
 - i. Imagine hush when Jesus showed up to Matthew’s party but then when something different about Matthew
 - ii. **Print and read Matthew 9: 16-17**
 - b. A relationship which will bring about a drastic change in the way we go about your other relationships
 - i. Jesus did not want Matthew to abandon his friends but invite them to meet him
 - ii. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation 2 Cor. 5: 17-18*

As Jesus’ disciples being purposeful to breath his joy into our friendships

- Often, we “*church goers*” can be our own worst enemy
 1. We can bring the kiss of death (**legalism**) into our relationship (**Print and read Matthew 9: 11-13**)
 - a. We miss the fun of life in Jesus and sharing his grace with each other when we live/die by the letter of rules
 - b. Grace toward others in our fellowship is what God wants more than anything else
 2. We can smother the fun (joy) of Jesus with **ritualism** (**Print and read Matthew 9: 14-15**)
 - a. John’s disciples missed the fact that all John did with the fasting was get them ready for Jesus

- b. Not getting lost in the practice of Christianity and missing the heart of it in Jesus' heart for others
- Letting Jesus introduce you and me to *His friends*
 1. Often it will be the *just-born-againers* with whom it will be the most fun to hang out
 2. Many of Jesus' friends will push you right outside of your comfort zone
 3. **Ills.: Throwing a birthday party for prostitutes**
 4. Are you keeping your eyes open for the new friends—the true friends to whom Jesus is hankering for you to meet?

Are We Having Fun Yet?

Two old fellows were walking along the shoreline of a lake when a frog came hopping up to them. Creaking with age, one of the old-timers slowly bent down and scooped up the frog in his hands. As he stood there gazing at the frog, fascinated by its ugliness, the frog croaked, "Hey, mister! I'm not really a frog. If you kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess." Startled, the old man slipped the frog into his pocket and headed on down the shoreline. For the longest time he and his friend trudged along in silence. "Well?" his buddy finally blurted out. "You gonna kiss it?" "Naw, I guess not," the first codger replied. "At my age, I think I'll have more fun with a talking frog." **Bonne Steffen, editor; source: Roby Mitchell, Christian Appeal**

Being Chosen

Soccer season was starting once again. This year my tiny, 35-pound, 5-year-old daughter would be playing Micro-League for the Bombers. As we walked to the first practice on a cool summer day, I was anxious to see who the coach would be. Would his focus be on making the game fun and a team experience, or would he focus on goals and winning? As practice began I met the coach, Ray. My first impression was that Ray was a good man. Any lingering doubt about him vanished when an odd incident occurred during a practice game: the white shirts versus the blue shirts. As they began, an olive skinned little boy who (we later learned) spoke no English wandered from the playground equipment over to the sidelines of the game. He watched. He waited. Moments later, I looked for him again, but he was gone. Then I noticed there were now thirteen Bombers running up and down the field. The boy, perfectly camouflaged in blue shorts and a white t-shirt, had joined the white team. He ran, he passed, he kicked. He smiled. No one seemed to notice that he wasn't a part of the team. No one yet said, "He hasn't paid the fees! The proper forms and releases have not been signed!" Soon, however, a ball rolled into a mother's lap, and as the new boy ran to fetch it, the mom innocently said to the coach, "He's not on the team." The kids, who had not even noticed that a new friend was on the field, stopped. The coach looked down at the now very dirty boy, saying, "He's not? Hmm." There was a pause as the boy looked up at Ray, who held his soccer fate, at least this day. Finally Ray made his judgment. He put his hand on the boy's small back and said, "Come on! Let's play soccer!" And off all thirteen Bombers ran. None of us deserve to be on God's team. We haven't earned it. Nor have we have we paid the price ourselves. Yet, in his grace, Jesus chooses us to be on the best team in the universe. **Curtis Buthe, Portland, Or**

Matthew 9:9-17

⁹When Jesus was leaving that place, he saw a man sitting in a tax office. The man's name was Matthew. Jesus said to him, "Follow me!" So Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰Later Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house. Many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and his disciples.

¹¹The Pharisees saw this and asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹²When Jesus heard that, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor; those who are sick do. ¹³Learn what this means: 'I want mercy, not sacrifices.' I've come to call sinners, not people who think they have God's approval."

¹⁴Then John's disciples came to Jesus. They said, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often but your disciples never do?"

¹⁵Jesus replied, "Can wedding guests be sad while the groom is still with them? The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them. Then they will fast.

¹⁶"No one patches an old coat with a new piece of cloth that will shrink. When the patch shrinks, it will rip

away from the coat, and the tear will become worse. ¹⁷Nor do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins burst, the wine runs out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, people pour new wine into fresh skins, and both are saved." [GW]

Throwing a Birthday Party for Prostitutes

In his book *The Kingdom of God Is a Party*, Tony Campolo relates an experience he had late one night in Hawaii.

Up a side street I found a little place that was still open. I went in, took a seat on one of the stools at the counter, and waited to be served. This was one of those sleazy places that deserves the name, "greasy spoon." I did not even touch the menu. I was afraid that if I opened the thing something gruesome would crawl out. But it was the only place I could find. The fat guy behind the counter came over and asked me, "What d'ya want?" I said I wanted a cup of coffee and a donut. He poured a cup of coffee, wiped his grimy hand on his smudged apron, and then he grabbed a donut off the shelf behind him. I'm a realist. I know that in the back room of that restaurant, donuts are probably dropped on the floor and kicked around. But when everything is out front where I could see it, I really would have appreciated it if he had used a pair of tongs and placed the donut on some wax paper. As I sat there munching on my donut and sipping my coffee at 3:30 in the morning, the door of the diner suddenly swung open and, to my discomfort, in marched eight or nine provocative and boisterous prostitutes. It was a small place, and they sat on either side of me. Their talk was loud and crude. I felt completely out of place and was just about to make my getaway when I overheard the woman beside me say, "Tomorrow's my birthday. I'm going to be 39." Her "friend" responded in a nasty tone, "So what do you want from me? A birthday party? What do you want? Ya want me to get you a cake and sing 'Happy Birthday'?" "Come on," said the woman sitting next to me. "Why do you have to be so mean? I was just telling you, that's all. Why do you have to put me down? I was just telling you it was my birthday. I don't want anything from you. I mean, why should you give me a birthday party? I've never had a birthday party in my whole life. Why should I have one now?" When I heard that, I made a decision. I sat and waited until the women had left. Then I called over the fat guy behind the counter, and I asked him, "Do they come in here every night?" "Yeah!" he answered. "The one right next to me, does she come here every night?" "Yeah!" he said. "That's Agnes. Yeah, she comes in here every night. Why d'ya wanta know?" "Because I heard her say that tomorrow is her birthday," I told him. "What do you say you and I do something about that? What do you think about us throwing a birthday party for her right here tomorrow night?" A cute smile slowly crossed his chubby cheeks, and he answered with measured delight, "That's great! I like it! That's a great idea!" Calling to his wife, who did the cooking in the back room, he shouted, "Hey! Come out here! This guy's got a great idea. Tomorrow's Agnes's birthday. This guy wants us to go in with him and throw a birthday party for her right here tomorrow night!" His wife came out of the back room all bright and smiley. She said, "That's wonderful! You know Agnes is one of those people who is really nice and kind, and nobody does anything nice and kind for her." "Look," I told them, "if it's okay with you, I'll get back here tomorrow morning about 2:30 and decorate the place. I'll even get a birthday cake!" "No way," said Harry (that was his name). "The birthday cake's my thing. I'll make the cake." At 2:30 the next morning, I was back at the diner. I had picked up some crepe-paper decorations at the store and had made a sign out of big pieces of cardboard that read, "Happy Birthday, Agnes!" I decorated the diner from one end to the other. I had that diner looking good. The woman who did the cooking must have gotten the word out on the street, because by 3:15 every prostitute in Honolulu was in the place. It was wall-to-wall prostitutes and me! At 3:30 on the dot, the door of the diner swung open, and in came Agnes and her friend. I had everybody ready (after all, I was kind of the M.C. of the affair) and when they came in we all screamed, "Happy birthday!" Never have I seen a person so flabbergasted so stunned so shaken. Her mouth fell open. Her legs seemed to buckle a bit. Her friend grabbed her arm to steady her. As she was led to sit on one of the stools along the counter, we all sang "Happy Birthday" to her. As we came to the end of our singing with "happy birthday, dear Agnes, happy birthday to you," her eyes moistened. Then, when the birthday cake with all the candles on it was carried out, she lost it and just openly cried. Harry gruffly mumbled, "Blow out the candles, Agnes! Come on! Blow out the candles! If you don't blow out the candles, I'm gonna hafta blow out the candles." And, after an endless few seconds, he did. Then he handed her a knife and told her, "Cut the cake, Agnes. Yo, Agnes, we all want some cake." Agnes looked down at the cake. Then without taking her eyes off it,

she slowly and softly said, "Look, Harry, is it all right with you if I--I mean is it okay if I kind of--what I want to ask you is--is it O.K. if I keep the cake a little while? I mean, is it all right if we don't eat it right away?" Harry shrugged and answered, "Sure! It's O.K. If you want to keep the cake, keep the cake. Take it home, if you want to." "Can I?" she asked. Then, looking at me, she said, "I live just down the street a couple of doors. I want to take the cake home, okay? I'll be right back. Honest!" She got off the stool, picked up the cake, and carrying it like it was the Holy Grail, walked slowly toward the door. As we all just stood there motionless, she left. When the door closed, there was a stunned silence in the place. Not knowing what else to do, I broke the silence by saying, "What do you say we pray?" Looking back on it now, it seems more than strange for a sociologist to be leading a prayer meeting with a bunch of prostitutes in a diner in Honolulu at 3:30 in the morning. But then it just felt like the right thing to do. I prayed for Agnes. I prayed for her salvation. I prayed that her life would be changed and that God would be good to her. When I finished, Harry leaned over the counter and with a trace of hostility in his voice, he said, "Hey! You never told me you were a preacher. What kind of church do you belong to?" In one of those moments when just the right words came, I answered, "I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for whores at 3:30 in the morning." Harry waited a moment and then almost sneered as he answered, "No you don't. There's no church like that. If there was, I'd join it. I'd join a church like that!" Wouldn't we all? Wouldn't we all like to join a church that throws birthday parties for whores at 3:30 in the morning? Well, that's the kind of church that Jesus came to create! **Tony Campolo, The Kingdom of God Is a Party (Word, 1990); used by permission from Thomas Nelson Publishing**