Matthew 9:9-13 (NIV)
9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture Reading - Matthew’s account)
– Though born with the honorable Jewish name “Levi,” Matthew [which means “gift of Jehovah”] was known and despised as “the publican.”
– Matthew reports this meal as just a “dinner,” humbly omitting his role in it, but Luke says Matthew hosted “a great banquet.” Maybe his humility was from being hated and distrusted by his countrymen. Not so with Jesus! [E. Stanley Jones: “Jesus has been called ‘the great believer in man.’ The common people heard him gladly because he did not treat them as common people. Three words were constantly upon his lips: the least, the last, and the lost. These words were upon his lips for these people were in his heart.”]
– Jesus was seeking “the least, the last, and the lost” all the way to Calvary, and for us who are His followers, HOM.idea. First, we’ll look at...

I. The Call of Christ
A. How does Christ call and how should we respond:
1. v.9a, As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him - The call of Christ may be very simple, but it is also an imperative:
   a. He sees us with eyes of faith in our future (not just optimism!)
   b. He calls us while we’re busy (Satan tempts us while we’re idle)
   c. His call includes the power to follow it (prevenient grace).
2. v.9b, Matthew got up and followed him - left place & preoccupation
3. He might have already considered what the call would mean:
   a. He was leaving income and ease for honor and adventure. (A love for silver became a love for souls – 2 Co 5:14)
   b. Leaving his desk but keeping his pen. (Our skills go with us.)
B. What does Christ’s call “Follow Me” mean for a disciple?
2. Christ calls us to care for the lost: Matthew’s life changed:
   a. He got concerned for the salvation of friends. (A love for silver became a love for souls – 2 Co 5:14. For Christ’s love compels us...
   b. Then he threw a banquet, v.10– many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples. - Bringing friends to Christ
also brings together two potential problems:

1. Invite Christ and you get his disciples (Some may not like or want to have anything to do with the Church).
2. Disciples must go where Jesus goes (even to old enemies, like tax-collectors were to Christ’s disciples).

**TRANS:** Christ is “the great believer in man... the least, the last, and the lost” To follow Him means *caring for the lost,* as He does. But it also means hearing the world criticize Him, as his disciples heard Him criticized by the Pharisees. When it happens, when Jesus is maligned in our hearing, we may feel at a loss for words, as the disciples evidently were at...

**II. The Criticism of Christ. v.11** (by the Pharisees)

A. Criticism is unavoidable [Eleanor Roosevelt: “You’ll be damned if you do, and damned if you don’t.”] Today Christ is *too narrow;* back then, He was *too nice— Luke 15:2.* “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

B. What was the reasoning of the Pharisees?

1. *Holy prophets shouldn’t mingle with unholy people— Psa 119:115.* Away from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commands of my God!
2. *Maybe they were jealous...* “We work hard to be holy! Why do sinners get his attention?” [Matthew Henry: “they have not the grace of God themselves, who grudge others a share in that grace.”]

C. Although blind to them, the Pharisees had their own problems:

1. The *self-righteous* may strictly avoid *sinners,* but they can’t avoid *sin— Rom 3:23,* for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
2. They were *zealous for godliness in appearance* but not in *power.* (Prejudice blinds people into practicing a powerless religiosity.)
   a. God wants: separation *unto Christ,* not separation from people.
   b. He wants separation as a result of a *holy life,* not a *means to it.*
   c. God calls us to be separated *unto love,* not *unto contempt.*

**TRANS:** The Pharisees criticized Jesus to the disciples, but they didn’t answer, *He did.* Believers can get in trouble wrangling with His critics. We must wait for Christ to speak to them—maybe it will be through us, maybe not. But we should *never* stop caring for them, as Christ does.

**III. The Commitment of Christ (describes His mission)**

A. His program was *healthcare for the sick— v.12.* Jesus said, “It is not the