

7 June 2026 – rumblings of the Holy Spirit

May the words of my mouth, and the meditations ...

I'm going to start out with a story about when I was a little kid in the mid-1950s.

I was maybe five or six, and I rode a city bus for the first time with my Granny, Myrtle, and my mom to downtown Cincinnati to shop at an upscale department store.

But I particularly remember getting to eat lunch in the fancy café on an upper floor of the building.

During the meal, the waitress and the busboy, both of whom were dark skinned people, came to our table to do their stuff. And when I started to speak to one of them, my grandmother very sternly hushed me and shook her head.

Both the waitress and the busboy were the first people that I had ever seen who looked like them, and I had been intrigued.

We had absolutely no such people living in the small town where I grew up. Zero.

My Granny, and Grandpa Albert had a farm hand, Stanley. Stanley looked pretty much like us.

I was curious about Stanley, too – but the same rules applied to having no contact with Stanley. Hired help.

I was being taught by my Granny – whom I dearly loved – that we didn't associate with "those" people. With those who aren't like us.

I essentially pigeonholed that memory until many years later, once I was an adult and living far from Cincinnati. And it never did feel right.

I finally came to understand that, when Myrtle was raised as a little girl, she was “taught to believe” that she was “better” than some other groups of people. Her family was part of “the right” crowd.

In our Gospel story this morning, we meet Matthew.

Matthew’s “job” was to collect import duties on the various goods that businessmen transported between towns and cities. Tax collectors would inflate the value of those goods, charge elevated fees, and then pocket the difference. That’s how they made their living.

Tax collectors collaborated with the occupying Roman forces, and the Jews despised them because of this.

Matthew was scorned as having “sold out” to the Romans.

Jesus walked past Matthew in Capernaum, as he was sitting at his “receipt of customs” booth, and the Lord simply told Matthew to follow Him.

Jesus then went with Matthew to his house, where He sat down and ate with other “tax collectors” and “sinners” who had gathered there. With people who were ritually unclean... Those who were known to engage in immoral practices. Those who were judged to be “beneath” the Pharisees and priests.

Women of the night. Women one wouldn’t bring home to meet one’s mother.

People who didn't properly keep the Sabbath...

People who coveted and took things that weren't theirs to take.  
People who took advantage of widows. People who were simply poor or disabled.

Those who weren't "welcome" in the temple.

And... Jesus, spending his time with these people, seriously ticked off the Scribes and Pharisees. Repeatedly. For three years.

In *their* opinion, Jesus just didn't hang out with the "right" people; with those on the "Approved" list kept by the Jewish leaders.

Instead, Jesus chose to associate with those who desperately needed to hear his words and feel his embrace.

Humble people who didn't lord their status over others. Those who were shunned by the "important" people.

Such as the Pharisees, Scribes, the priests.

The Jewish leaders truly "*believed*" that they were better than Jesus and those with whom He spent so much of his time.

*They* were "proud" of *their* status. Proud that they were *so much better* than those with whom Jesus spent *his* days.

Jesus was a rabbi, a teacher, who came down to *our* level.

He didn't have to. He chose to do so. It was in His DNA.

Jesus quickly responded to the humble leader of the synagogue who had sought him out, imploring him to restore life for his daughter...

Jesus gently embraced the humble woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for so many years, healing her body. She had so little self-esteem that she had been afraid to even speak to Jesus.

Jesus didn't care if the religious leaders approved or disapproved of the company He kept.

Are we worthy of Jesus' love?

Worthy – not in *our* eyes..., but in those of the Lord who looks deeply into each of our hearts, our souls, and sees something very different than what we ourselves could ever see.

He sees where we are broken, deep inside... He sees where we need “fixing.”

Because we *are* each broken. Broken by everything that life has thrown our way through the years. But we are *never* broken beyond repair.

None of us is irredeemable...

From a young age we each pick up undesirable habits. Many of those were passed down to us from our parents, our grandparents. Maybe even from our teachers or pastors.

But we also pick up so many good habits along the way – if we allow ourselves to do so.

The Lord “abides” deep inside the hearts of each of us. He sees through all our various trappings, through all our fancy clothes and possessions we try to hide behind.

Jesus chose to live among the many who had been shunned by society.

And He still lives among us today.

All of which made me wonder... If Jesus lived in Skagit Valley today, would he choose to hang out with us?