

**Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup>**  
**Matthew 9: 10-17**

The Pharisees were the middle class power base outside of Jerusalem and were primarily teachers and scholars. Matthew portrayed them as narrow-minded legalists who emphasized faithfulness to the Torah, study of scripture, and obedience to the law.

Jesus called Matthew, the tax collector to follow him and was seen sharing a meal with other tax collectors and sinners (the undesirable or considered unclean). The Pharisees questioned Jesus' associations. Jesus reply was to emphasize that his desire was to be where help was needed, where he could do the most good. "It isn't the healthy who need a doctor, it's the sick." Jesus wanted mercy shown to the needy. "It's mercy I want, not sacrifice." He desired compassion towards the needy, not pious prayers and showy religion.

When Jesus was questioned relative to the Pharisees' fasting while his disciples were not fasting, Jesus' reply was about the appropriateness of the law at a particular time or situation. Again, Jesus was saying to be kind, have compassion, and consider the circumstances surrounding a situation and whether or not they pose an unreasonable burden or condemn the guiltless.

Jesus' responses remind me of the three legged stool which we reference in our Episcopal faith: Scripture, Tradition and Reason. Jesus knew the Old Testament laws, and chose reaching out to help followers understand questions of moral behavior relevant to those laws, traditions and logical ethics.

***Anne Hamner***