



# Sermon 8

## Lifting Up the Fallen in Your City

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Matthew 11:19

*“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds”*

### Introduction

**D**id you know that cities are filled with broken hearts? Some people who are going through tough times tend to fill their lives with a kind of darkness. In cities, we encounter young people who are trapped in the world of drugs, others who are under the influence of gangs, and some who are battling abuse and mistreatment. You can see young and old people who seem utterly lost, with no idea of which path to take. They are broken inside and are desperately seeking an opportunity to change.

Let us talk about the case of Maria, a twenty-five-year-old woman who lived in the heart of the big city. She had grown up in a difficult environment, surrounded by family problems and the negative influence of her friends. She began experimenting with drugs at a young age and soon found herself caught in a downward spiral. She lost her job, her relationships crumbled, and her health deteriorated rapidly. Maria was broken, both physically and emotionally.

## Development

I would like to begin this reflection with a verse from the Bible that has always caught my attention:

*“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’” (Matthew 11:19 NIV).*

Dear young people, have you ever wondered how they referred to Jesus? They called Him a “friend of sinners”! Can you imagine Jesus walking through your city? Who would He talk to? Towards whom would He show more sympathy? Undoubtedly, I believe He would approach those like Maria, those who have fallen and have broken hearts.

Now, what does it really mean for Jesus to be a friend of sinners? It means that He is our friend and is waiting for us to acknowledge His presence and willingness. God’s love for us goes beyond what we can imagine.

It is interesting that the title “friend of sinners” was given to Jesus by the religious leaders of His time. They criticized Him for spending time with the marginalized and “socially unacceptable” people, and that is why they called Him a “friend of sinners”!

For example, on one occasion, the Scribes and Pharisees murmured against Jesus. Do you know why? “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying *“This*

*man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them”* (Luke 15:1-2 KJV).

In the face of these criticisms, Jesus did not defend Himself but told a parable that illustrates how much God loves those who have fallen:

*“Then He spoke this parable to them, saying: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”* (Luke 15:3-7 NKJV).

Jesus talks about a shepherd who had a hundred sheep, but one of them strayed away and was lost. According to zoology, sheep are animals that stray and get lost easily due to their lack of a sense of direction. But the shepherd left the ninety-nine and made every effort to find the one lost sheep, even facing extreme weather conditions. Finally, with tenderness and love, he found the sheep and brought it back to the flock. Upon returning home, he celebrated his find with joy.

Christian writer Ellen G. White says that God, like an earthly shepherd, knows His sheep, scattered throughout the world.

“As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the Divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. “Ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.” Jesus says, “I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.” “I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.” Ezekiel 34:31; Isaiah 43:1; 49:16. Jesus knows us individually and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.”<sup>1</sup>

Jesus, the divine shepherd, goes through cities in search of the lost, the broken, and the fallen, those with broken hearts due to life’s blows and traumas.

Why do I believe that Jesus lifts up the fallen?

**He lifted up the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11):** He found a woman trapped in adultery, and instead of condemning her, He said, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her.” The crowd dispersed, and Jesus told the woman that He did not condemn her and that she should sin no more.

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1 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017), p. pp. 479, 479.3.

**He lifted up the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15):** On another occasion, Jesus found a man who had been sick and bedridden for 38 years. Jesus told him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk,” and the man was instantly healed.

**He lifted up Zacchaeus, the tax collector (Luke 19:1-10):** Zacchaeus was despised for his occupation and reputation as a sinner. When Jesus visited him, Zacchaeus was moved and decided to give half of his goods to the poor and restore fourfold to those he had defrauded.

In each of these examples, Jesus demonstrates His ability to lift up the fallen and offer them hope, regardless of their circumstances or past sins. He teaches us that there is always an opportunity for forgiveness, healing, and transformation in His presence.

## Conclusion

One day, while struggling with her addiction, Maria, encountered a group of volunteers from the Adventist Church who were helping vulnerable young people. One of them, Pablo, approached her with kindness and support. They offered her a safe haven and assistance in facing her problems. Despite her initial skepticism, Maria decided to give this helping hand a chance.

Over the following months, Maria began to rebuild her life. She received Bible studies and emotional support, counseling, and help to

overcome her addiction. As she regained her confidence and skills, she also found employment and rebuilt healthy relationships with her family and friends. Today, Maria is a living testimony of how a second chance and a helping hand can change someone's life. Maria is an example that Jesus continues to lift up the fallen in cities. Dear young person, rise up and seek out the fallen in your city and introduce them to Jesus, who is the friend of sinners.

