

September 9:

Message: Why Do You Buy That #1: Jumping in Scum

Scripture: Matthew 9:9-13 (Jesus is judged for mixing with Matthew the tax collector)

Theme: Marketing: Our world creates a never ending cycle of always needing that one more thing to be accepted or happy. Our church (Religion) tells us we just need to do that one more thing to be good enough. Jesus just says come! We “buy” this because we realize that we really are scum! Commercials prick this realization. Yet the answer isn’t buying their product, it’s turning to Jesus.

Blurb: This Sunday Pastor David returns and launches our fall message series, “Why Do You Buy That?” We’ll look at popular and insightful ad commercials to see why we do what we do. Commercials work because they tap into our wanting of something more. We’re looking for something different. We desire more out of life than we have now. For our first message we’ll start off with the basics: Jesus answers the true longings of our lives. Come and see how you can be truly satisfied!

Kids: “Why Did You Buy That?” Bidding Game with 3 contestants, including kids -Andrew

Memory Verse: Romans 12:2 “Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.”

Opening Song: *Rejoice* - Sanctify

Welcome: -David

Memory Verse:

“Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.” -Romans 12:2

Greeting Time:

Worship Music Set:

Send Us Out

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Living Hope

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Offering: *Rejoice* (reprise) - Sanctify

“Why Did You Buy That?” Bidding Game with 3 contestants, including kids -Andrew

Prayers: -David

Lord’s Prayer

Message: “Why Do We Buy That” #1: Jumping in Scum

Bumper Video: "When I Grow Up" Monster.com

<https://youtu.be/myG8hq1Mk00> (32 seconds) “There’s a better job out there.”

PP#1: Why Do We Buy That?

Jumping in Scum

“Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.” Romans 12:2

So, do you now want to go out and find a new job? Think about how you are not satisfied with what you do right now. Focus on what you don’t like about your job. Remember when you were a kid, and what you dreamed of doing? What happened to that dream? How did you get where you are now? Why aren’t you doing something else? You can still get that, you know. If you use monster.com you could find the job of your dreams!

This fall for our message series, we’re going to watch commercials. Every fall I try to use media from our culture to take a better look at the Christian life. We live in our culture, and it affects us. Some of it is good...our culture can offer us help in living well. Sometimes we see biblical truths in media. But our culture also gets it wrong, actually much of the time. And we need to be able to separate out what is unhelpful, and instead find the better way. We live in our culture, and we are immersed in it. Just like in coloring an Easter egg, we absorb our culture simply by being in it. And taking a closer look at media can help us see the values and way of life that our culture teaches.

So, I bring the wider culture into worship in order to name the culture we live in, to help us see the Christian life as an alternative to what the world offers, and to help us be able to engage others who also live in this culture and point out God’s alternative to them.

Our series on commercials is “Why Do We Buy That?” Today, we’re “Jumping in Scum.” Romans 12:2, “Don’t be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.”

PP#2: *Funny image conveying the power of commercials.*

Commercials are a cornerstone of our culture today. It used to be ads in print and in-person demonstrations, then commercials on TV, and now it is all over the internet and social media. Research says that the average person sees between 3,000 to 5,000 advertisements a day!

At its basic level, advertising is communication. There is something here you need to know. But it’s largely driven by people or companies wanting you to buy something. There is a motivation behind it...the desire to make a sale. Don’t forget that one. We’ll come back to this again and again. Advertisers aren’t objective. They don’t have their best interest in mind. They have theirs. Never forget that! Sometimes it’s things you need or really could use if you knew about it. Did you know that they make a grabber arm that can help you get those socks that fall behind the drier? Man! I could really use one of those! That would make my life easier! How do I get one?

PP#3: *Ad for bagel slicer*

But then there is the far larger chunk of products and services where marketing is trying to sell you something that you really can live quite happily without. Are you still cutting your bagels with a knife? Let me tell you about the new bagel slicer! And since the seller needs to you to buy it more than you need to have it, the solution for that gap is aggressive advertising.

PP#4: *Image for how ads make you feel bad, or jealous*

Aggressive marketing has two parts. The first is to make you feel unhappy because of some defect or lack in your life, usually something you were really not thinking about before. It's dangerous to cut a bagel with a knife. You could cut yourself! Then, the second part is that you can fix that defect by purchasing the product or service, and therefore have a happiness that you didn't have before. Wow, having the bagel slicer puts such a smile on my face!

Notice that the underlying motivation that advertising seeks to tap into is *happiness*. We all want to be happy. You might not have realized it, but this identified lack is restricting your happiness. Lack of happiness because of lack of *thing*. You can purchase *thing* for money. Like algebra, when we simplify the equation, the transaction is: we can purchase happiness.

PP#5: *Typical ad with descriptions of 3 low payments, guaranteed, recommended by doctors, etc.*

Of course smart marketing preemptively addresses our reservations. It's worth the money because of the product's quality or superiority. Scarcity: only available here, or for a limited time. It's new...a breakthrough. There's a guarantee. It's cheap, it's affordable, "for only the low price of..." Or monthly payments. There's testimonies: "I tried this and it worked for me!" Or expert recommendation...by the way, is there anything that 10 out of 10 dentists recommend? Sorry, that's where my mind goes!

You don't have the job of your dreams. You do a lot of menial tasks. Therefore you lack happiness in your current job. Solution? Use Monster.com. Buy that app, pay that service to get what you lack. (Be exposed to more ads.) You win!

PP#6: *Ad about exercise equipment with gorgeous models using it.*

But the most effective marketing taps into our sense of *value, compared to others*. You could be this cool, this envied, turn heads, have abs like these people. You know, there's always something disturbing about fit, buff people selling exercise equipment. It works, of course, because I want to look like them, so I will do what they do and buy their product. But as I watch, I ask, "if this product keeps people looking like this, then it's not for me, because I'm not like that yet, and if it makes people fit, then why are they using it since they are already fit?" See how my mind works?

PP#7: *Iconic image from the Coke Side of Life advertising campaign*

A few years ago Coke-a-Cola launched their "Coke side of life" campaign. You know I had to get to Coke quickly, as they are the undisputed champions of advertising. They have built an empire on convincing you that you really want to spend \$1 buying a drink that costs 5 cents. So, every campaign for the last 140 years has been, buy a Coke and you'll be happier.

The Coke Side of Life campaign ran a few years and had dozens of commercials. Take a look at this one from a Superbowl.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fc1ADvKwWXU> (62 seconds)

Coke "Stewie v. Underdog" - Super Bowl Commercial (2008) Charlie Brown gets it!

PP#8: *Image of giant Charlie Brown balloon holding a giant Coke bottle balloon.*

Told in a fun way, but the basic message is that Stewie and Underdog both want Coke. It's highly desirable. You want it too, right? And in the end, Charlie Brown gets it! Charlie Brown, the average person we all identify with: he gets the Coke, and *finally* has happiness. That's you! You can have that kind of feeling if you only go out and buy a Coke.

Here's another commercial from that campaign. Teens are the largest consumers of soft drinks. So, of course, Coke is trying to expand into the adult market. Take a look at this one.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Qw_5M3juo4 (32 seconds)

PP#9: *Image of a person in their happy place, holding a Coke.*

Can you, adult employee, imagine a world that's not all about schedules and meetings? Where there is time for what we really want, those meaningful relationships? Well, it can be real, on the "Coke side of life." Life is different there. Things go right. We feel happy, and fulfilled. Don't you want to be a part of that kind of reality? Coke is using the classic association model of advertising. Coke may not cause you to have meaningful relationships, but a better life and Coke go together. What can you do to have this reality? Well, why don't you think about it while drinking a Coke?

Why do we buy that? Why do we buy Coke? Well, we want the great taste of drinking a Coke, but we also want the meaningful relationships rather than the meeting-filled, broken world we live in. Why do we buy the idea that Coke can make us happy? Because we want to be a happy Charlie Brown, those people who have that deep relationship, the guy who has the dream job.

PP#10: *Ad of really cool and beautiful people in an ad using coolness to make you want it.*

We buy it because we believe that we are lacking. If you don't wear this brand of clothing, people won't like you as much, and you won't get the guy or girl you like. If you buy a PC instead of a Mac you are going to end up like this dorky, fat, balding, old guy (!) with lots of problems instead of the young, cool looking guy. If you drink Coke you will be cool, popular, and most importantly, desirable.

Advertising tells us over and over again that we are not happy, not cool, not pretty, too fat, too thin, and on and on. You may not have realized it, but you are scum! If you are not using this product or service, you are scum! But wait, your problem can be solved, for the low price of...

PP#11: *Image for the Bible crashing through ads based on attraction and secular value.*

I want you to know that there is an alternative. God's voice breaks into this advertising pummeling and speaks a deeper truth, a truth that doesn't just give happiness, but true joy. That truth comes vividly in the person of Jesus. Let's go to a passage of Scripture that we don't read very much. It's the calling of Matthew to follow Jesus.

PP#12: *Image Matthew sitting at a tax collector's booth...perhaps with people looking down on him.*

As you turn to Matthew 9, I want to introduce you a bit to Matthew. In his day, the aggressive advertising came in the form of important people dressing in flashy outfits that showed just how religious they were as they paraded around. The cultural teaching was that you should be just like they were: outwardly religious, looking pious, and doing all the right rituals and behaviors. Then you could look and dress like they did. But, if you didn't, you were scum.

But the lowest of the scum were tax collectors. They were people who collaborated with the Roman occupiers, and collected taxes from their own people in order to fund their enemy. They couldn't be religious and God-fearing because they broke so many rules. And they were often so unscrupulous that they grew rich by cheating and extorting while collecting the taxes. Oh, of all the people not to be like, it was tax collectors. Matthew, you see, was a tax collector.

PP#13: Matthew 9:9-13 (CEB)

9 As Jesus continued on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at a kiosk for collecting taxes. He said to him, "Follow me," and he got up and followed him. 10 As Jesus sat down to eat in Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners joined Jesus and His disciples at the table.

Turn to Matthew 9:9. "As Jesus continued on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at a kiosk for collecting taxes. He said to him, "Follow me," and he got up and followed Him. As Jesus sat down to eat in Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners joined Jesus and His disciples at the table."

PP#14: Matthew 9:9-13 (CEB)

11 But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

12 When Jesus heard it, He said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. 13 Go and learn what this means: 'I want mercy and not sacrifice.' [Hosea 6:6] I didn't come to call righteous people, but sinners."

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PP#15: *Image of pompous Pharisees parading around with fancy religious clothes.*

The religious leaders took the same approach as commercials do. They convinced people that they weren't good enough for God unless they did this or did that. They spent their time selling God as a product, gaining importance.

Matthew didn't buy their product, as he was too busy enjoying what his wealth bought him. He got his happiness from having more money, rather than having more favor. But he felt the stinging treatment as scum of the earth by most people most of the time. So, undoubtedly, he spent his time hanging out with the other tax collectors and "unclean" people. I'm sure they talked about all the stuff that their money bought and how they had so much more than everyone else. They told each other that their stuff made them happy.

PP#16: *Image of Jesus either talking to Matthew at the tax booth or eating with him at his home.*

But we see that Jesus comes by and hits him below his shallow beliefs. When Matthew saw Jesus coming, Matthew, I'm sure, braced himself for another attack from a famous holy rabbi. But this time, instead of seeing the usual hatred, condemnation, and disapproval, in Jesus' eyes Matthew saw love and compassion. Then, Jesus said something shocking and unimaginable: "Follow me and be my disciple." What? Me? The scum? You think I could follow you? But surely you know who I am!

We are supposed to identify ourselves as Matthew in this story. All day long advertisements tell us that we are worthless unless we do this or that. We wonder about our value, as inside we feel worthless. Desperately, we keep trying all the products and services that are supposed to make us happy. We talk with other miserable people, trying to convince ourselves that we will be happy once we buy that next thing. But all the while we are still empty inside. We feel like we are scum.

And there is truth here. For we know the blackness deep within. We know what we are capable of. We have seen ourselves do what shocks us, think what offends us, say what we wish we could take back. We feel we deserve our kiosk of separation. We only watch from a distance as others talk about God and feeling whole.

Did you see how Jesus *came to* Matthew? He saw Matthew. He came up to Matthew. He chose Matthew. He invited him to be His follower, knowing exactly who Matthew was.

We see an alternative here in Jesus. Jesus jumps into the scum! And, hallelujah!, He pulls us out! He offers an alternative way of life, one that doesn't bring shallow happiness, but one that brings abiding joy: "You can have eternal life. You can have abundant life, now. You are worth it! You have tried to seek happiness from money, from power, from wealth, from privilege. But only I deliver on that promise!"

PP#17: *Image for Jesus' voice of truth cutting through all the voices we hear, saying He wants us.*

Jesus' voice cuts through all the voices of culture, those thousands of voices that say all those things to us and about us. He speaks into your soul and tells you that although you carry the label of scum, He calls you a child of the Most High God. He sees you the way you are now, and knows you fully. And He still loves you and chooses you as His own! He pulls you out of the kiosk and says, "Come and follow me!"

Did you see what happened in the story? As Matthew followed Jesus, he immediately thought about all his unclean friends. He knew that they felt the same way he did, and he knew they needed to meet Jesus. So, at some point—the text doesn't give us the details—Matthew put together a party and invited everyone he knew. As people arrived, he introduced them to Jesus. The room began to buzz as more and more scum-people were amazed and surprised that this famous religious teacher was there with them, caring about them, and loving them!

Word spreads, and some Pharisees come to check it out. I can't tell if they are irritated or just confused. But they turned to Jesus' disciples and ask, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?"

You know, the power of advertising is that we are not just victims of its values, we are also promoters of it. We feel cocky when we buy the new car or new outfit. We frame others as "those who don't have a bagel slicer." We like being in the "in" crowd. But that means we identify others as "not in." We perpetuate the values of our culture each time we buy the new, cool product.

PP#18: *Image for trying to fit into the cool crowd by doing/buying/having what they do.*

So now, at this point in the story, we can identify ourselves with the Pharisees. “Why does Jesus go and care about them, and not just us?” Jesus is not behaving correctly! He doesn’t operate by the same religious values as we do. Perhaps we get irritated. Perhaps we’re just confused.

But look, Jesus comes to them, too! Now, when they are on the outside, and not included, Jesus comes to them and seeks them out, also. Jesus’ answer is that those who know God’s value in their lives don’t just tell each other. They go and tell those who don’t know it yet! Wasn’t that *their* job? Go back and take a look at Scripture again. There you will see that my behavior is actually what God wants! You have missed something when you label people as scum. “I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.” Only those who know they are sinners are actually open to following me. Be careful that your following of the religious rules and practices stops taking you to God and starts being a product in and of itself that you trust in to give you happiness. Be careful not to turn your life-giving religious practices into a product you market!

PP#19: Jumping in Scum

1. Watch commercials with a reflective eye

Jesus offers an alternative to the exhausting accumulation that we hope brings happiness. To continue to follow Jesus in this culture, we need to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, so we don’t conform to the pattern of this world.

So, as you seek to follow Jesus, I want you to start watching ads differently. Start asking yourself, asking God, during your prayer time, ask, “Why do I buy that?”

Start hearing the lie behind the marketing. Remember, they need you to buy their thing more than you need that thing! It’s a losing battle: no matter what we buy, we will always be scum unless we buy the next thing, too. It’s unfulfilling. Sure, it may be fun for a time, perhaps a fleeting boost of self esteem. But it’s built on a house of cards. Some things may be truly helpful and make life easier, but you must disentangle the real benefit you get, from the value that our culture puts on you by having it. Don’t buy the lie! Your happiness, your value, doesn’t come from your stuff!

So, take the blank side of your bulletin insert, and some time this week, write down a commercial you see, and write down what it’s really selling. Then make a note: why do you buy that?

PP#20: Jumping in Scum

1. Watch commercials with a reflective eye
2. Buy what Jesus offers for free - your priceless value!

Secondly, instead of buying *that*, receive what Jesus is offering to you, free of charge! He comes to you and proclaims value on you. He speaks your new identity as a child of God, one who is loved and chosen, even knowing you fully. Your happiness comes from your relationship with the God who made you, and it is irrelevant of what you have or own. Jesus invites you out of the kiosk of scum, the kiosk that sees happiness coming from what you can have. Jesus invites you to embrace your real identity. It is Jesus who paid the price. He died on the cross to take you out of the kiosk. What you need has been paid for. All you need to do is choose to follow Him.

Below the advertisement you write down, write down the memory verse. Say it out loud, and then remind yourself that you are a child of the One True God! You have all you need already!

PP#21: Jumping in Scum

1. Watch commercials with a reflective eye
2. Buy what Jesus offers for free - your priceless value!
3. Show others a different way of living

Then, go back to your friends. Live your new life, with your new value system, among your old people. They are struggling with the same lie. You show them an alternative by your changed behaviors. Stop obsessing about the next thing. Talk about how you are content with your three-year-old phone...gasp! Really? Yes, really! Show them how you can be happy with little, by giving away much. Share how you are so excited that you can give the \$400 you would have spent on a new phone to our church's missionaries instead. Live a life of happiness and contentment that shows them what they long for. And be willing to tell them why you live differently, counter-culturally, and how you have found joy.

Notice the commercials and see what they're really selling.

Say the memory verse to remind you that your happiness comes from being God's child.

And live your life differently in front of all your friends, and show what happiness looks like.

PP#22: Why Do We Buy That?

Jumping in Scum

“Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.” Romans 12:2

It's perfectly fine to get a better job and drink a Coke. Just be careful what you're buying! [Romans 12:2] “Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.”

Amen.

Closing Song: *Jesus Paid It All*

Memory Verse:

“Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.” -Romans 12:2

Announcements: -Pastor David
Grow Groups sign-ups

Benediction: -Pastor David