

# Luke 15:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

## Analysis

---

Luke sets the context: 'Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him' (Ἔσαν δὲ αὐτῷ ἐγγίζοντες πάντες οἱ τελῶναι καὶ οἱ ἀμαρτωλοὶ ἀκούειν αὐτοῦ). The imperfect tense 'engizō' (ἐγγίζοντες, were drawing near) indicates continuous action—outcasts habitually came to Jesus. Tax collectors (τελῶναι, telōnai) were despised as collaborators with Rome and extortioners. 'Sinners' (ἀμαρτωλοὶ, hamartōloī) included prostitutes, the ritually unclean, and Torah-violators. Their attraction to Jesus demonstrates His radical acceptance and the gospel's appeal to those aware of their need. This gathering provokes the Pharisees' criticism (v.2), setting up three parables about God's joy over repentant sinners.

## Historical Context

---

First-century Jewish society maintained strict social stratification. Pharisees avoided contact with sinners to preserve ritual purity. Tax collectors worked for Rome, collecting levies and tolls, typically overcharging to enrich themselves. Their collaboration with pagan occupiers made them traitors in Jewish eyes. That Jesus welcomed such people scandalized religious leaders and raised questions about His righteousness. Yet this pattern fulfilled His mission statement: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Luke 5:32).

## Related Passages

---

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

---

1. What does the fact that outcasts were drawn to Jesus while religious leaders opposed Him reveal about authentic gospel ministry?
2. How should contemporary churches evaluate whether they attract sinners seeking grace or primarily appeal to the self-righteous?

## Interlinear Text

---

Ἦσαν δὲ ἐγγίζοντες αὐτοῦ πάντες οἱ τελῶναι καὶ  
drew near Then G1448 him all G3588 the publicans and  
G2258 G1161 G846 G3956 G5057 G2532

οἱ ἀμαρτωλοὶ ἀκούειν αὐτοῦ  
sinners for to hear him  
G3588 G268 G191 G846

## Additional Cross-References

---

**1 Timothy 1:15** (Sin): This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

**Ezekiel 18:27** (Parallel theme): Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.