



# Links Players

## The Heartbeat of Links | What Time is It?

*...John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds." (Matthew 11:16-19, ESV)*

It's a personal thing, but I don't particularly enjoy large crowds. I can handle them occasionally; usually, I prefer smaller groups or one-on-one meetings. The exception is attending one of the Majors or the Ryder Cup.

What I, like everyone else, expect to see at these tournaments is a divided fan base—some people rooting for one player, and others for another. The applause and groans we hear from different sections are synchronized when their player succeeds or falters. All of this is quite reasonable.

What would never make sense is an entire crowd pulling against every player, whether the shots are good or bad. Scottie or Rory might experience that in a nightmare, but in the real world, it is highly improbable.

In the earthly ministry of Jesus, we see him interacting with large crowds (feeding the 5,000), smaller groups (the Twelve), and an intimate circle of close friends (the three).

Intriguingly, unlike John the Baptist, Jesus is accused of being a "friend to tax collectors and sinners." One question that arises is, "Is this accusation accurate?" Is Jesus truly a friend of sinners?

Matthew's point is that, regardless of who delivers the message or how it is presented, the crowds reject the truth. While their ministries shared the same goal—turning to the Messiah and leaving sin behind—the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus were distinctly different.

John, as the last prophet of the Old Covenant, came preaching the law and calling for repentance (a funeral song); Jesus, as the arrival of the New Covenant, came preaching grace (a celebratory song), and yet, that "generation" rejected both.

If the messengers and message aren't the problem, then what is? The issue is an obstinate heart mirrored in a defiant will among the crowds.

Yes, Jesus is a friend to sinners! But for the purpose that sinners are

forgiven and transformed by His message. Thankfully, among the masses, some responded to Christ's calling. Peter, James, and John, among others, followed him, and as they did, the Spirit of Christ transformed them.

There is an old saying that goes like this: Fundamentalist churches expect you to change before coming to Jesus. Liberal churches do not expect any change at all. Biblically informed churches say, "Come to Jesus just as you are, and watch him change you by grace alone."

The "this generation" of Jesus' day failed to recognize the time in which they lived and thus missed the greatest invitation of all time: the opportunity to be loved by and love their Maker and Redeemer in return.

May our generation "know the times." It is a time to mourn our sin and to dance to the song of salvation that Jesus plays. Said another way, it is time to grieve all our missed shots, and time to celebrate that Jesus played the perfect round on our behalf.

**Prayer: Father, may we not be indifferent to our sin and unmoved by your grace. Instead, may we join in the song of the heavenly choir, celebrating Jesus' victory over sin, death, and Satan.**

### READING: Matthew 11:1-30.

1. Have you ever known a player who refused to follow accurate instructions from anyone about their swing? What is the typical result?

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2. After reading all of Matthew 11, identify and discuss the many truths found in this chapter.

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3. Application: After some self-assessment, what is your typical reaction when corrected by your spouse, friends, or colleagues? What could that reveal about you?

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