

## Written Copy: Matthew 9:9-13 “Welcomed at His Table”

Proper 5 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday @ Pentecost

Sunday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Text: Matthew 9:9-13

<sup>9</sup> As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. <sup>10</sup> And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>12</sup> But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup> Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

### Exegetical Statement

Jesus is leaving Peter's house after healing a paralytic in body and soul and passes by Matthew's tax collector booth. He says two words, "Follow Me". Jesus words have the performative power in Matthew to change his heart and mind to walk away from the god of mammon and begin believing and following Jesus. He invites his friends, fellow tax collectors and other residence of Capernaum who, like him, are sinners who in their lifestyles have shown disregard for God's words and laws. Yet Jesus, God in human flesh is their eating with them all. The Pharisees see what is going on and judge Jesus as sinning against God for having fellowship with those they consider unworthy. Jesus rebukes them pointing out that He came to call and minister not those who believe they are right with God on their own, but those who are sick with sin, to show them their sickness and then show them Himself, their Savior. He gives them this to chew on as the continue on their way: God desires merciful hearts that realize one is not right with God by keeping the laws, but by faith in the one who came to keep the laws perfectly for them.

### Focus Statement:

Jesus by His powerful word called you to faith and into the fellowship of His Church. Here through His word, He calls to others to come to the same faith that you hold: that He was crucified for our trespasses and raised up again so that we might know only through Him are we right with God. His Spirit teaches all who desire to know Him better the tenants of faith in the Small Catechism. And through Word and Sacrament keeps us in that faith to enjoy the eternal fellowship banquet to come.

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

We can see the fellowship we share in the Church as being only for those whom we know and love, who think, dress, and act like us. We can think that we deserve our place because of our faithfulness and attendance and works. We forget we are called to be Matthew and invite those who don't know Jesus to meet Him in His Church and through His word shared by us.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

See ourselves as unworthy guests at the table made worthy only by Christ. Invite others to join in this fellowship by sharing His invitation through the Gospel.

### Subject Sentence: Jesus brings fellowship that lasts forever

## **Introduction: Matthew in the Toll Booth**

Did you ever consider what life must have been like for Matthew during his time as a tax collector? (*Show picture of Matthew in his toll booth*) Consider how lonely it must have been. Most of the Jews in Capernaum, as well as those passing through on the trade route known as “The Way of the Sea” would’ve despised him. They saw him as a traitor working for the enemy, the Roman Government. Rome required taxes to be paid. They contracted the job of tax collector out to the native people in the lands they had conquered. Men would bid on the job for a certain location, and the contract would be rewarded to the highest bidder. So, how did the tax collector gain back the money paid out to be the highest bidder? He collected it off the backs of his fellow countrymen. Matthew would’ve charged people what Rome required and added on top of that an additional amount to recoup his loss for the bid. Of course, sinful hearts being greedy like they are, Matthew wouldn’t have stopped when he broke even. Why do that. He had the protection of the Roman government behind him. So, he continued to over-tax and gain wealth off the backs of his fellow Jews, who knew what he was doing and hated him for it.

Matthew’s life would’ve been a lonely one. Even though we know he had friends, and could afford to throw extravagant parties and banquets, his life was still missing something; it was missing Someone. His life was missing the LORD God who created him and all humankind to have a relationship with Him. Instead, Matthew sought and held a relationship with a god of this world, the god called mammon-the love of money and wealth. But there is not enough money in the world to buy the happiness one misses without the Lord God in your life.

You and I are no stranger to Matthew’s predicament. It is the life you and I were born into. As Paul says in **Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**. We were born caged in by sin and ruled by the thoughts and desires of our sinful heart. Your god may not have been mammon and wealth; perhaps for you it was lust for power, glory, sex. And when we answer the call of our sinful heart, we make ourselves out to be gods. Every time we answer the call of that sinful heart, we place ourselves back in that booth that Matthew was in, caged in by our serving that sinful heart. And on our own we cannot escape it, just as he could not. Jesus came to change all that.

## **Jesus Calls you to Faith and Into Church Fellowship**

Jesus came to call Matthew out of that tax booth, and out of his life of sinful separation from God the Father. As He was passing by Jesus stopped and looked at Matthew. Matthew looked back at Him. Then Jesus changed His life forever with just two words: **“Follow Me”**.

Now those words spoken by me, or you might not have had much effect. It would not be an easy thing for Matthew to get up and leave this position of wealth and comfort behind. But the Spirit had been at work on his heart. And the words of Jesus carry the weight and power of the Holy Spirit. His words not only declare things, but they also make happen what they proclaim. Jesus words moved Matthew to stop trusting in the god of mammon and wealth and to turn instead to trust in the Man who stood before him. The Spirit revealed this Jesus to be Matthew's Savior and Lord, who can and would forgive all his sins and make him right with God.

Jesus came to you in the tax booth of your sin and called out to you the same powerful words: **"Follow Me"**. And He gave you to do so, the power of faith by which you trust that all the sins that had kept you apart from God the Father were wiped away by His blood shed on the cross. He called to you in your baptism, and calls to you repeatedly in His Word, showing you through the law how you've placed yourself back in that toll booth through the pleasing your sinful heart. Then He unlocks that booth and calls you out through His words of forgiveness in the Gospel Message. Just like Matthew, he calls you and I from our toll booth life of sin to live a new life in Him as His disciple.

And what did that new life look like for Matthew? Jesus didn't call him to faith and leave him sitting in his tax booth. He called Matthew to follow Him and join the fellowship of what would be the 12 disciples. Matthew gathers with them and with Jesus for a fellowship meal at his house (*Show picture of the banquet Matthew hosted*). And this gathering, with a table loaded with many kinds of food and people gathered around enjoying the company of one another and the company of Jesus, is symbolic of our gathering together as the Church. It certainly represents the fellowship meals and events we have. But even more so it represents our gathering together for worship. We gather as those who have been called by faith to follow Jesus. We have been called not to remain by ourselves but to join together in worship and praise of the one who called us out of the darkness and caged in bars of our sin and into His marvelous light of faith. We share together praising Him and singing of our love and thankfulness to Him. And here, spiritually speaking, we gather at a table that is loaded with His finest gifts: forgiveness of sins, salvation from separation from our Creator God, and the life we now have with Him that stretches all the way to eternity. It's a gathering and a fellowship like nowhere else. And you are invited, made worthy to attend, by Jesus' work in His suffering, dying and rising, given to you by His words of the Gospel and in your baptism.

## Calling Others to Come Meet Jesus

But Matthew didn't just invite Jesus and His disciples. He invited his friends to come and meet this man who had changed his life. And who were his friends? Fellow tax collectors and "sinners". What does Matthew mean by "sinners"? These are people who by the Pharisees definition, as well as by others in Jewish society who, although not members of the Pharisees, looked up to them and respected them, as being outside of the faith in the One True God. These "sinners" made no attempt to read, study, or live by the Scriptures. They were tax collectors, prostitutes, and others whose lifestyle was deemed unworthy of attending the synagogue worship, and in the Pharisees eyes unworthy of the kingdom of God. These are the people gathered around the table with the disciples; and Jesus, the Rabbi, the one who is supposed to be teaching divine truths, is eating with them.

The Pharisees are greatly offended by this, the Rabbi Jesus not only in the company of such sinners, but even worse sharing fellowship and a meal with them. Can you picture who we might consider to be the "sinners" of our day, those that would make us shocked and offended if they were to come and join us in our worship service this day? People that we, like the Pharisees, secretly deem unworthy to be in our presence worshipping God, at least until they change their lives and become more like us.

But Jesus welcomes these sinners and eats with them just as they are. He explains why to the Pharisees when He says in **Matthew 9:12** "**Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.**" These sinners are suffering from the sickness of sin. They are in a cage like Matthew's tax collector booth, trapped by their sinful heart and unable to escape, just as you and I once were. Jesus has come to free them just as He has you and me. He gathers with them at Matthew's house to talk with them, get to know them and so they can get to know Him. He gathers to lovingly show them their sickness of sin, and then show them His supernatural healing power in the Gospel. He is the God who forgives sins. He called Matthew to faith and forgave all his sins. And He wants to do the same with those gathered at Matthew's house, forgive all who would believe in Him.

He wants to welcome the sinners of our day into our gathering around this table of fellowship and our worship that we are engaged in today. He doesn't ask them to change before they walk through those doors. He invites them in so that through His words of law and Gospel He can change them, so He can draw them out of their tax collector booth of sin and into His marvelous light. He calls them to come in among us so that He can make some His disciples who, changed by the power of the Holy Spirit, want to follow Him through regular presence and participation in worship and Bible Study.

And through this gathering of them with us, His Church, His family of believers, He wants them to work growth in the faith, and move them to take the next step of becoming members with us. He wants them to learn what we believe and confess from Scripture as explained through the Small Catechism. This is what we are doing in our Walking Together Class on Sundays, working to unite all in faith and fellowship so that they can join with us at a more special table: the table that is the Sacrament of the Altar. He wants them to receive the same supernatural gift that we receive: Jesus real presence: His body and blood in the bread and the wine for our forgiveness, our strengthening of faith, and the assurance of eternal life. And this all starts with us being like Matthew, being Jesus' means to invite others to meet with Him, have fellowship with Him, receive His gifts of forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life through His words of law and Gospel here in this place of worship.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus didn't ask Matthew to change his life before He called him. Jesus call to faith and then to discipleship is what changed Matthew's life through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus didn't ask you to change your life before He came to you in baptism and His Spirit created faith in your heart. It was Jesus' call to you through baptism, and His ongoing call to you in worship and Bible Study to be a disciple that has changed you and continues to change you to this day. Those who live and work around us that are still in the world, still stuck in their tax collector booth of sin; Jesus wants us to call them. He wants us to reach out with the Gospel. He wants us to invite them into our fellowship and into our worship. Here in His presence, just as He was doing at Matthew's house, He wants to grant them the cure for their sickness of sin. He wants to give them His life, death, and resurrection, so that they, along with us, will join Him in that eternal banquet to come. Amen