

The call of Matthew

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[0 : 00] And as Jesus passed forth from thence, that is from the house where the paralyzed man was healed, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom.

And he said unto him, follow me. And he arose and followed him. When did you last go to see the doctor? When did you last call him to see you?

Well, I can probably tell you when that happened. It was the last time you were sick. The last time you weren't feeling 100%. You would have gone to see the doctor.

Or you would have called the doctor to yourself if you were unable to get out of the house. Because the fact is that you never go to see a doctor if you're well. You don't need their services.

Unless there's something wrong, something that needs to be put right, you keep clear of the medical services. But no one, if it were the case that no one in the community here was ever ill, or at least if no one would actually own up and admit that they were ill, then we simply wouldn't need a doctor.

[1 : 06] There'd be no need for the medical center here whatsoever. Well, Jesus uses that illustration as he spoke to the Pharisees in this incident here.

He used that illustration of the sick going to a doctor to show that it was good and right for him to mix with the tax collectors and the sinners.

They were spiritually sick people. They were immoral, irreligious people. And they needed his spiritual healing.

They needed his spiritual medical services, we might say. And his action, the way he behaved and his attitude here, is left for us as an example of the attitude that all his people should have.

That his believing people should have the same outlook on life, the same outlook on the world roundabouts, as Jesus himself had. Now, the Matthew that's described here in this incident is, of course, the man, the same man who wrote this gospel.

[2 : 09] Who wrote the gospel of Matthew. And, as you'll know, he subsequently became a disciple of Jesus. He was included amongst the twelve. This man, Matthew, he had experienced spiritual healing.

He knew what Jesus had done for him. And he wrote his gospel in order that other people might experience the same thing. In order that you, in order that I, might have the same spiritual life and health.

Well, as we look at these verses 9 to 13, the first thing we see in verse 9 is Jesus' call to Matthew. Jesus passed forth from thence.

He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom at the tax collector's booth. And he said unto him, follow me. And he arose and followed him. Jesus had been at work in Galilee, in the north of Israel, really in the country area of Galilee.

The main commercial and social centre was down in Jerusalem in the south. But Jesus had spent a long time working in Galilee.

[3 : 20] And his headquarters, his base, had been the town or city of Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. And it was in this town that Matthew lived and worked as a tax collector.

Now the tax collectors, as you may know, were hated and despised by the rest of the Jewish people. Because they were traitors. They were regarded as traitors.

They worked for the occupying Roman army. They collected taxes from their own people. And gave them to the occupying army. They were hated as well because they were dishonest men.

They lined their own pockets. They took more from people than they should have done. They were greedy, dishonest men. They were concerned primarily about having wealth in this world.

And not caring so much about their relationship with other people. So the fact that Matthew worked and lived in this town. And that Jesus had his headquarters there.

[4 : 22] He had a house there. It's very likely that Jesus had had contact with Matthew before this. He may have heard him preach.

Matthew may have heard Jesus preach. He may have seen him perform miracles. He perhaps had spoken with Jesus on an occasion prior to this. So that when Jesus comes and calls Matthew to follow him.

He abates without hesitation. As soon as Jesus comes with his call. Matthew's up out of the seat. Leaves his tax collector's booth.

His work. And goes off to follow Jesus. Now Matthew as he writes this account of his own call. There's something of his own humility comes through here.

Because Mark and Luke, they record the same incident. They say that he got up and he left everything. He first took everything. Matthew doesn't mention it.

[5 : 20] So as Jesus called Matthew. This man had a very important decision to make. Either he could stay and carry on his work.

Carry on his business. Enjoy his life of riches and security. Knowing that he would never have to worry about his next meal. He could go on in his life of greed.

And cheating and dishonesty. Or he could leave it all behind. He could leave all that. And follow this man Jesus. And join himself to this poor man.

Jesus was a poor man. He didn't work. Well at least he didn't have any income. From work with his hands at this point. So Matthew was joining himself to a poor man.

Who was just going around the country. Preaching and healing. There seemed to be no security. No certainty. About the future. If he were to do that. Well it appears that Matthew.

[6 : 22] To Matthew the choice was obvious. There wasn't a moment of hesitation. When he was caught. He left everything. He left all that life behind. And he goes and follows Jesus.

Now it's probable that Matthew here was an employee. There seemed to have been a sort of a... There were chief tax collectors.

And there were those who worked for the chief tax collectors. Matthew would have been one of the minor tax collectors. So when he left his work. Someone else could just have taken on the job he was doing. So there's no restriction on him.

Just packing his bags. And leaving the work he's doing. He's choosing to make an absolute clean break. With his past life. He's going to be done with that way of life.

Done with the dishonesty. Done with the greed. Done with the material prosperity. And came with it. Because now he wants to follow Christ. Now he wishes to be a follower of Jesus.

[7 : 26] This man saw that Jesus had far more to offer. Far more to offer. Than all the wealth that he could gather from his tax collection. Jesus appeared to have nothing.

But Matthew had true spiritual insight. And saw just how much Jesus could give him. Well today. Jesus' call to you and to me.

Doesn't come with the specific call that it came to Matthew. But it does come with a call for self-sacrifice. Matthew here was called to sacrifice.

His wealth. And his way of life. And that Jesus' call to each one of us. Comes with the same. The same self-sacrifice to man. A willingness to do without.

Some of the things that we might like for ourselves otherwise. Some of the things of this world. Jesus' disciples are called to deny themselves. So if today you profess to be a follower of Christ.

[8 : 32] You profess to be one of his disciples. Then the same attitude. Must be found in you. Must be found in me. That was found in Matthew here. If you, if I truly appreciate the fabulous wealth that we have in Christ.

The Lord Jesus is offering, is giving to his people so much. Not only in this world. But in the world to come. If you appreciate that. Then the things of this world are going to be of little significance.

You're going to be willing. And able. To give up the things of this life that attract so many in our society. You're not going to be particularly concerned. About the things of here and now.

Because you've got your eye on eternal things. On spiritual things. Things that are true wealth.

That's going to mean being generous. In giving away the things that God has blessed you with.

It means giving away our money. For the cause of Christ. To maintain and to continue the work of the church in this world. It's going to mean being generous.

[9 : 41] To help helping those in need. So often we see on our television screens. Many in the world who have so little. And it should move us to compassion. Our Christianity.

Our self-sacrifice. Should show itself. And the willingness to give to these people. It will mean. If we have this attitude of self-sacrifice.

It will mean not keeping up with those right of ethics. We won't be concerned. That we have the. We keep up with the fashions. That we want bigger or nicer houses.

That we want the latest model of car. These things aren't important. If we realize the true value of spiritual riches. It will mean using our time. Using our talents.

Using our homes. And our lives as a whole. Not for ourselves. But for the good of other people. For the cause of Jesus Christ in this world. Not simply for our own pleasure.

[10 : 41] Not for our own enjoyment and comfort. But for the sake of others. Here was Matthew hearing a call. To give up a great deal. To sacrifice.

A very cushy lifestyle. But he saw the value. Of following Jesus. And he was quite happy. Quite ready. To let these things go.

And to immediately respond. And follow Jesus. That is what God requires of you. And of me today. He requires the same sort of obedience.

The same readiness. To follow Jesus. As is demonstrated in Matthew here. You are required. And I am required to lose our lives.

For his sake. And you will find them. You will find real life. Real happiness and joy in life. If you give up. Living for yourself.

[11 : 36] And live to follow Christ. Christ. So Jesus call to Matthew. But then as we read on. We see the offense.

That Jesus brought. To the Pharisees. Verse 10. Behold it came to pass. As Jesus sat. At meat. At a meal. In the house. Behold. Many publicans.

Many tax collectors. And sinners. Came and sat down with him. And his disciples. And the Pharisees saw it. And they said unto his disciples. Why eateth your master?

With publicans. And sinners. Now Matthew. Perhaps again. Out of humility. He doesn't actually say. Whose house this is. But it was his own house.

He had laid on. A meal. For Jesus. In honour. Of Jesus. And also. It would seem. To enable. His tax collector friends. To come and meet Jesus.

[12 : 32] For themselves. Matthew. Appreciated. Knowing Jesus. And he wanted others. To have the same opportunity. So he lays on this banquet. In honour.

In honour of Jesus. And for the sake of the others. But then. The self-righteous Pharisees. They get wind of what's going on. Apparently. In. Bible times.

Sometimes. These banquets. Would be held. Sort of. Around the side of the house. Or in a. Sort of. Shaded area. At the side of the house. And anyone passing by. Could see what was going on.

So it may have been. That the Pharisees saw. What was going on here. They saw Jesus. Sitting with people. Whom they knew. To be immoral people. People who were tax collectors. And the likes.

And the Pharisees. You see their attitude of. Self-righteousness. They were looking down. On these people. And they were saying. How is it possible. That this man.

[13 : 29] Who is meant to be. A righteous man. Meant to be a teacher. Of the way of God. How can he possibly. Associate with these men. Perhaps there are women. There as well. Men and women.

Who have. Well they. These tax collectors. And sinners. No doubt. They had little regard. For the laws. That the Pharisees. Themselves. Had invented. But also. Had little regard.

For God's law. As well. These self-righteous people. They condemned them. As being. Really. Social outcasts.

They saw themselves. As good. Upstanding people. And they wonder. How is it possible. That Jesus. Can take time. To be with them. As we read this passage.

Did you notice. Their cowardice. Did you see. The way the Pharisees. Went about it. They got on. To the disciples. They didn't go to Jesus. And say. What are you doing. They say.

[14 : 27] To the disciples. Why eateth your master. With publicans. And sinners. They seem to be saying. What kind of. Immoral teacher. Have you got. He's meant to be.

Your leader. He's meant to be. Your rabbi. And this is the sort of. Company. He's bringing you into. They don't complain. To Jesus. They seem to go. Behind his back. And complain. To his disciples. Well. Even by their attitude. The Pharisees. Were clearly. Demonstrating. Their lack. Their lack. Of compassion. Their lack. Of love. And concern. For these people. These Pharisees. They were. Along with the other. Religious leaders. They were responsible. For teaching. The laws of God. And when they saw. These people. Who. Profaned the laws of God. Who had no time. For God's law. They should have. Had a concern for them. [15:23] They should have done. All they could. To teach them. The truth. But instead of that. They just. Dismiss them. They have. The self-righteous attitude. That. They're so bad. That we're having nothing to do with them. Well. They condemned Jesus. For what he was doing. But Jesus. And the behavior here. His actions. Doesn't need to be condemned. It needs to be copied. The way Jesus behaves. Need to be copied. Jesus. In his perfect obedience. To his father. Was ready. To associate. With the very flags. Of society. These people. Who were. Social outcasts. Jesus was ready. To get alongside them. And to mix with their company. Now you can be absolutely certain. That Jesus never condoned. The evil behavior. Of these people. [16:21] No doubt. He would have confronted them. Confronted them with it. Shown. Spoken to the tax collectors. About their greed. And about their dishonesty. Spoken to the others. Who are sinners. About their immoral lifestyle. Perhaps. But that wasn't enough. To stop him. Associating with them. Jesus never condoned. Never let them away. With their sin. But it wasn't. Their sin wasn't such. That it put him off. So that he kept them. At arm's length. Well it's much easier. For us. Isn't it? To associate with people. Who are like ourselves. People who are. Middle class perhaps. Who are fairly morally. Upstanding. People. Whom we can get along with. Okay. We don't see much wrong in their lives. Nothing to offend us. It's easy for us to get along. With people like that. But Christ is teaching us here. [17:19] Through this incident. That Christian people. Have a duty. Not to ignore. What we might say. That those in the gutter. Those whose. Perhaps their lifestyle. Repels us. We have not. We have no. No. Scriptural justification. For ignoring. Or rejecting. Those who in our society. Would be the equivalent. Of tax collectors. And sinners. They need to hear the gospel. In a way. In a sense. They need it more than anyone. Because of their. Immoral. Way of life. Those you know then. Who are. Perhaps engaged. In immoral things. Those with drink problems. Those. Going through. Family problems. Those whose language is foul. Those who never darken. The door of a church. These are the sort of people. That Christians. Should be associating with. [18:17] Not exclusively. Of course. But they're not to be. Son. They're not to be kept. With our flanks. And say well. We're never going to go near them. Jesus didn't do it. And you and I. Have no reason to do it either. We must have condoned their sin. But we must. Be ready to mix with them. I remember. As a. A divinity student. Going to a number of. Congregations. And several. Different places. A number of folks. Said to me. Well there are lots of. Free church people. In the community here. There are folk. Who used to come to church. But they don't come now. And the impression. Conveyed was. Well. If only we could get. These free church people. To church. Then things would be much better. People didn't seem. To have a vision. For those. Who are not free church. Those who've never been to church. Those who. Whose lives. Who in their lives. [19:12] Seem nothing. Attractive. In Christianity. At all. Yes. The gospel is for free church people. For people. But it's for everyone. As well. Whatever their status in life. Jesus. You see. He didn't just spend his time. With religious people. He didn't just spend his time. With those who went to the synagogue. Or those who perhaps. Should have gone to the synagogue. But he spent time. With these people. Tax collectors. And sinners. If you behave like this.

It may cause offence. It may offend people. And say. Well. So and so is meant to be a Christian. And see the sort of company he keeps. Well. Jesus' behaviour. Had precisely the same reaction. Caused the same reaction. In these Pharisees. But that wasn't enough to stop him. His love and concern for these people. Meant that he spent time with them. So Jesus' offence to the Pharisees. [20 : 11] But then finally. In verses 12 and 13. See Jesus' mission. To the world. When Jesus heard that. He said unto them.

They that be whole. Need not a physician. But they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth. I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the righteous. But sinners to repentance. Repentance. Somehow. Jesus gets to fear. Of what the Pharisees. Have been saying. And so. He answers them.

He gives them a reason. For why he is behaving the way he is. For being with these people. And he simply says. I have come to call sinners. I have come to call sinners.

To repentance. And I can't do that. Unless I mix with them. Unless I have some contact. With these sinful people. I cannot call them. I cannot call them to repentance.

[21 : 08] Jesus is saying. These people are spiritually sick. They are desperately needing. Spiritual help. They need a doctor. And so I have got to go.

And be with them. To help them. What use is a doctor? If you can't talk to him. If you can't go and see him. What use is a doctor?

If he never comes near his patients. He is never going to be able. To look at the symptoms. And diagnose the problem. And prescribe a remedy. Precisely what Jesus is saying.

These people need healing. They need spiritual healing. And I have to get alongside them. To deal with their problems. And then Jesus backs up his reasons.

By referring to the Old Testament. He says. Learn this. Go ye and learn what this means. I will have mercy. This is God speaking.

[22 : 06] I will have mercy. And not sacrifice. It's a quote from one of the minor prophets. I forget which one is from. Hosea I think.

These religious leaders. They were guilty. Of going through the outward. Trappings of religion. They were careful.

To make sure the sacrifices were done properly. They were careful. To tithe everything they possessed. They were careful. To keep all the laws of God. So they thought. That they had forgotten mercy.

And God. Jesus is reminding them. God wants mercy. He wants you to show compassion. And love. And concern for these people. He's not interested. In your.

Your. Outwards ceremonies. There has to be real. Love. And mercy. In your hearts. Jesus directs them to go.

[23 : 05] And learn what this means. These people. They were well familiar with the Bible. Of the Old Testament. But they didn't know what it meant. And he says. You go away and learn this.

Think about it. Meditate on it. And you'll understand. Why I'm mixing with these people. God is more concerned. That people. That his own.

Believing people. Show a love and concern for others. Especially in gospel things. Especially. That. Others. Would hear. The good news of Christ. Christ. And so Jesus is really summing up his message.

His mission to the world. In the last phrase there. I am not come to call the righteous. But sinners. He had not come to call those.

Who were so self-righteous. They did not see any needs of Jesus. He had come. To call those who were sinners. Who recognized. The evil of their ways.

[24 : 03] And wished. To change. Now that is precisely what Jesus continues to do. Jesus is still at work in this world.

He's still at work. In the hearts and lives of men and women. He's no longer living with us. On earth. But his spirit is active. And his work is continuing to be.

To call. Not the righteous. But sinners to repentance. Repentance. He does it. Through his own people. Through. The witness of believing people.

To those round about him. He does it through the reading of his word. He does it through the preaching of the gospel. He is still calling sinners. To repentance.

Have you heard that call? That call is addressed to every one of us. He is calling us all. To repent of our sin. Or do you reckon.

[25 : 02] You don't need that. Are you amongst these righteous people. Who Jesus is not calling. Do you reckon yourself to be good enough for God. That you're not sick at all.

You don't need Jesus' help. You don't need Jesus' forgiveness. Well Jesus has got nothing to say to you. If you're sort of. Stuffed full of your own self-righteousness.

If you reckon that you're good enough for God. That you're doing well enough in this life. Then Jesus has got nothing to say to you. But if you're willing to acknowledge.

That you've broken God's law. That you deserve absolutely nothing from God. That you're spiritually sick. That you're rotten. And you're hopeless.

Then Jesus is calling you. Jesus is calling sinners. And if you're a sinner. If you admit you're a sinner. Jesus' call is coming to you.

[25 : 59] Jesus laid down his life. He died on Calvary's cross. For those who will own up to their sin.

For those who recognize that they have nothing to go to God with. Those who realize their own wickedness. And their own hopelessness in this world. Jesus didn't die for those.

Who reckon themselves to be spiritually healthy. And as he calls. He promises to bring that spiritual health. That spiritual life. And healing. That he brought to Matthew.

Matthew's life was transformed. His old ways. Of dishonesty. And greed. And materialism. That was all gone. And he followed his disciple.

His Lord as a disciple. And he did all he could. To spread that good news. To the rest of the world. Through writing his gospel. Now if today you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 03] And you have heard that call. You have known Jesus' healing in your own life. Then you have a duty. And I have a duty. To continue. Jesus' mission in the world.

Jesus came to this world. To call sinners. And he is using you. He is using me. He is using all his people. To take that news into the world. Last week we were privileged to hear from some of the. The OMF people. And their work in Japan and Cambodia. We think of missionaries as people who go away from this land. To other countries. To take the gospel there.

But do you not see there is a mission field round about us? Hundreds of people in our own community. Who don't know Christ. Who don't realize. That they are spiritually sick.

That they are on their way to a lost eternity. So you and I. We need to take the gospel out. Not only to free church people. Not only to good upstanding moral people. But to those.

[28 : 04] Who are immoral. Those whose lives we find repulsive. Those who are in all kinds of sin. They need the good news.

They need to be contacted for Christ. And all those. Whether it's you or me. Or those we contact out in the world. All those who will confess their sin.

And recognize their unworthiness. And their godlessness. They can be reassured. They can be absolutely confident. That God in Christ is calling them.

And go give them life. Will give them eternal life. And save them from their sin. Jesus said. They that be whole. They that are healthy.

Need not a physician a doctor. But they that are sick. But go ye and learn what this means. I will have mercy. And not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous.

[29 : 02] But sinners to repentance. Amen. May the Lord bless this to us. Let's pray together. We thank you Lord.

For the work of Matthew. As he followed the Lord Jesus. As a disciple. And as he recorded for us. For the church. Of all time.

Something of the life. And work and ministry. Of the saviour. We thank you for these words. That he wrote. And that you have preserved. Down through. Two thousand years. That they are relevant. To us today. That they have. An importance for us. That we too. Would respond to the call. Of the gospel. The call of Jesus Christ. And repent of our sin.

And turn to him. For forgiveness. And for healing. And for spiritual life. We thank you. For the power of your word. We pray that. It may take root in our hearts.

[30 : 04] And bring forth. Fruit. It would have an effect. In our lives. That we like Matthew. Would be changed. We thank you. That there is no one. Beyond the power of the gospel.

No one too far gone in sin. Who can be saved. May we all know. Repentance and faith. In our own experience. And be able to rejoice.
In what Christ has done. In dying for sinners. In his name. Amen.