

Encountering Jesus: Matthew
Reaching and loving those who are not like you.



Teaching Notes

Matthew 9.9-12 / Luke 5.27-32

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Text

Matthew 9.9-12. And as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man, called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he rose, and followed Him. And it happened that as He was reclining at the table in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?" But when He heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.

Luke 5.27-32. And after that He went out, and noticed a tax-gatherer named Levi, sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow Me." And he left everything behind, and rose and began to follow Him. And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax-gatherers and other people who were reclining at the table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax-gatherers and sinners?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Observations

- 1) *Context.* The passage starts with "And after that . . ." so we need to go back and see what "that" was. Jesus had just healed a paralyzed man, and he did so while teaching the crowd that He is able to forgive sins. The Pharisees grumbled about it, and Jesus saw into their hearts, and told them so. Those are the two key points from what Jesus had done just before calling Matthew, the two key things that relate to what He's about to do – He asserted His authority to forgive sins, and He told the religious elite that He knew what they were thinking (and it was wrong).
- 2) *Tax-gatherer.* Just to make sure we're all on the same page, this does not merely mean, "the IRS auditor." These were people from among the local community – that is, the Jewish community – who agreed to work for their oppressors, the Roman government, collecting taxes due to Rome. They generally were dishonest, and collected much more than what was actually due, and they'd pocket the difference. So they were essentially stealing from

their own countrymen. And they probably enjoyed some measure of protection from the Roman soldiers, because they were seen as people whose loyalty was with Rome, not with the Jews.

- 3) *Name.* Luke calls him Levi, Matthew calls him (himself) Matthew. He was born Levi, and was still called Levi when he met Jesus, thus Luke uses that name. But Jesus changed his name to Matthew, which means, "Gift of the Lord."
- 4) *Response.* The Matthew account says simply that he followed Jesus. Luke gives us added detail: "he left everything behind." Who knows how much money he had sitting there? Or how many records and documents? He left it all behind. Just like the four fishermen apostles left their boats and nets behind. Just like the prostitute left her perfume behind.

→ *What have you left behind since Jesus called you?*

- 5) *Matthew vs. Zaccheus.* You may recall, we covered the story of Zaccheus earlier in this series. There are some similarities here. They were both tax-collectors. They were both unpopular. They both responded favorably to Jesus. But Zaccheus immediately acknowledged that he had defrauded people, whereas Matthew doesn't say anything on the subject. So we're not sure about him – either he wasn't taking more than the proper amount of tax from people, or he was and it's just not recorded here that he repented of it. But notice in both cases, Jesus sought out these very unpopular people.

→ *Do you seek out unpopular people, to share God's love with them?*

→ *Do you ever feel like you ARE the unpopular person, that no one seeks out? Good news: Jesus is looking for you.*

- 6) *Follow me.* Jesus told Matthew, "Follow Me" but the first place He went was Matthew's house. This really says a lot. What God wants, when you agree to follow Him, is that He wants to come deeper into Your life. He wants to come where You live, and let His love and grace and truth flow through there. He wants to touch people around you, just as He touched your life.

→ *Are you letting God invade Your world? Are you bringing Him to your friends and family?*

- 7) *The Question.* First thing you have to notice here – they took their question to the disciples. They were afraid to talk to Jesus, because He just showed them up earlier in the day. And their question is always the same: Why are You doing what You are doing? They ask this same question, in different forms, over and over again throughout Jesus' ministry. And the reason is obvious: What He does, doesn't fit their template. It disrupts their orderly control over the minds of the people.

Unbelieving people do this a lot, so be aware of it: Rather than take their questions to Jesus, they'll sit back and criticize His followers.

Believers, too, sometimes will try to justify themselves by comparing their behavior to that of other Christians. You answer to God alone.

→ *Do you seek affirmation from God alone?*

Also, the stated question is often not the real question. Now, we don't want to make assumptions here and be dogmatic about it, but we can consider some possibilities. What do you think their real issue might have been? ("Why aren't You dining with us? Why do You approve of them, but not us?")

- 8) *The Answer.* First, I want you to note that Jesus bailed out the disciples. They didn't need to worry about how to answer the Pharisees – Jesus was there to answer for them. The same is true for us today.

Jesus' response to the Pharisees is priceless. "Those who are well don't need a physician!" Notice, He's not directly saying that they are well! He's just saying that Matthew and his friends are sick, and He was invited to attend to them. So where does He leave the Pharisees? What would they need to do to get time with Jesus? They'd need to admit that they are sick!

- 9) *Outreach.* The other intriguing thing about Jesus' response to these guys is that it ran counter to their mentality. They probably only sought out righteous people to be their disciples, to be converted to their faith, their system of beliefs. Jesus, on the other hand, sought out those whose failures and needs and weaknesses and imperfections were obvious.

→ *Whom do you seek out with God's love?*