

The Call of Christ - Matt. 9:9-13

Introduction: This morning I was tempted to share with you a recording that was made several years ago called the phone call from Jesus. It was a scenario in which Jesus makes a phone call to a guy to check up on him and to see why he wasn't behaving more like Christ in his life.

But I didn't because there is not anything funny about the call of Christ. It is a serious subject, although many people do not treat it as such. That is evident in the way people ignore it, shrug it off, or blatantly refuse to hear it. But it is something that is dear to the heart of God. It's important to God and to us. **Read Mt. 9:9-13.**

When we consider that this is the Gospel account according to Matthew, this is a very personal and touching scene. It deals with Matthew's personal testimony. Imagine his sitting and writing about so many other experiences in other people's lives throughout his Gospel. Now it comes to his personal experience. Now, Matthew doesn't tell us much, but what he reveals gives us insight into the personal nature of this call.

What we know about Matthew can be summarized in a couple of paragraphs. We know that he was a tax collector, or as the KJV says, a publican. That's enough to tell us that he was hated by everyone, especially his own people. Tax collectors were mostly Jewish people who were doing the Romans dirty work for them. So they were looked upon as traitors.

They were collecting taxes for the hated Romans who had conquered and divided their nation. So, someone who would go to work for them was detestable to say the least. Tax Collectors were the lowest of the low. Luke 15:1 puts tax collectors and sinners in the same group. Even prostitutes had a higher social status than them. That's how low these guys were thought of.

But something else that made people hate the tax collector was the fact that most of them were well off while everybody else scraped just to get by. You see, in a way they were working for themselves, so they could collect whatever someone was willing to pay and pocket all the cash extra for themselves. So the people were taken advantage of. So was the life of a tax collector.

But one day, all that was about to change for Matthew. You see, Jesus was passing by, and He was about to call Matthew away from that kind of life.

In verses 9-13 there are 2 calls I want to point out this morning. First, there is:

1. The Call to Salvation (9)

Now, you have to know what a day in the life of Jesus was like in order to get the picture here. In roughly the past couple of days, He had finished the Sermon on the Mount, healed a leper, a Centurion's servant, and Peter's Mother-in-law along with many, many others outside Peter's house. He then sailed across the sea of Galilee, where He calmed a raging storm. Then, at the place He landed, He drove a legion of demons out of a couple of demoniacs. And for all that, He was asked to leave from that place, so He sailed back across the sea to Capernium where as He was teaching in someone's house, and healed a paralytic. Oh, by the way, He also had been into it with the Pharisees. Whew! You'd think Jesus would be ready for a break!

But then the scripture says that as Jesus was traveling about the city, He saw a man named Matthew sitting there doing what he does every day. And Jesus stops! He knew what kind of man Matthew was. He knew what he did for a living. He didn't care if His reputation was at stake by being seen with this tax collector everybody else thought was the scum of the earth.

You know what this says to me? It doesn't matter who you are, what you do or what you've done, Jesus always has time for you personally. He's no respecter of person good or bad! Aren't you glad that when nobody else in the world cared or wouldn't even give you the time of day that Jesus took time for you when you called on Him?

Jesus knew the Matthew's heart, his thoughts, his hurt, his pain, and his loneliness too. He knew that the only friends that tax collectors had were other tax collectors who felt the same way he did. Jesus also knew that Matthew had a lack of purpose in life. He saw a life being wasted. He saw a man who needed a Savior, a Savior who could meet the every need of his miserable life.

But Jesus not only saw Matthew, He called Matthew. Jesus walks up to this despised tax collector everybody else hates, looks him straight in the eyes and says, "*Follow Me.*" He didn't talk about the weather, or how the Gladiators were doing. He didn't ask him how it was going on the job. He went straight to the point. You know, whenever Jesus spoke, He spoke with authority. Jesus said right before the Great Commission, "*All authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth.*" And speaking with authority always gets our attention.

Whenever a uniformed officer says “*Halt!*” He’s got my attention. Whenever my Mom or Dad used to call out my whole name, it got my attention. You know how it is.

And that’s the way it was throughout the Gospels. Jesus spoke like nobody else they had ever heard. He spoke with authority because He is the authority. When Jesus speaks, you need to react! That’s why when God’s Word is read or proclaimed, we ought to sit up and take notice.

Jesus said to Matthew, “*Follow Me.*” Well, what did He mean by that? In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, “*If any man would come after Me let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*” Jesus was telling Matthew, “*Look, leave this miserable life behind and come follow Me, I’ll give you real life.*” And apparently, Jesus read Matthew mind because he had to be thinking the same thing, “*There’s got to be more to life than this.*”

Another thing is this, who’s to say that Matthew wasn’t a little bit familiar with Jesus. It’s possible that he had heard of Him or even seen Him before now. Surely, after all the time Jesus had spent in the city preaching and teaching and healing, Matthew had heard of Him. Surely he had heard of His miracles. He had to have known something of His reputation and authority. But one thing we do know, Jesus’ invitation was very to-the-point, “*Follow Me.*” He didn’t sing 25 verses of “*Just As I Am!*”

And with that simple, yet straightforward invitation, Matthew got up and followed the Lord. There were no questions asked, no hesitations, no if, ands, or buts, no allowances, no half-heartedness, no delayed action. It was immediate and total commitment or nothing.

Matthew rose up from his collection table in obedience and followed Jesus, and he didn’t look back. He didn’t say, “*What do you mean follow you? Don’t you see I’ve got a business to run here? Let me at least get someone to take care of the money for me?*” You know, he wasn’t forced to go with Jesus, he made a decision. And if you’re going follow Jesus, you have to make the same decision Matthew did!

This simple act of faith put Matthew’s name in the Lamb’s Book of Life for all eternity. Mark 8:35-36 says, “*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*”

If God saved Matthew, He'll save anybody: the hated, the bitter, the lonely, the dissatisfied, the traitor, the thief, the immoral and the one who has no purpose or meaning in life. Matthew represents all of those! Jesus' call was to a sinner in need of a Savior. But not only that, next there is:

2. The Call to Evangelize (10-11)

Well, evidently Matthew spent the remainder of the day with Jesus and when it came time to eat, Matthew says, "*Let's go to my house.*" Now, this is something new to Matthew. He knows somebody who is genuine. He's never met anyone like Jesus. He has a friend who won't stab him in the back. He has a friend who won't take advantage of him. He has a friend that's not out to get him. He has a friend who has already shown him that He loves him just for who he is. Let me ask you something: Are you that kind of friend? Jesus is, and He's placing another call upon your life. Jesus is calling for those He has saved to become evangelists.

One of the fastest growing and most effective means of evangelism that is catching on in many places is the idea of cell groups or home cell groups. The idea probably originated right here from this text. The purpose of cell groups is to get friends who had come to Christ to invite their lost friends who wouldn't come to church, to come to their house for some sort of informal gathering – a meal, a community get-together on holidays, or a special event. There is no heavy theological debate – no preaching, and sometimes no Bible Study at least at first. These gatherings were solely for the purpose of fellowship, getting acquainted and building relationships. It's a great tool for reach the lost and unchurched in the community.

Well, this is sort of what Matthew did. After being with Jesus the rest of the day, he invited him to his house to eat along with a few of his tax collector buddies. Matthew was a hated man but, he did have a few friends who needed what he had found.

Remember how it was when you first met Jesus as your Savior? How new it was? How refreshing it was? How you wanted to share that with somebody? I hope you did! Well, that's the way Matthew felt. When you're excited about something, it's hard to keep it to yourself.

Matthew wanted his friends to see the change in his life. You know what? He did the right thing! The Bible tells us to let our shine before men in such a way that they see the change and it glorifies God. We need to shine before our lost friends. Do you?

In the midst of this motley crew of sinful people, Jesus and His disciples share a meal. But as usual, wherever Jesus went, the Pharisees were close behind, watching His every move, trying to find some fault, some way they could accuse Him. Finally, they grab one of his disciples and ask, “*What’s He doing in there with those people? Doesn’t He know who they are, what they do?*”

Well, yes, He did know who they were and what they did! And the Pharisees knew them too, but they weren’t in this house. They wouldn’t be caught dead with such “*sinners.*”

But Jesus went where the sinners were. He didn’t avoid them or shy away from them. As a matter of fact, He sought them out. He showed them that they were welcome to come to Him and that He cared for them.

Now, here is where a lot of Christians fall way short of Jesus’ example. In fact, many Christians seem to have more of the attitude of the Pharisees than Jesus’ attitude. “*Why are we letting those folks in the church? Why, they’ll just let anybody in these days!*” I’ve heard some of those comments. Accusing, critical, looking for fault, not really caring for people like Jesus would. And did you notice that the Pharisees didn’t accuse Jesus face to face? They grabbed one of His disciples and told them.

That’s usually the way it goes, isn’t it. We can’t tell the person face to face, so we grab someone close to him to tell them. That’s what the Pharisees did. Probably, there was the intent of trying to plant doubt in their minds too. They were probably trying to turn them from Jesus, “*Are you sure you want to run around with a guy like that? Look who He’s with?*”

The Pharisees had the mind set that says, “*I’m not like them*” or “*I’m better than them*” or “*I’m not near as bad as them.*” But the scripture plainly tells us that “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” – and that includes every one of us!

These two calls are calls that can change everything. They are, in effect, both calls to salvation. One changes those who hear and respond to the call and the other changes your outlook on people. One changes you from no relationship with Christ into having a close, personal relationship with Christ; and the other changes you from a person who looks upon people with hatred and arrogance into a person who genuinely sees people as Christ sees them – sinners in need of a Savior.

Jesus is tenderly calling for you. Do you hear Him calling? He says, "*Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"(Matt. 11:28)

He says "*Come, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.*" (Isaiah 1:18).

"*Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'*" (Matthew 9:37-38)

And the last invitation given in Scripture: "*The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*" (Revelation 22:17). He is saying: "*Follow Me!*"