

WSS Part 12  
Week 4  
Saturday

**The Wonder of Redemption**  
by Lisa Wallover, Guest Writer

Today's Treasure

*As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth,  
and He said to him, "Follow Me."  
Matthew 9:9a*

Suggested Scripture reading for today: [Matthew 9:9-13](#) or [Mark 2:13-17](#) or [Luke 5:27-32](#)

Matthew had his ear to the ground.

With his business centered in Capernaum, Matthew would have been keenly aware of the happenings in that town. The new Teacher, Jesus, had everyone talking. Dramatic healings. Teachings with authority. Gathering disciples from among the common fishermen who sailed the Sea of Galilee. Remarkable rumors of the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of debt owed to God.

If anyone in Capernaum knew about debts, it was Matthew. Because Matthew was a tax collector for the occupying Roman Empire, he kept the records; he knew the sums that each and every one of his debtors owed to Rome. He knew how much extra he collected, to make the job worth the rejection and anger he experienced from his fellow Jews. He knew the power of the Roman sword that enforced the collection of those taxes—and the fear it elicited.

He also knew the one word that could bring a look of relief and even joy to the weary faces of his fellow Jews. The one word written across their account once all payment was made: "*Tetelestai.*" *It is paid. It is finished!* The debt that had been owed was paid in full.

Somehow, this Jesus was promising that kind of forgiveness, not from Rome, but from God. How had Matthew begun to feel the weight of his own debt to a Holy God? A debt he knew he could not pay. Years of betrayal of his people, his family, his faith—he was a prodigal who did not leave but lived out his rebellion daily in the town square, in the face of all who knew him.

*“Follow Me.”* Two words from the Teacher. The Teacher who *saw* him. Who saw him at the tax booth. Who knew exactly who he was and what he was but called him anyway.

Matthew’s response to Jesus was swift and dramatic: he got up, left his tax booth in the middle of business, and followed Jesus. He was done sitting, collecting debts. No looking back. He was done with that kingdom. He was being called to another. In joy, his response of faith was quickly followed by the response of celebration.

A party! A party at his house! For Jesus and His followers. Though he was hated by many, Matthew did have friends. All the other tax collectors—and he would invite them all! And *their* friends, too. Many came—tax collectors and sinners. And Jesus gathered with them and dined with them and talked with them. Inside the house, it felt like a jubilee.

Outside, however, was another response. Some Pharisees and scribes grumbled to Jesus’s disciples against Him, like their forefathers had grumbled against God in the wilderness. This gathering, they imagined, could never please God. *“Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”* If Jesus was to eat with anyone, certainly it should be with them.

Graciously, Jesus came out to meet them, to answer them.

*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*

*Luke: 5: 31-32*

Did they hear the invitation of Jesus? They, too, could dine with Him. They could enter the house and join the jubilee. They needed only to see their need of Him, as Matthew had, that they were sick with sin. Their debt was more than they could pay. They were serving a kingdom of their own making.

Just three years later, grumblings would turn to accusations. Those who claimed to defend the honor of God would plot murder. Fear of the Roman sword would cause all of Jesus’s followers to fall away. But Jesus would not retreat. Jesus knew that only He could pay the debt we owed before God, to purchase the forgiveness of sins. It was why He had come. Oh, the wonder of Redemption – that Jesus would bear our sins in His body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24).

And having completed all, He would declare from that very cross: *Tetelestai! It is finished!* The debt is paid. Now, and forever.

## LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

The word *Tetelestai* is the perfect tense of the Greek verb *teleo* (meaning to bring something to a successful end or to its intended or destined goal). The perfect tense indicates that “It is finished, it stands finished, and it always will be finished!” Every sin, past, present, and future, that Jesus paid for is *completely* paid for. Once forgiven, no more debt can be added.

If you have trusted Christ to pay your debt before God, how do you respond to hearing Jesus’s cry: “*It is finished!*”?

What are the ways you may believe you still need to pay part of that debt before God?  
How does living out of Jesus’s forgiveness bring you joy?  
How does seeing how much you are forgiven help you love God and others even more?

## PRAYER

Lord, there are times when I feel amazed that You take note of me at all, let alone that You have called me to follow You. In those moments, let my amazement lead me to praise and to a joy in sharing You with others.

Let me never outgrow a sense of wonder at Your grace or Your holiness. Thank You that I grow in You the same way I came to You: trusting in all You have accomplished for me on the cross.