

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

February 19, 2023 "Seeing ourselves in the 12. Matthew: Jesus welcomes a traitor."

I Intro.

We're solidly in 2023 now. The new year will bring some new and innovative ideas in all areas of our church life. We have seen an increased activity in our children's ministry, and we're working on new ideas for both our children and our students. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

This is our third Sunday in finding ourselves in those who followed Jesus. It's a series on giving ourselves permission to not be perfect, and real life lessons on how to overcome different struggles. The first Sunday we looked at Peter and the struggle to overcome pride and the desire to want to control everything in our lives. Last week we talked about overcoming our own restrictive, predefined view of the world, and being open to experiencing all of who Jesus is. This week we talk about finding our way back from a stuck place.

III Scripture.

There are a couple of ways we can approach this story of the calling of Matthew. He's a complicated character whom Jesus chose to be a disciple. One perspective is to deal with the fact that he had become a traitor to the Jews and worked for Rome collecting taxes. This had made him very wealthy, and hated by the Jews, his own people. So hated he probably had to have security escort him around. But my guess is, if we were able to dig deep into the story and history of Matthew, we would find that he just didn't just decide one day to betray his people. Rarely does anyone just make that kind of decision. Usually there are a series, sometimes a lot of little decisions, that lead a person, maybe even us, to a place we never intended to be. So, even though Matthew is a highly despised person of that day, we're going to frame where he found himself as a journey many of us have taken. And how Jesus reached out to him and helped him find his way back. Some opening questions first.

When was there a time you felt like you had drifted away from God? What fed that drift?

What awoke you to the realization you had drifted?

Do you have anything in place now to help warn you when you're drifting again?

Our scripture is the calling of Matthew found in...yes...**Matthew 9:9-13**. Read it and we'll discuss.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

What did that passage tell you about Matthew?

What do you think Matthew had to overcome to follow Jesus?

So, what can we learn from the calling of Matthew and leaving this place he had gotten stuck in?

Matthew did two things.

1. Matthew had an awareness his life hadn't gone where he had hoped it would. His life wasn't what he wanted.

You don't just get up and leave a high paying job. Even if you have turned against your country. Mathew had it made as far as careers go, but he didn't seem to be fulfilled, satisfied about his lot in life. He was not where he wanted to be, where he wanted his life to go. And he's brave and courageous enough to not only feel it, to acknowledge it, but to actually act on it.

The place you find yourself right now...both physically and spiritually.

Is it where you want to be?

Whether it was from turning your back on God, or just coming to the end of yourself, you want something different out of life. And for that to happen you know you need to do something different.

What is the first step you could take to head back to where you want to be?

2. Matthew followed Jesus. He knew of him, about him, but that was about it. But he had this little thing inside that was telling him to take that first step towards Jesus.

This wasn't a calculated, thought through, well planned move into a new phase of life. Matthew and Mrs. Tax Collector didn't sit down and crunch numbers, and work through all of this to see if they could make it work. Matthew didn't do a risk/benefit analysis to see if this would pay out over time. It seemed he was just stepping out of a place that he knew he didn't want to be, into simply following this prophet named Jesus. This was the path to a better life.

For some of us it may be a multiple step process. Stop doing what we're doing, reevaluate where we are, maybe do some work about how and what got us there, and where we need to go. And for some of us...it's just following Jesus. In fact, if you're doing that very first step, it's about following Jesus.

Even if you don't know where, or what, the next steps are, a decision to follow or re-follow Jesus is a way to find your way back. And you will ALWAYS find that Jesus fully welcomes you back.

If Jesus physically stepped into your everyday life and told you to come follow him...what is it you most likely need to step away from?

IV Challenge.

This story of the calling of Matthew is such an interesting account. We don't get any backstory about what caused Matthew to end up in the place that he did. I'm curious about it, but have to settle for the fact that like many of us, Matthew just ended up in a place he didn't seem to want to be. And in order for us to step out of our stuckness, the place we never intended to end up at, we have to be willing to leave where we are, (physically or spiritually), and make an increased commitment to follow Jesus. No matter how you got to where you are, or even where you are, you'll find a Jesus who is ALWAYS there to welcome you back.