

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 9:9-13 | Matthew: Saving the Worst Sinner in Town
Sunday, August 20, 2023

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 9.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we learned about the most important miracle that God could ever perform.

The miracle itself is not the physical healing of a paralyzed man—but the spiritual healing of his heart.

The most important thing that God did—and still does today— is to turn sinners into saints.

And in doing so, we heard the most important words Jesus could ever speak,

"Your sins are forgiven!"

LW KEYPOINT 1:

Jesus is not only the Great Physician (Mark 2:17) but, more importantly, the High Priest (Heb. 2:17).

Today's church, for the most part, is obsessed with the healing of our bodies.

We live as if we were not going anywhere—not true.

Jesus showed us last week that the paralyzed man's physical healing is secondary to the healing of his soul.

We saw Jesus' priorities: Forgiveness first, body second.

Why is that?

LW KEYPOINT 2:

Forgiveness of sin is God's greatest gift because it meets man's greatest need.

What good is it for Jesus to heal this man's body—for him to remain in his sin?

At best, that's a temporary fix.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we're going to see how forgiveness leads to discipleship.

How far? wide does forgiveness run? To what extent does forgiveness change someone?

Today we learn about the testimony of Matthew, our Gospel writer.

Everybody loves a good salvation story—and today we'll learn how Jesus saved the worst sinner in town.

How does Matt's testimony impact you?

Let's find out together.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 9:9— As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me," and he got up and followed him.

Matthew 9:10— While he was reclining at the table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and his disciples.

Matthew 9:11— When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

Matthew 9:12— Now when he heard this, he said, "It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick."

Matthew 9:13— Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice., For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."

These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.

PRAY:

I love the Lord because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. (Psalm 116:1 NLT).

(May we experience You verse-by-verse.)

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 9:9— As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, "Follow me," and he got up and followed him.

Let's start with the big picture and move in slowly because Matt gives us a condensed version of this story.

Verses nine and ten are Matthew's testimony.

It's only two verses!

Matthew is doing something similar to what the Dutch painter Rembrandt did in one of his paintings of the crucifixion.

SLIDE:

In 1633, Rembrandt painted "The Raising of the Cross."

There is one character who is out of place at the bottom of the cross—

That's Rembrandt—and he's saying "I put Jesus there."

In the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, Mel Gibson, the producer, did the same thing.

It was his hands that drove the nails into Jesus' feet.

It's is the same reality for everyone—our sin drove Jesus to the cross.

Now Matt's conversion story is also in Mark and Luke.

So let's look to them to fill in some holes...

Mark 2:13 NLT— Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him.

Luke 5:27 NLT— Later, as Jesus left the town,

Matthew 9:9— As Jesus went on from there,

There's a pretty good chance that this location is where Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John as disciples.

So as Jesus is walking along the ^{Shore} Sea of Galilee, a crowd follows, and Jesus is doing what Jesus does—teaching.

Matthew 9:9— As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the tax office,

Both Mark and Luke call Matthew by a different name—*Levi*. (Mark 2:14; cf. Luke 5:27).

Bible critics will point the two names as an error and claim that the Bible is not the written Word of God.

However, the problem with their argument is that it's not uncommon for people to be known by multiple names.

It was common for first-century Jews to have two or three names.

For example:

Peter was known as Simon.

Mark, the gospel writer, was also known as John Mark.

The apostle Paul was known as Saul.

Thomas is also known as Didymus.

Matthew is his Gentile name. Levi is his Jewish name.

The name Levi means that this tax collector sprang from the Levites.

Matthew comes from a long Jewish history & bloodline.

The tribe of Levi were the priestly class—their role was to worship and minister at the Temple.

But instead of worshiping at the Temple, Matthew/Levi was working for the IRS—oh, the divine irony!

And it gets better, "Matthew" means—*the gift of God*.

Matthew 9:9—*sitting at the tax office,*

Matthew was a publican, a *publicani*.

In other words, Matthew is a trader for the cause of Israel.

Matthew decided that money was more important than his family and God.

So, he bought a tax franchise from Rome.

Not only did Matthew buy the franchise, extort money, and oppress his own people, he had the muscle of the Roman government to back him up.

Matthew virtually had unlimited power when it came to taxation.

In other words, Matt had a legal license for extortion.

~~He was considered a traitor by their own people.~~

Tax Collectors were more despised than Roman officials or soldiers.

Matt was barred from the synagogue.

He could not have any religious or social contact with his fellow Jews.

Very few people would take his charitable donations.

He was ranked in the same class as pigs.

He was viewed as a liar, robber, and murderer.

He couldn't even give testimony in Jewish courts.

That's just the picture of tax collectors in general.

If we chase this rabbit for just a moment—It's important to note that there were two categories of tax collectors in the first century.

Category number one were the general tax collectors, and their job was to take the regular taxes.

And there were three of them:

1. Property tax. (one-tenth of your grain, one-fifth of our fruit and wine)
2. Income tax. (one percent of your money earned.)
3. Registration tax. (For simply being alive).

In other words, if you're alive, you got to pay tax for being alive.

All of this was done by the general tax collectors.

Their title in the Hebrew was *gabbai* G-A-B-B-A-I.

That's what you think today when you send our year tax statements!— Goodbye.

But there was another kind of tax collector.

His job was to collect duty on everything else.

This tax collector was not a *gabbai*, but a *mokhes*.

A *mokhes* was able to collect tax on all imports, all export, everything bought, everything sold, every road, every bridge, every harbor, every town, every everything.

A *mokhes* could even invent taxes on the spot.

They would open packages and letters coming along the road to see if business transactions were happening in that letter—and if there were, they could attach a tax to that.

As you can see, *gabbais* were despised—and the *mokhes* were detested.

Now, Luke tells us that Jesus was walking alongside the shore of Galilee—teaching.

The lake's shore was a prime spot for a tax collector.

And guess whose spot this was?

Matt was collecting taxes on everything going on in that area.

His tax booth was near the road from Damascus to the west (which led to the Orient), so he taxed everybody traveling east and west and vice versa.

So what kind of tax collector is Matthew, then?

Matthew wasn't a general tax collector, *gabbai*; He was a *mokhes*.

This means Matthew was oppressive, unjust— robbing people in broad daylight.

If being a *mokhes* wasn't bad enough—there were two types of *mokhes*.

The first were called the *great mokhes*.

They were the ones who hired somebody else to sit at the booth and take all the heat and hate.

A *great mokhes* and stayed behind the scenes.

They wanted to have the appearance of social decency.

But secondly, there were the *small mokhes*.

Small mokhes collected the taxes themselves.

They were too cheap to pay somebody else.

A *small mokhes* didn't care about their reputation.

It was one thing to be a tax collector.

It was worse to be a *mokhes*.

And still, further, It was worse to be a *small mokhes*.

Guess what kind of tax collector Matthew is.

Matthew was the *small mokhes* of Capernaum!

~~The worst man in the city!~~ The worst of the worst!

As far as the people were concerned, he was the most wretched human in their town.

The whole city hated him.

The rabbis said that repentance is impossible for a *small mokhes*.

If there is one sinner in town that can't be forgiven —Matthew.

Everybody knew that—and everybody knew Matthew.

Everybody paid Matt because they were afraid not to.

This whole thing reminds me of the mob.

If business owners didn't pay the mob, the mob sent 'little Vinny.'

The problem with 'little Vinny' is that he's not so little.

And Vinny had a way of convincing you that you didn't need what you had.

So with that background on Matthew...^{his profession} Jesus, some of his disciples, and this large crowd walk by Matthew's booth.

Matthew 9:9— "Follow me,"

One moment, Matthew has irritated and angry people standing in line to pay taxes.

The next, he hears these words from Jesus.

Not only did he hear them, but so did everybody else!

I'm guessing the people standing in line are even more irritated and angry.

The people following Jesus are appalled and offended.

 **Matthew 9:9**— *and he got up and followed him.*

So Matt puts down the ledger.

Putting aside the stacks of coins... gets up from his chair and closes shop—never to return.

Question: Why Matthew?

Why did Jesus call the most despised man in Capernaum to be a disciple?

Isn't this whole scene strange?

Jesus is being mobbed by the crowds again—everyone except Matthew wants a piece of Jesus.

It is not that Matthew didn't know anything about Jesus.

As a tax collector, Matthew knew more than most people about what was happening around town.

In all likelihood, this is not the first time Matthew saw or heard Jesus speak.

Both live in Capernaum—both were infamous in their own rights—both knew of one another.

Matthew may have met Jesus face-to-face previously.

Regardless, he doesn't care.

Matthew can see the crowd approaching him—he may have seen Jesus.

And still, Matthew *sits* unphased by Jesus and the crowd walking by.

Why? His profession says it all.

Matthew's God is money.

Matthew is like today's Wall Street workaholic.

No matter what is happening around him, he is convinced that time is money.

But something happened to Matthew when he heard that invitation from Jesus.

God's sovereign call to Matt changed everything in his life.

Matthew 9:9— "Follow me," and he got up and followed him.

"Follow Me"—Walk as I walk, think as I think, choose as I choose, see as I see.

"Got up"—It's the same Greek word used to describe the Resurrection of Jesus.

Matthew rose to his feet and followed! *The Sheep Hear the Master's Voice,*

Matthew's calling is different than the other disciples.

When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John, they were fishermen.

So, we have to take a guess that in the back of their minds, if this disciple thing didn't work out, we could always go back to fishing. *John B*

Not so with Matthew.

Matthew lost everything that day.

Within hours, someone else bought his franchise— and the taxes kept flowing into Rome without skipping a beat.

Luke confirms it...



Luke 5:28 NLT—*So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.*

Matthew's conversion reminds me of others who left six-figure salaries to go into ministry.

And in doing so, friends and family are left scratching their heads.

You're quitting your job? Are you out of your mind? You have a six figure salary, with benefits, retirement? You're going to give up your house, car and income to go to seminary, to go to Africa, to go...? Have you lost your mind?

Matthew had no safety net. He was all in.

Jesus' call here is met with immediate obedience.

Matthew lost his career and gained a destiny.

In the providence and sovereignty of God, Jesus has chosen Matthew because God has been preparing Matthew all of his life for this.

We are not told that Jesus begged Matthew to come.

Matthew didn't say, *Hold on, I'm coming, I'm coming. I'll be there in a minute; first let me take care of this transaction,* or *"First let me pack my bags,"* or *"First let me grab a bite to eat.*

Matthew made a radical decision to follow Jesus.

Pause—what are the first four disciples thinking?

Peter, Andrew, James and John all know what kind of man Matthew is.

Matthew has personally stolen from all of them.

Can't you see Peter running up to Jesus—

WHOA! "Lord, if you choose that man as your next disciple, you'll offend and alienate everyone. It is bad enough that you only have a bunch of stinky fishermen. But if you pick Matthew, you will ruin your message.

It's a good thing that Jesus doesn't take advice from His disciples.

Luke 5:29 NLT— Later, Levi held a banquet in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor.

Mark 2:15 NLT— Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.)

Matthew 9:10— ^{Jesus} While he was reclining at the table in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and his disciples.

In other words, it's party time!

This is a farewell party at Matthew's home in honor of Jesus.

So the music is pumping and the drinks are flowing.

Can you imagine the disciples walking around Matthew's mansion and saying—
Yep, I paid for this...and that...and that!

What do you do when you throw a party?

Invite all your friends!

Who are Matt's friends?

 **Matthew 9:10**— *many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and his disciples.*

More tax collectors.

We all do this—our professions generally indicate the types of friends we have.

Matthew's friends were just like him—social and religious outcasts.

Other *gabbai* and *mokhes* from other towns showed up.

For the first time in Matt's life, he is living the life he was ordained to live—like Moses and Aaron.

He's introducing people to the Messiah.

 **Matthew 9:10**— *many tax collectors and sinners came to eat with Jesus and his disciples.*

The sinners included people like me and you—lying thieving blaspheming adulterers at heart.

The banquet is a picture of sinners becoming seminarians. They are sitting at the feet of the Master Teacher.

Matthew 9:11— *When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"*

The Pharisee's question is an attack on Jesus' morality.

The implication is that if Jesus associates with "these kinds of people,"—he must be like them and share in their sin.

KEYPOINT 1:

There is a right way to fellowship with unbelievers and share the Gospel.

Jesus eats with sinners because he *accepts* them where they are; however, he does not want them to *remain* there.

A good teacher loves her students, but wants to grow and challenge them into becoming better students.

A good boss accepts his employees as they are, yet inspires and trains them for personal and professional growth.

Matthew 9:11— *"Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"*

Can you hear a bit of resentment in the Pharisee's question?

"Your teacher"—not ours.

Maybe the Pharisees were embarrassed and humiliated that Jesus didn't spend time with them.

So, if that's the case, the question is more of a rebuke than a question itself.

The Pharisee's question has massive implications for our theology.

Jesus having dinner with sinners should probably be viewed as a glimpse of the Heavenly banquet.

Jesus provides a parable in Matthew 22—*Parable of the Great Feast*.

Matthew 22:2 NLT—“The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son.

Matthew 22:3 NLT— When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to notify those who were invited. But they all refused to come!

Matthew 22:7 NLT— “The king was furious...

Matthew 22:9 NLT— Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.’

Matthew 22:10 NLT— So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests.

In other words, since the Jews didn't want Jesus, Jesus went out into the world and made His invitation to everyone.

That’s why you and I are in church today!

Matthew 9:11— “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

So the Pharisees ask this rhetorical question to Jesus' disciples—not Jesus.

The Pharisees are basically saying, “Shame on you for being taught by this type of man!”

Here's the scene—So as Jesus is inside partying, the disciples are taking a tongue-lashing outside—because there's no way the Pharisees are walking into Matt's house.

Regardless, Jesus heard the question.

Matthew 9:12— *Now when he heard this, he said, "It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick."*

The slur of the Pharisees to Jesus' disciples has been duly noted by Jesus.

Jesus answers their question with a first-century proverb.

Matthew 9:12— *"It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick."*

In other words, Jesus is not hobnobbing with sinners.

Jesus is not a partner in crime, like "birds of a feather flocking together."

Instead, Jesus is a spiritual physician.

Just because Jesus is close to them doesn't mean He's contaminated by them.

Today when people are sick, they usually go to a doctor or to a hospital.

Do hospitals have places for people who are well—besides waiting rooms? No, they have places for people who are sick.

In Jesus' day, there were no hospitals or doctors' offices.

Doctors went to the patients—they actually made house calls.

And that's what Jesus does—Jesus goes to where the sick people are.

It's as if Jesus said to the Pharisees—

"If you're really as spiritually and morally perfect as you think—you don't need any help from God.

But these people do.

Matthew 9:13— *Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice., For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Jesus tells them to "go and learn" because they don't even know the basics of Judaism.

Jesus quotes from the OT prophet Hosea—which the Scribes and Pharisees are supposed to know.

A major theme in Hosea is mercy.

Hosea 6:6 NIV—*For I desire mercy, not sacrifice.*

By quoting this verse, Jesus was saying, in essence:

*I'm on mission—to save sinners—which includes you. But you don't see yourself as a sinner. You see yourself as someone who is right with God because you go to church, drop a few bucks in the offering and serve at the homeless shelter once per month. And to all of those things you do—I say **so what.** I don't care about your works—I want you to know me and to know God as He really is—not the one you've created in your own minds and serve when it's convenient for you.*

The Pharisees never got that through their heads.

KEYPOINT 2:

Religious people love the knowledge of God, but lack the mercy of God.

They believe that works is more important than mercy—they believe a lie.

So Jesus did what he always does with the Pharisees—He pinned them to the wall with their own Scripture from Hosea.

Hosea is about God's faithful love to an unfaithful people—Israel.

And Hosea's marriage to a woman named Gomer is a vivid illustration.

Now, when you start dating someone named Gomer, I'm guessing you're off to a bad start.

Secondly, Gomer not only had a bad name, but she was a prostitute.

So Jesus' illustration is this—

So Gomer's behavior, aka the nation of Israel, is a sign that points to Israel's spiritual adultery.

However, Hosea's continuing love and forgiveness of Gomer was a picture of the mercy, love forgiveness God offered Israel.

But Israel didn't want God, just as Gomer didn't want Hosea.

Israel wanted religion, not a relationship.

They wanted to keep a set of rules.

After that grace = mercy.

When your worldview and idea of God is a set of rules, you will always have conflict, especially within the church.

And that's why Jesus was in constant conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees.

So Jesus is trying to show them the truth.



Matthew 9:13— *I desire mercy and not sacrifice., For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Jesus says, "I didn't come."

His statement shows us His divine authority.

Jesus came from Heaven—His ways are not man's ways.

Keypoint #3

Jesus "came ... to call ... sinners."

That is the main point of this passage.

The Pharisees thought Jesus should spend time with sinners only *after they changed.*

People think the same thing today.

They think God is interested in them if and only if they reform themselves.

Try a little harder

That's like getting cleaned up before you take a shower.

That's like trying to teach a drowning man how to swim.



PREACH:

Over the past several weeks we've seen two groups of people emerge from our narratives.

We saw Jesus save two demon possession ^{*2 demon*} vs the unbelieving towns people.

We saw Jesus forgive and heal paralyzed man ^{*4 friends*} vs. unbelieving Scribes/Pharisees.

Today, we see Jesus save the worst sinner in town and call him to discipleship vs. unbelieving Scribes/Pharisees.

What group are you in?

Are you in or out?

There are two basic elements that many people don't realize about the Christian faith.

You're either in or out. You either believe it or not.

1. We accept the free gift of salvation through Christ alone.
2. We refuse it and live according to our principles and values. *- believe good*

scribes = pharisees
"Good" people don't go to Heaven—forgiven sinners do.

The Gospel is not for "good" people.

~~We learned last week that none of us are good.~~

We looked at two of the Ten Commandments and learned that we are all lying thieves.

And lying thieves don't go to Heaven.

We still have eight more commandments to go!

Scripture tells us that no one is good—no one—no, not one. (Rom. 3:12).

The Gospel is for bad people who know they are bad.

Just as Jesus spoke those divine words to the paralyzed man last Sunday—

It wasn't "Get up and walk."

It was, "Your sins are forgiven."

Those are the best greatest words we will ever hear.

Are you in or out? How do you know? - Testimony
If you're in, praise God!
Matt's testimony - Your testimony

You've experienced God verse-by-verse and I pray that you will now share Jesus with the Verde Valley day-by-day.

Are you out? Do you not believe?

Let me share one more illustration—

- Doctor
- Parachute.

PRAYER | Song .

BENEDICTION

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love. (2 John 3)

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