

ST MATTHEW - APOSTLE & EVANGELIST

The Collect

O Almighty God, whose blessed Son called Matthew the tax collector to be an apostle and evangelist: give us grace to forsake the selfish pursuit of gain and the possessive love of riches that we may follow in the way of your Son Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The First Reading **(NRSV)**

Proverbs 3:13-18

A reading from the book of Proverbs.

Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding, for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. **Thanks be to God.**

The Psalm **72**

119:65-

Blessed are those who keep his commands.

Response: **Blessed are those who keep his commands.**

You have dealt graciously / with your / servant:
according to your / word, O / Lord.

O teach me true understand/ing and / knowledge:
for I have trusted in / your com/mandments. **Response**

Before I was afflicted I / went a/stray:
but now I / keep your / word.

You are gracious / and do / good:
O Lord, teach / me your / statutes. **Response**

The proud have smeared / me with / lies:
but I will keep your commandments with / my whole / heart.
Their heart has become / gross with / fat:
but my delight is / in your/ law. **Response**

It is good for me that I have/ been af/flicted:
that I may / learn your / statutes.
The law of your mouth is dear/er to / me:

than a hoard of / gold and / silver. **Response**

***The Second Reading
(CEV)***

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians.
God has been kind enough to trust us with this work. That's why we never give up. We don't do shameful things that must be kept secret. And we don't try to fool anyone or twist God's message around. God is our witness that we speak the truth, so others can be sure that we can be trusted. If there is anything hidden about our message, it is hidden only to someone who is lost. The god who rules this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers. They cannot see the light, which is the good news about our glorious Christ, who shows what God is like. We are not preaching about ourselves. Our message is that Jesus Christ is Lord. He also sent us to be your servants. The Scriptures say, "God commanded light to shine in the dark." Now God is shining in our hearts to let you know that his glory is seen in Jesus Christ.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church. **Thanks be to God.**

The Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia! **Alleluia!** I do not call you ser/vants but / friends,
because I have made known to you *
everything that I have heard / from my / Father. **Alleluia!**

***The Gospel Reading
(TNIV)***

Matthew 9:9-13

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

As Jesus went along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon – St Matthew.

Today is the feast of St. Matthew, the apostle and evangelist who composed/inspired the Gospel account that bears his name. We are also in the middle of lectionary year A, which, for the most part, follows Matthew. That means that we've spent the last few months hearing him tell the good news of Jesus with a perspective that reflects both his own experience and that of the Christian community of which he was a part. And, if we've been listening carefully, we've noticed that Matthew's version repeatedly conveys a tension between who is in and who is out.

Matthew is the only one who tells us the story of the Gentile wise men from the East who saw the infant king's star and followed it to Bethlehem. Matthew is the only one who describes the kingdom of heaven as a field sown with good seed and later by an enemy with weeds and who tells us that both must grow up together until the day of judgment, when the weeds will be separated out and thrown into the fire. Matthew's Jesus is the only one who tells the parable of the net with all kinds of fish—some clean and some unclean—that have to be separated before they can be eaten. Matthew is the only one who shares the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, in which even those who came at the last hour get paid as much as those who worked all day. Matthew's account is the only one in which Jesus orders his disciples to go nowhere among the Gentiles or Samaritans but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

In other words, in ways that aren't so clear in the other Gospel accounts, Matthew shows his reader that there's always an underlying question about what sort of person gets salvation and what sort of person gets left out.

I wonder whether Matthew's own calling in [Matthew 9](#) has something to do with that. "As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him." As a tax collector, Matthew was working for the enemy of God. He was responsible for getting money from his fellow Jews and giving it to the Roman Empire, and his own salary came from commission—which means he was motivated to squeeze every penny from them. It's not an accident that in the Gospel accounts the label "tax collector" is associated with "sinner" as if they were interchangeable. That's the life Matthew lived—rejected by his people, rejected by his faith, rejected by his God. And then Jesus comes along and says, "Hey, tax collector! Follow me!"

We see in the verses that follow that Jesus was keeping company with other tax collectors and sinners and that this choice got under the skin of the religious elites. "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" they asked his disciples. Jesus replied directly to them, saying, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." That's the teaching that the Pharisees need to hear. They need to learn what it means for God, who desires mercy not sacrifice, to draw sinners to himself and not righteous people. But how does the truth of God's choice of sinners like Matthew the tax collector shape him and those like him? We see explicitly what that choice does to the religious insiders. What does it do to those who are called?

I wonder which was harder to believe: that Jesus would eat with sinners like that, or that Jesus would eat with sinners like me or you or anyone else whom Jesus calls. Who had the harder time grasping the reality of that call, the Pharisees or Matthew? Which is easier: to mock Jesus for hanging out with sinners, or to get up when he calls and trust that even I have a place at the table?

The Gospel accounts spend a lot of time describing the elites' reaction to Jesus' company, but we never get the first-hand account of what it felt like to be called from a place of sin and rejection into a place of forgiveness and reconciliation. Unless we count Matthew.

There is a tension in our lives between who is in and who is out. We feel it. Even those of us who have lived so-called "good" lives, who go to church, who pay our taxes, who kiss our mothers, and who say our prayers, even we wonder whether Jesus could really be calling us. "Who me?" we ask, when he points his finger at us. "Me? Why me?" we ask. Over and over, Matthew brings us to that tension. Who belongs—the dog who eats the scraps that fall from the master's table? What fish get thrown away? What weeds get gathered and burned? What Gentile stargazers, who know less about Israel's God than they know about Pisces and Leo, are invited to see the king?

Today we celebrate not only Matthew, the tax collector who was invited to join Jesus and who became an evangelist, but also the tension that comes from wondering whether we, too, might belong to God. Throughout his account, Matthew invites us to ask those sorts of questions—who belongs? do I?—because he felt that tension himself. He discovered what it means for a sinner to be welcome at God's table, and he invites us to do the same.

Amen

Intercessions -St Matthew

Generous God we commemorate with thanksgiving Matthews change of heart and decision to follow you. We give thanks for the gospel that bears his name And his ability to draw us closer to you Lord .

Keep us faithful to our calling and give us the resolve we need to be true disciples .

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We pray for the church for all ministers of word and sacrament for priests and evangelists and all who proclaim your saving love today. We pray for Cherry our Bishop and for all who proclaim forgiveness to the penitent and open to them the gateway to mercy and new life.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We pray for all who work in tax and finance, and those who ensure the public services have the funds they need. we pray for those who create the wealth we enjoy, for a just and honest stewardship of those resources. We give thanks for the generosity that finances so many good causes, and those who sacrificial giving enables the churches ministry to function in all parts of the world and in our own communities.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

We pray for those weighed down with financial worries , those who struggle for the necessities of life. Lord help us all to give to you what belongs to you and to trust in your promises. we pray too for those who are sick at home or in hospital ...

We give thanks for those who care for them doctors, nurses, family and friends Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

As we long for the things of heaven we remember all who have died ... risen Lord bless those who mourn they may know the comfort of your presence with us .

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Rejoicing that your Kingdom has come near to us in Christ our Lord with Matthew and all the apostles we raise this anthem of praise to your glory Merciful father accept these prayers ...