

“The Call of Matthew”
Mark 2:13-17
(Preached at Trinity, September 23, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we entered **Chapter 2** we found Jesus back home in Capernaum. His days of rest were short lived for the multitudes soon discovered that Jesus had returned and they crowded into the house to hear Him preach.
2. As I stated before, this section is a collection of narratives that have a common theme – the conflict of Jesus with the scribes and Pharisees.
3. As we continue with **Verse 13** we find Jesus calling Matthew the publican or tax collector. Mark and Luke call him Levi.
In Matthew’s Gospel he refers to himself as Matthew
 - a. Some think Matthew was the name he was known by as a publican and so in humility he referred to himself by this name.
 - b. Some believe Matthew was the name given to him by Christ upon his calling. The name “Matthew” means “The Gift of God” – God graced him with His divine favor. He was God’s gift to the church.
4. As a publican, Matthew was sitting at the seat of custom.
 - a. During the Herodian period of the Roman Empire officers were appointed to collect taxes. Judaea had been incorporated into the Roman Empire and placed under procurators. Direct taxes were collected by imperial officers. These taxes were very heavy which would explain the question about paying tribute unto Caesar in **Matthew 22**. Antagonism of the Jews against Rome was heavy.
 - b. Tolls levied upon exports and imports were sold to the highest bidders who were called “publicans.” Matthew would have had his seat at the port at Capernaum. He examined the goods and collected the tolls.
 - c. The hatred of the publicans is easy to understand. They would open boxes and bundles to appraise the value. He paid a fixed sum for the taxes and pocketed the rest. They often overcharged. Few were honest. He was always under the suspicion of the people. They were seen as extortioners. In addition, He was seen as a traitor – a Jew who has made allegiance with Rome.
5. This hatred of the publican is a common theme of the Gospels.
Matthew 5:46 – “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?”
Matthew 18:17 – “And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”
Luke 18:10-11 – “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.”

4. Jesus passes by but instead of looking upon him with scorn he says, “Follow Me” God had chosen him before the world began. Yes, Matthew was wicked, scorned and despised, yet God’s grace is poured out upon the most wicked men. **Verse 15** tells us that Jesus sat with many such people who were called and transformed by God’s grace. **Mark 2:15** – “And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.”
 5. The scribes and Pharisees continued in their self-righteous pride and remained untouched and unchanged. In all likelihood they died in their sins and are in torment at this very moment. What is the difference between the wicked Pharisees who continued in their wickedness and the wicked publicans who were transformed into righteousness? It is all summed up in one word: Grace. Matthew and others became trophies of God’s grace.
 6. This morning I want us to spend a few minutes pondering this wondrous grace in the conversion of Matthew.
- I. There are several things we need to notice in the call of Matthew
- A. Matthew wasn’t seeking Christ
 1. Although every man is commanded to seek Christ, none will
Romans 3:11 – “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.”
Psalms 53:2-3 – “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God. ³ Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.”
 2. This is the nature of what is called “total depravity”
It is essential for us to have a proper understanding of the human condition J.C. Ryle: “There are very few errors and false doctrines of which the beginning may not be traced up to unsound views about the corruption of human nature. Wrong views of the disease will always bring with them wrong views of the remedy.”
 3. Total depravity is not absolute depravity – it doesn’t mean that people are as bad as they could be or incapable of doing any good, (although he is incapable of pleasing God.).
 4. Total depravity means that man is totally beyond any means of helping himself return to God. Because he is born spiritually dead, he is unable to understand spiritual things. Dead men do not see light.
His greatest desire is to please self.
 5. Matthew would have never desired to give up his occupation on his own. He would have found it fulfilling and lucrative.
 - B. God chose Matthew –
This is the nature of “Unconditional Election”
John 15:16 – “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”
1 John 4:19 – “We love him, because he first loved us.”

1. It wasn't because of any foreseen good in Matthew
1 Corinthians 1:26 – “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.”
 2. Election involves every type of person involved in every type of sin
Mark 2:17 – “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”
- C. When Jesus called him, he followed – “Irresistible Grace”
1. We don't find any evidence of Jesus offering arguments to convince him to follow. With the same authority we saw in the previous passage (“Arise, take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house”) we find Jesus saying, “Follow Me”
 2. Irresistible grace does not mean that God forces us to do something that we do not desire
Judas was not forced to betray Christ but acted according to his own sin corrupted desire
 3. Irresistible grace means that those granted life will desire to follow Christ. Coercion is not necessary
 - a. The lost man finds Satan irresistible
 - b. The awakened man finds Christ irresistible
 - c. This is the great difference between the redeemed publicans and sinners and the Pharisees
 4. It is all of God!
He awakens us, gives us a new nature, and grants us faith which isn't in ourselves
Ephesians 2:8 – “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”
- D. Notice, Mark is clear what kind of people these were; what kind of person Matthew was. Grace is for wicked people. Listen to Paul:
1 Timothy 1:13 – “Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.”
Those called by the grace of God are quick to witness of His grace that He might be more magnified.
- E. Upon conversion Matthew wanted all of his friends and acquaintances to meet Jesus.
1. Mark wants us to see that Jesus was not hesitant to sit down with sinners
 2. These were Matthew's past acquaintances – He wanted them to meet the Savior – We see this over and over. Those who come to Christ desire others to come.
 - a. The Demoniac - **Mark 5:20** – “And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all *men* did marvel.”
 - b. The woman at the well - **John 4:29** – “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?”

- c. Even those whom Jesus told not to tell –
- The Leper in the previous chapter –
Mark 1:45 – “But he went out, and began to publish *it* much, and to blaze abroad the matter”
 - The two blind men in **Matt. 9** -
Matthew 9:30-31 – “And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

II. Verse 16 - The displeasure of the Pharisees

A. Their nature

1. They were proud, conceited – they saw themselves as much better than these sinners
2. They were self-righteous. They trusted in things other than Christ.
Their outward obedience to the law
Their position as Pharisees
Their heritage – they were sons of Abraham
3. They possessed nothing but an outward religion
2 Timothy 3:5 – “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”
4. Paul had all of this but considered it of no greater value than dung
Philippians 3:5-9 – “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, ⁹ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:”

B. Notice they attacked Christ through His disciples

1. Since they hated Christ His disciples could expect nothing else
Matthew 10:24 – “The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord.”
2. As believers we must always be ready to defend Christ
1 Peter 3:15 – “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

C. Verse 17 - The Response of Christ

“They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick”

1. The Pharisees were self-justified – they believed themselves to be righteous – Christ’s words to the Pharisees were not because they had no need of Him but because they *thought* they had none. This is the problem of most of humanity. They think they are well. They have no need of Christ.

2. Sin is a sickness of the soul – it is a plague
 - a. It deforms the mind
 - b. It ravages the body
 - c. It kills the soul – we were born dead
3. Christian Conversion involves becoming fully aware of this plague
 - a. A man cannot begin to treat a disease until he becomes aware of his sickness. If a man doesn't see his sickness he won't seek a cure.
 - b. No man left to himself will ever see his plague of sin. This is why we desperately need God's grace
4. It is impossible for a person to be saved apart from God's saving grace
Matthew 19:25-26 – “When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”

Conclusion:

1. This story of Matthew is an amazing story. Jesus sought out a man to be His disciple that everyone else despised as a man of the greatest wickedness. He was seen as the worst of sinners – a greedy traitorous extortioner.
2. This is what Jesus does. He did it with you and me. This is the nature of grace. There would be much that would change in Matthew's life. Look at his fellow publican, Zacchaeus
Luke 19:8 – “And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold.”
3. We all saved from much sin. Christ begins the process of transforming us.