

Matthew 9:9-13

June 14, 2015

“Follow Me”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

3rd Sunday af. Pentecost

Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Introduction] After hearing our Gospel reading, we think: Might even say:

Whoa!

Don't go there Jesus!

Don't get near that piece of trash!

He's been excluded from the synagogue!

He's betrayed his countrymen! Works for the Roman scum.

He's unclean! A lying cheat! Overcharges the tax and pockets the difference.

He's a big time sinner! You can't be seen with people like that!

We're warning you! You'll get a reputation Jesus!

So what does Jesus do? He ignores us.

Goes right through our stop sign and bellies right up to this unclean, tax collecting, cheating, notorious sinner named Matthew.

Jesus interrupts Matthew's entire life and recruits him to be a disciple.

“Follow me.” That's all it took!

Mercy unleashed. Pure forgiveness. No strings attached.

Just, “follow me.”

Jesus says:

“I'm here as your Savior.

I'm here to forgive you of everything Matthew.

I know who you are.

I know what you've done.

You're a sin sick sinner. Believe me, nothing you've done shocks me.

I'm here to take all your rot, gunk and filth in my Body
and answer for it on the Cross.

I'm hear to trade places with you Matthew. I forgive you Matthew.

I'll take your sin and be the damned sinner on the Cross.

And in exchange I'll give you my righteousness.

Follow me Matthew.”

And lo and behold: Matthew does!

Matthew dies to his sins! Let's Lord Jesus have them all.

This sin sick sinner holds onto none of his sin... only holds onto Jesus' forgiveness. He's dead to sin. Jesus has forgiven it.

And now Matthew's alive to God through Jesus the Savior.
And so Matthew gets up. He arises – is “resurrected” — for a new life.
The life of faith in Jesus who has come to forgive sinners,
even a horrible sinner such as he.

So with the great joy of being set right with God through Jesus' forgiveness, it's off to Matthew's house. A dinner party. And the guest of honor, Jesus Himself, the Savior who rescued Matthew from sin's paycheck: death.

“The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23)

You can just imagine the spread of food. Matthew's not a poor man.
A large quantity of wine. Plenty to drink! Plenty to eat!
Grilled Lake of Galilee Trout served with the freshest vegetables and the sweetest baked bread. Almond cookies and fig pie.

And then billards, brandy, and cigars in the game room
as the latest episode of “The Mediterranean Bachelor”
glows from the big screen TV.

Jesus' other disciples and all of Matthew's friends are invited.
Quite a motley crew! Unwholesome characters.
Fellow excommunicated tax collectors. All kinds of questionable folks.
Red light district girls and all sorts of sinners.
All, just like Matthew, in need of the Savior who has come precisely for them!

[Pharisee]

Jesus is there for them too. He's there for them in full blast mercy mode.

All of this is happening and the Pharisees are offended. Scandalized. Outraged.
They've been working very hard on NOT being sinners. Very careful to not sin.
They've sacrificed everything in trying to be just perfect.
And if they can get this NOT SINNING mastered,
then they'd be God's favorites!

And even if they don't get that job done,
at least God will give them kingdom of God credit for trying.

And most certainly trying harder than this Matthew and his dinner party sinners!

[Sinner]

After hearing our Gospel reading, we think:

Whoa!

Don't go there Jesus!

Are you a Pharisee?

Are you offended that Jesus would dine and have fellowship with sinners?

Are you deeply put off that Jesus would forgive hard-core sinners?

Then listen to Jesus. "The healthy don't need a doctor. But sick people do."

Do you realize the depth of your sins?

Never murdered? Okay... but you have hated.

Broken commandment 5.

Never committed adultery? Okay... but you have had a lustful eye.

Broken commandment 6.

Never committed a theft? Okay... but you have stolen time.

Broken commandment 7.

You haven't always honored your mother and father or your authorities.

Broken commandment 4.

You haven't always wanted to sit in the pews at church.

Broken commandment 3.

You haven't always used the Lord's name

– calling upon it in every trouble, prayer, praise, and giving thanks.

Broken commandment 2.

You haven't always trusted in God. No you have trusted in other gods

– your smarts, your strength, your salary, your success.

Broken commandment 1.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7... 8, 9 and 10 too!

You try to take your measuring stick out and say I am not bad.

You compare yourselves to others and say look at him.

Go home and read your Bibles. See where it says,
“I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.
I’ve come not to call on the perfect. I’ve come to seek and save the lost.
I’ve come to rescue sinners like Matthew and his friends.”

[Saved]

The fact is...

While we were yet sinners – that’s when Jesus died for us!

That is so delicious! So scandalous! So joyous! So outrageously comforting!
Before Matthew and before you could get your act together
– before you or Matthew ever cleaned up your lives and starting flying right –
Jesus comes and says:

“Pardon the interruption. But you’re a dead, damned sinner.
Under God’s wrath. But now I’m here. I’ve taken your sin.
All of it. Every last bit of it. In my Body on the cross.
I took your place. I became the sinner. I became the sin.
I took the damnation you deserved.”

“And since I’ve risen from the dead I have a word for you too.
I forgive you. Of everything.
Arise, come, follow me.
Sinner, follow me to another Supper. Mine. I’m the Host.
The Butler. The Food.
For you, dear sinner, I give you my Good Friday Body and Blood.
Proof beyond a shadow of a doubt that I died for you and that I forgive you.
Matthew’s here. So are His buddies. All is forgiven. All is made right.
God is at peace with you. Come, follow me.”

And we do follow.

For we are about equipping disciples to make disciples for Jesus. Amen!

You are the body of Christ, each one of you part of it! Amen!