

I Desire Mercy - Not Sacrifice

SUNDAY 11 JUNE 2023 GOSPEL READING: Matthew 9:9-13

9 As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. 10 And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Meditation: What is God's call on your life? Jesus chose Matthew to be his follower and friend, not because Matthew was religious or learned, popular or saintly. Matthew appeared to be none of those. He chose to live a life of wealth and ease. His profession was probably the most corrupted and despised by everyone because tax collectors made themselves wealthy by over-charging and threatening people if they did not hand over their money to them.

God searches our heart

What did Jesus see in Matthew that others did not see? When the prophet Samuel came to the house of Jesse to anoint the future heir to the throne of Israel, he bypassed all the first seven sons and chose the last! "God looks at the heart and not at the appearance of a man" he declared (1 Samuel 16:7-13). David's heart was like a compass looking for true north - it pointed to God. Matthew's heart must have yearned for God, even though he dare not show his face in a synagogue - the Jewish house of prayer and the study of Torah - God's law. When Jesus saw Matthew sitting at his tax office - no doubt counting his day's profit - Jesus spoke only two words - "follow me". Those two words changed Matthew from a self-serving profiteer to a God-serving apostle who would bring the treasures of God's kingdom to the poor and needy.

John Chrysostom, the great 5th century church father, describes Matthew's calling:

"Why did Jesus not call Matthew at the same time as he called Peter and John and the rest? He came to each one at a particular time when he knew that they would respond to him. He came at a different time to call Matthew when he was assured that Matthew would surrender to his call. Similarly, he called Paul at a different time when he was vulnerable, after the resurrection, something like a hunter going after his quarry. For he who is acquainted with our inmost hearts and knows the secrets of our minds knows when each

one of us is ready to respond fully. Therefore, he did not call them all together at the beginning, when Matthew was still in a hardened condition. Rather, only after countless miracles, after his fame spread abroad, did he call Matthew. He knew Matthew had been softened for full responsiveness."

Jesus- the divine physician

When the Pharisees challenged Jesus' unorthodox behaviour in eating with public sinners, Jesus' defence was quite simple. **A doctor doesn't need to visit healthy people instead, he goes to those who are sick.** Jesus likewise sought out those in the greatest need. A true physician seeks healing of the whole person - body, mind, and spirit. Jesus came as the divine physician and good shepherd to care for his people and to restore them to wholeness of life. The orthodox were so preoccupied with their own practice of religion that they neglected to help the very people who needed spiritual care. Their religion was selfish because they didn't want to have anything to do with people not like themselves. Jesus stated his mission in unequivocal terms: ***I came not to call the righteous, but to call sinners.*** Ironically the orthodox were as needy as those they despised. *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23).

On more than one occasion Jesus quoted the saying from the prophet Hosea: For I desire mercy and not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6). Do you thank the Lord Jesus for the great mercy he has shown to you? And do you show mercy to your neighbour as well?

OPENING PRAYER: - Lord Jesus, our Savior, let us now come to you: Our hearts are cold; Lord, warm them with your selfless love. Our hearts are sinful; cleanse them with your precious blood. Our hearts are weak; strengthen them with your joyous Spirit. Our hearts are empty; fill them with your divine presence. Lord Jesus, our hearts are yours; possess them always and only for yourself. **Amen**

CLOSING PRAYER:- "World Peace" Lord, we pray for the victims of recent natural disasters Earthquakes and Cyclones that they have the resolve to rebuild their lives and homes after the forces of nature have turned against them, also the war in Ukraine that those effected have the strength to go on and the leaders of both countries find a peaceful resolution to this war. **Amen.**