

Episodes in Life of T/lord 01 the Call of Matthew

by Robert Constable

Jesus' call to Matthew teaches us that he is willing to reach out to anyone, no matter how unlikely or messed up their life may be, and that he is able to meet our needs in ways that nobody else can.

Duration: 40:58

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 9:9, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 2:13-17, Luke 5:27-32, Luke 19:1-10, John 1:14

Topics: "Calling"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on a specific event in the life of Jesus Christ. He describes a scene by the pool of a paralytic man who had been suffering for a long time. On a Sabbath day, Jesus arrives and calls the man by name, bringing about a profound change in his life. The speaker emphasizes the significance of this moment, as it marks the birth of the Gospels and the beginning of a new era of joy for humanity. The sermon also highlights the importance of understanding the depth and complexity of salvation, as well as the need to reach out to those who are mistreated and misguided.

Transcript

It was a day like any other day, when by the pool a paralytic lay, wasting and withering hope upon his dead where half a lifetime he had lain half dead. It was a Sabbath day without a name, when to the sheep gate the Good Shepherd came. A step was heard, a voice, a sigh had grown.

Everything has changed on that day around. That's what we're going to talk about this week. Episodes in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When he came by, everything changed. Of course, we've experienced this ourselves, haven't we? Everything changed in our lives when he came by. So, we want to enter into the experiences of other people this week, other people who had the joy of having Jesus come by, and having a great change made.

Now, the episode I want for us to consider this morning is in the ninth chapter of Matthew, in the ninth verse. Matthew chapter nine, verse nine, and as Jesus passed forth from sin, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of customs, and he saith unto him, follow me. And he arose and followed him.

This is a great verse, and it's got a tremendous amount written between the lines. Now, you will remember, won't you, that Matthew wrote this verse. Matthew wrote about this man Matthew that was seated at the receipt of customs.

Matthew wrote this whole book that bears his name, and I don't think that when Matthew wrote this book, he sat down one day and said, I'm going to write myself a book, and they started him at verse one, chapter one, and he wrote through the whole book until he was all finished with the 28th chapter. Do you? People ordinarily don't write that way. He probably sat down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and thought through what he was going to have to say, and the particular approach he was going to use.

Matthew was a Jew, and he was writing for the Jews, and he was writing about the king of Israel. And all of these things were very much in his mind, and so he would sit down, and presumably he would write for a while, and then a little later he'd sit down and he'd write some more, and he'd be thinking about what he was going to write next for a while, and then would another writing session when he would sit down and he'd write some more, and I almost think that it took him all day to write this verse. It isn't a very big verse.

Oh no, but what it has in it? It says, and as Jesus passed forth from sin, he saw a man named Matthew, and Matthew wrote this, and as he wrote this I can just see him sitting at his desk, putting his head in his hands, and thinking what a day that was. What a day that was! The day that Jesus passed from sin, and saw me sitting there. My what a flood that would bring into his soul all that had transpired because that day Jesus came by.

My what a what a difference it made. He doesn't say in his recording of this episode that he had a big house. He did have a big house.

He doesn't say in this record that he wrote that he gave a great feast. He did give a great feast. He doesn't say here that it says that he invited all his old friends to the feast.

We're told these things by the other writers of the gospel. Matthew doesn't tell us all this. He's a modest sort of fellow, but oh my how his heart must have been overwhelmed as he wrote these words, and as Jesus passed forth from sin he saw a man named Matthew.

How he must have bowed his head and said Lord thank you for coming by that day. Thank you for coming by that day. Jesus saw a man and he said to that man follow me.

He followed. You know there are some times in our experience aren't there when we can't trust ourselves to tell all about it. We just have some experiences that if we start to talk we just sort of overflow and overdo it, and we know this, and so we generally keep it to ourselves.

There are those sacred experiences in all of our lives that we don't talk about to other people, and Matthew is writing for publication, and so he keeps it short. He keeps it simple. There are many stories untold or undertold.

Who knows how many stories there are in this room this morning that could be told about when Jesus passed by, when Jesus spoke to our heart, when Jesus came and made his presence a reality to us. Everyone in this room probably has had experiences like that that are so sacred, and are so wonderful. We just hardly trust ourselves to tell other people about it.

We'd rather keep that to ourselves. Isn't this true? I'm sure it's true. Of all of us, of many of us, if not of all of us, when it just seems that only the sky and the air and the stars and the angels ought to hear about this, you wouldn't want to share it with other people.

They might not understand. They might not really know what we're talking about, or they might smile at us, or they might think, well, they just wouldn't understand. And I think that's the way Matthew felt when he wrote this simple verse.

He just didn't tell everything. It was a wonderful and a sacred moment in Matthew's life. But you know, wrapped up in this verse, gospels were born, history was changed, and the germ of joy was forever set free amongst the sons of men when Jesus came and called this man by name.

It was a wonderful time. Now, in some of the things that we're going to consider this week, we're going to have intensely dramatic and exceedingly moving situations where people are utterly astounded at the things they see or hear. That doesn't happen in this case.

This is a quiet scene, but it is a deeply moving scene, because you've got to think about this. You have to live in this verse in order to get what's in it out. Now, let me ask you a question.

Why should Jesus go to this man? Why should Jesus go to Matthew? And the reason is because this man needed Jesus. Oh, how much he needed Jesus! But inherent in this is the idea that he wanted Jesus. He longed for Jesus.

He longed for the Messiah. He longed for the fulfillment of the promise of God which he knew from the word of God. And when there is a longing for the Lord Jesus, he comes.

You remember it says of him, he must needs go by Samaria, because there was a woman at Sychar well who was waiting for the Messiah, who said when he comes he's going to tell us everything. Jesus knew about that longing heart. He knew about this man's heart before ever he came by from thence.

He knew there was a man seated at the receipt of custom, a tax gatherer who in his heart was longing for something better. I wonder why he longs for something better? Maybe he'd heard John the Baptist preaching. People did in those days, you know.

John the Baptist was like Billy Graham. Everybody knew about John the Baptist. Man, what a preacher! And how the word of his preaching went around the nation, and people came by the flocking multitudes to hear him preach.

Everybody came to hear John the Baptist. Maybe Matthew heard him. Maybe Matthew even heard him say, behold the Lamb of God, and in his heart was stirred, oh that longing there, oh that I might see him.

He longed to see that face, to hear that voice, to feel that touch. One day at his business, while he was at the office. You know, the offices in this part of the world are not like our offices that are all closed up and shut everybody out.

You know, the offices in this part of the world that we're talking about are usually booms. They're open places, three-sided places that are open to the public, and especially would this be true of the office of a tax gatherer. It would be sort of a room with the open side toward the street, and a table set there at which the tax gatherer would sit with his change around, and when people came to pay their taxes, he'd figure

out the taxes that they had to pay, and they'd pay their taxes and grumble, and fight with him, and squabble, and there'd be lots of noise about, and quite a situation in his office.

It was at the office. It was a day like any other day. He'd gone to the office that morning, and he met the people through the day that he expected to meet, and that had come to pay their taxes, and to grumble exceedingly at paying their taxes, because they knew very well they were being gypped, and that this man was a grasser, and that he was charging them more than they ought to have to pay, but they didn't know how to get around it, and he put the screws to them, and took the money from them, and all the accompanying problems of the day at his office.

This is the kind of day he had. He was at his business, and the quiet time in the day came perhaps when nobody was there, and seated at his table, he put his head in his hands, and thought, shall I ever see him? Shall I ever see him? And as he sat there, head in hands, wondering, he heard a voice, a voice that said, Matthew, follow me, and he followed him, and he followed him. It's put another way in the gospel of Luke.

In the gospel of Luke, it tells about the fact that he left all. It was just as though Matthew had said to himself before, if I ever do see him, if he ever does come my way, why I'd leave everything in a minute. And you know we very often say this, don't we? Many of us think that, oh if I ever had the chance to do this, or do that, or the other thing, believe me I would grab the chance.

And then the chance often comes by, and well there's a million reasons why we let it go by. We don't do the thing that we thought we might do. But this man, he didn't wait a moment.

Let's turn to Luke 5, and see what it says there. Luke tells more about what went on on this occasion than Matthew does. Luke is talking about another man's experience.

Sometimes it's easier to talk about another man's experience than it is our own, and so in chapter 5 of Luke, and in the 27th verse we begin to read about this, Luke calls him by his other name. Luke calls him Levi, and after these things Jesus went forth and saw a publican named Levi sitting at the receipt of custom, and he said unto him, follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

And Levi made a great feast in his own house, and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

This is the other record. He left all. You know, he left a good deal.

This was a man of wealth. This was a man of some influence, of some position. This was a man who had a great deal to leave.

This was no down-and-outer, you understand. He had come to terms with the Romans, and he was one of those selected by the Roman hierarchy to deal with the Jews. He was a Jew, and so the Jews hated him.

They hated him thoroughly, but this hatred of his own people was not enough to keep him from the receipt of custom. This was a well-paying job, and there was lots of graft available. He was able to make himself very rich, and live in a great house, and give a great feast.

He had much that he could live. He had a great potential in his job. He had a high position, and he had lots of friends.

You know, nothing will draw friends together more than rejection, more than persecution, and this group of Jews who were dealing with the Romans, and were willing to be the tax-gatherers for the Romans, the Jews hated all of them, and this very rejection from their own people drew them together into a tight group of men who valued each other, and needed each other's friendship. So, he had many close friends, but it says he left all. He left his potential, he left his position, he left his friends.

He had counted the costs. He knew that if ever Messiah came by, it would cost him everything. He counted that, but he knew what he would do.

He knew what he would do before he came, and Jesus knew it too. When Jesus walked by that office that day, and he said, Matthew follow me, he knew what Matthew would do. Matthew got up from his desk, and followed him.

He left everything. Jesus knew where Matthew was too. He not only knew what he would do, but he knew where to find him.

This is a wonderful thing about the Lord Jesus. He knows where people are. He knew where Matthew was.

He knew where Zacchaeus was too, you remember? He's walking along the street, and he looked up into the sycamore tree, and he spotted Zacchaeus up in the tree. He knew where he was, and do you remember on another occasion that a very fine man came to Jesus, and Jesus said to him, when thou was under the fig tree, I saw thee. And this man was so absolutely startled by this, that he said that you must be the Messiah.

Nobody knew about my experience under the fig tree. Nathanael thought that he had been alone with God under the fig tree. Nobody else had shared this experience with him.

And then Jesus tells him he knew all about it. And this convinced Nathanael he must be Messiah. Jesus knows where people are.

He knows where you are. He knows what brought you here. He knows the attitude of your heart this morning.

He knows what he's going to say to you today too. Yes, Jesus knows. And he not only knows where you are, but he knows all about you too.

And you know not only does he know all about us, but we have no look heavenward, no desire for something better. You ever feel that moving in your heart? You wish you were a better Christian. You wish you knew the Lord a little better.

You wish you were a little bit more faithful. You wish somehow that you had better sense to do things more wisely. That you really felt you measured up a little bit in this matter of being holy, becoming more conformed to the likeness of the Lord Jesus.

You ever have aspirations like this in your heart? You know, he knows all about these. But that isn't all. He doesn't only know about them.

He started them. He gives these aspirations. He got them going.

It is him working in your heart. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. If he knows where you are, he knows what's in your heart.

And if there's anything there that aspires to something better, he knows about it like he knew all about what was in Matthew's heart. And he comes to people who would like to see him. Would you like to see him this morning? Would you like for Jesus to come by and call you by your name this morning? What would you do? Well, maybe you'll find out.

But you know, Matthew was an unlikely person for Jesus to come by. What a person! He wasn't a nice person at all. He was decidedly unpopular.

The establishment had no use for Matthew. And the people in the church of the day, we're not using it in the technical term, let's say the religious community of the day, they didn't want this fellow around. They had no use for him.

And when they spoke of him, as they did here in this episode in Luke, as we read it, he went, the Lord Jesus went to this feast at Matthew's house. And so the religious establishment said, why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners? This is the kind of a person Matthew was. He was put in the same class of the harlots.

And with the gamblers, and with the people that are mad for money, the grafters, the nonconformist. The establishment felt about Matthew about the way you might feel if a very dirty, long haired, crummy hippie came in here this morning. How would you feel? But you know, these are the people that heaven opens its doors to.

These are the people that heaven opens its doors to. The people on the outside, the people everybody despises, but the people who in their hearts wish it were better, wish it was different. Oh yes, the establishment was made up of people who would sit in judgment on Christ and question the authority of omnipotence to save sinners.

Why did he eat with sinners? This is no kind of person for him to be associating with. Well, Jesus had an answer for that. He said, they that are whole need not a physician, they that are sick.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. So, have you been discouraged in days gone by about whether he would be interested in coming to you? Whether really you are the kind of person that Jesus is interested in coming to? Well, be encouraged by this. He came to Matthew, and he was about as unlikely a person as you will find anywhere.

And so, for every man, there is a chance. You know, you see some people on the streets, and some boys and girls especially, mistreated and misguided children. I remember going down Clark Street one day in Chicago.

That's a north side skid row in Chicago. And as I was walking along the street, suddenly from out of the doors there came a whole flood of children running out on the street. And where did these kids all come from? And one of the teachers of the Christian Education Course at Moody Bible Institute came along with them.

I said, Mrs. Garner, this is a strange place to find you. Oh, she said, it's a wonderful place. She said, this whole neighborhood is filled with children that are not wanted.

They live in five, six, seven of them with their parents in a single hotel room down in this terrible place. And the parents wish they never saw them. These children have grown up with the idea that nobody cares.

And if you try to do something for one of these children, when they're little children, they give you a sidelong glance and wonder, what's in this for you? Why are you doing this for me? Mistreated and misguided children. There are people like these people grow up. These children grow up to be men and women that feel unwanted.

God doesn't care. But it's the people nobody wants that he wants. And he brought to earth a new way of treating sinners.

Now I've been talking about, why should Jesus go to Matthew? And I've said, because Matthew needed him. Why did Jesus go to Matthew? Not just why should he, but why did he? Because Jesus knew that Matthew needed him. That's why he went.

He knew all about his needs. And not only that, but Jesus knew that nobody else could do him any good. Nobody could help a man like Matthew.

He'd gone over the line. He was beyond help except for Jesus. And nobody's gone beyond the lines of ours.

Jesus has been so. He can reach up wherever we may be. This man's life was a mess.

It was all tangled up. This whole business of his deciding that he would betray his own people and go to terms with the Romans. This whole business of his getting a job as the representative of the Roman Empire to screw the taxes out of his own people, the Jews, and the rejection that that involved, and the hurt in his own soul, and in the soul of those that loved him as he got mixed up with this whole dirty business.

His life was made a mess. He was despised by the Romans he served. He was rejected by his own people and hated with a virulent hatred.

His life was a mess. You know, there are a lot of people in the world today whose lives are mixed up this way. I know a chaplain in the Navy that was telling me one day about a boy that he led to the Lord who had four wives and four families at different points in the world.

You get a boy like that saved and try and straighten out his life. You've got something on your hands, believe me. Men need to be told something more than just believe, believe.

We make salvation sound so simple, and it is simple, but you know a man whose life is all mixed up and is tied in knots and is in a mess, he knows he needs more than just some quick ascent to some doctrine. He needs somebody who will enter into his life and work on those knots, and untie those knots, and straighten things out, and clean up the messy things. This is the kind of man that needs to be introduced to Jesus, because his were the fingers that weaved the rainbow like a scarf and hung it over the shoulders of the dying storm.

This is the fingers we're talking about now. We're talking about the fingers that painted these azaleas and those pansies down by the dining room. We're talking about the fingers that dipped into eternity and brought forth this earth and all that it contains.

These are the fingers we're talking about, and these are the fingers that can take a mixed-up life, straighten it all out neatly, clean, and holy. That's what he can do. He came to make the crooked places straight and the rough places plain, but he not only can, he will, and he was willing to do it for Matthew.

Now there's something else involved here. There's another reason why Jesus did come to Matthew, and that is that Matthew could do something for Jesus that nobody else could do. Not only Jesus do something for Matthew, but Matthew could do something for Jesus, and nobody else could do it quite that way.

Jesus needed Matthew. Oh, the people around, they sneered, and with a curl of the lip they spoke of him and his kind as sinners. They love to say that.

The establishment loves to talk about these sinners. Ah yes, you know Zacchaeus was the same kind of a sinner. He was a tax collector too, and they spoke of him as a sinner.

But you know what Jesus called Zacchaeus? Son of Abraham. Son of Abraham. Because Jesus doesn't see people the way we see people.

Jesus sees the potential in people, not just what they are, but what they might be. Ah, what a difference. What a different point of view.

Now I ask you, would you have gone to a publican, and a grafter, and a chief, and a crook like Matthew to find somebody to write a gospel? Would you? I don't think you would. But Jesus saw the potential, and Jesus has a wonderful way of showing what he can do with very unlikely material, and this encourages my heart, believe me. He can do things beyond all our thinking.

If we want him to, if we'll let him, we'll give over to him. Oh, he can do great things. He sees the potential in every boy, and every girl.

He sees what he might do with that personality, and he longs to work in it. He sees the potential in you, and sometimes we get the idea that our potential is all behind us. But Jesus never looks behind.

He looks before. He sees the potential of all that lies before us. Sometimes, when people come to retirement, they have an idea that they've put everything by, but they haven't put the Lord by.

And the Lord has not let put anybody by that he has left on earth. If you are here on earth, and all of you seem to be, then this means that Jesus still sees the potential. He still sees something he wants to accomplish.

He's still working in you. Well, for instance, who would have picked out that vile, drunken, and terribly depraved sailor, and he sailed from England and turned him into John Newton, the poet, the theologian, and the great preacher, and the man who wrote the book, Songs from the Heart, Voice of the Heart? Nobody would have picked John Newton, the sailor. Nobody but Jesus.

Who would have chosen that swearing tinker, of whom it was said that he used such language, the air turned blue, and even the people in the world around him that were his best friends hated to come into his company because he swore so violently. John Bunyan, the Lord put John Bunyan in a prison cell. And

what came out of that prison cell? The pilgrim's progress that has blessed the hearts of multitudes for generations, and the holy war that has inspired the people of God to stand for Christ generation after generation.

Who would have taken that beer salesman up in New England? A beer salesman. Now, I haven't got anything against beer salesmen, but on the other hand, I wouldn't exactly choose a beer salesman to lead America's great revival that began in New England when John Whitfield was picked up by the Lord Jesus and sent out to preach the gospel. Or the shoe salesman, who was so bent on getting rich in the shoe business, he came from Boston to Chicago, but when he got saved, he was such a scalawag that the members of the elders in the church to which he applied for membership after he got saved, said nothing doing.

You show us for 12 months whether this thing is real or not. They couldn't believe it. But the words and work of D. L. Moody continue to this day.

God chooses unlikely material, but he does great things with it. There was a gypsy with five motherless children in a little tent in England, doing his best to raise his little children in the fear of God. One of those children was Gypsy Smith, who went from that tent with a father who loved the Lord Jesus around the world, gathering in thousands upon uncounted thousands into the kingdom.

A little gypsy boy in the hands of God. You see, love sees, love wants, and love says, follow me. So Matthew took the Lord Jesus home.

Everybody in his house, though it was a great house, and it says there were very many at the feast, everybody there had a chance to meet Jesus. This was Matthew's first witness. He got his friends all in, and he presented Jesus.

He had come to him. Oh, what a day that was! What a blessing that day! And I suspect that Zacchaeus, maybe, was among those friends at Matthew's house, and that this was what made Zacchaeus later on run on ahead of the crowd and climb the sycamore tree to see him again. I think that may have been the case, I can't be sure, but Zacchaeus was a publican like Matthew, and Zacchaeus learned, if he was there that afternoon, that when Jesus comes by it is to do you good.

It is to do men good. When Jesus came by in my life, it changed my life. When he came by in your life, he changed your life, and he wants to continue this change working to do you good, and to do others good through you.

What would you do if Jesus came by this morning? If Jesus said to you this morning, follow me, what would you do? He has come, he has spoken, he knows what's in your heart, he sees potentials there beyond your wildest dreams, and he says this morning, follow me, shall we pray? O gracious Savior, thou who dost come to us in all our need of thee, give us to hear thy voice this morning, and stir within these hearts of ours a new readiness to witness for thee, a new readiness to be at thy command, a new determination, Lord, to live for thee. Do in these hearts of ours what thou didst do in Matthew's life.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/10/SID10001.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/robert-constable/episodes-in-life-of-flord-01-the-call-of-matthew/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net