

Matthew, One of the Thirteen

Matthew the Apostle was a successful man. He was a Tax Collector, good at his career, a success, well off, but tax collectors were not well thought of in the community, they seemed to be cheaters, often friendless, with no mercy, associated with the authorities, and money grabbers. They were, however, as I said, well off and therefore a success to many. Jesus saw Matthew at his table collecting taxes and said to him, "Follow me." Matthew rose up and followed Jesus just as the others had done. I thought that Matthew would have been the holder of the purse strings, but that was Judas. Perhaps Matthew had had enough of money and the problems it brought into his life. Matthew had probably learned that money won't buy you a lot of things, like happiness, peace of mind, salvation, or success in relationships. Poverty doesn't buy you these things either. A life of service for others, belief and faith in God and salvation comes much closer. He changed his life. He gave up his success. Died a Martyr's death, but died with his faith, love of others, belief in something bigger and better than himself, and love of Christ intact. He changed his life for a life of giving to others rather than himself, a life of bringing others to Christ, J. Ellsworth Kalas writes that Matthew was to many the picture of success, well off with the ability to become even richer and was in a profession unlikely to suffer from inflation or depression. But Jesus looked at this tax collector and said his words, "Follow me" and like the others Matthew heard those words and left his wealth and career behind and followed Jesus.

Matthew 9:9-13 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the Tax Collectors 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 the 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 the sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have come not to call the righteous but sinners."

Lord, we thank you for each day given to us with another chance to do your will and another chance at forgiveness when we fail. Be with our church, be with those who are ill and those who grieve. Be with us as we seek your will in our lives, help us as we seek to help those who hunger, those who need you in their lives, those who thirst for your word. Be with Pastor Don and Laura and their family, guide and protect them. Be with our staff and leaders as they seek to serve the church. May we always feel your love and mercy surround us. May we in this time, in this place, be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ for it is in his name we pray and have our trust. Amen

Grace Epperson

*references from The Thirteen Apostles by J. Ellsworth Kalas