

Season after PENTECOST

Prayers

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Collect of the Day

Almighty and most merciful God, You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to seek and to save the lost. Graciously open our ears and our hearts to hear His call and to follow Him by faith that we may feast with Him forever in His kingdom; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Psalm 119:65-72 (antiphon v. 65)

Hosea 5:15-6:6

Romans 4:13-25

Matthew 9:9-13

Hymns

Hymn of the Day – 689

Other Hymns – 803 (OT), 702

(E), 518 st. 1, 25, 3 (G), 688

(G), 915 (G)

O Lord, You strike down and You heal. Though we justly deserve Your wrath for our sin, revive us and raise us up, that we may live before You forever. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You desire steadfast love and that Your people would know You. Bless pastors, teachers and all church workers, that Your Word would sound forth in abundance. Open the ears of all who hear to acknowledge Your steadfast love. Be also with those who work this weekend to prepare for our Synod's convention. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father in heaven, by Your grace Abraham did not weaken in faith but trusted Your promises. Strengthen parents to persist in their callings and train their children in Your Word and ways. Defend them from discouragement and apathy, and convince them that You are able to do what You have promised. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creator of all things, You call into existence what does not exist and govern it for good. Remember those You have given authority among the nations, that the laws they administer might reflect Your order and maintain peace. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, Your Son came to heal the sick and forgive sinners. Hear our prayers for those who suffer in any way [*including _____*]. Restore them according to Your gracious will, and strengthen their faith in Your faithfulness and love. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father in heaven, You made childless Abraham the father of many nations when his body was as good as dead, giving him faith to trust in the promised Christ. Strengthen our faith also to trust Your promises despite our weaknesses and troubles. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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Almighty God, Your Son ate with sinners to call them into righteousness and now feeds us in His Supper, that we might be forgiven. Prepare our hearts to partake of the Sacrament of the Altar with penitence and faith, and so depart in righteousness and peace. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy Father, receive our thanks for Your kindness to Abraham, Sarah and all the saints who have gone before us. Preserve us in faith and in righteousness, that we, too, may give You glory now and forever. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Season after **PENTECOST SERMON**

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

(Series A)

June 11, 2023

Sermon Text: Matthew 9:9-13

"The Call Of Jesus To Sinners"

In the Large Catechism we read the following words: "In Baptism every Christian has enough to study and to practice all his life." And such are most fitting words by way of introduction to today's appointed Gospel Reading in which is set before us, in effect, the central theme and message of all of Holy Scripture and of the Christian faith; namely, 'The Call Of Jesus To Sinners.'

Now, who exactly is this Matthew whom Jesus calls to be His disciple? Well, as our text says, he was a tax collector. And as a tax collector, Matthew was an outcast among his own people; for he was a person who not only was in league with the hated Romans who occupied their land, but who also grew wealthy at the expense of his fellow Jews – making a large personal profit on the excess taxes that he collected from them.

No wonder that at the time of Jesus tax collectors were thus put out of, excluded, excommunicated from the synagogue. No wonder they were often grouped together with thieves and prostitutes and other notorious sinners; and considered to be social outcasts, spiritually unclean, outside not only the synagogue and the temple, but also outside the kingdom of God.

And yet, what is it that we read here in our text? "As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and He said to him, 'Follow Me.' And he rose and followed Him."

Now, why does Jesus call this tax collector by the name of Matthew to follow Him and be His disciple? Certainly, it is not because Matthew was good and upright and worthy of such a calling. Nor did Jesus see any good in Matthew, any fine untapped potential that only needed a little nurturing and encouragement and positive direction. No, the reason, quite simply, is, as Jesus Himself says: "Those who

are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." Yes, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." That is why the very Son of God took upon Himself our flesh and blood and came into this world. That is the mission of Jesus – to call sinners.

Now, here, however, we need to be careful. After all, it has become rather fashionable and socially and politically correct in our day of age to talk about the need and the importance of being open toward and accepting of all people regardless of what they believe or how they live. After all, so it is asserted and claimed, is this not what Jesus did? Is this not what Jesus tells us to do, as well?

But here in our text we are given an antidote to this misguided notion. Oh, to be sure, Jesus did indeed come to this world to call sinners. In fact, "many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and were reclining at the table with Jesus and His disciples" in Matthew's home. But why does Jesus do this? To confirm them in their sin and unbelief? To bless their ungodly and unholy living and lifestyle? Hardly!

No, He came to call them to repentance . . . to call them to take their sins and violations of God's holy Law seriously and to confess them . . . to call them to receive the grace and mercy of God who alone forgives sins . . . to call them to Himself who by His holy, precious blood and by His innocent suffering and death fully and completely pays for their sins . . . to call them to now leave their life of sin and to live a new life as His disciple.

And is not this still the purpose and task of Jesus today, as well? Is not this what the entire Christian faith is all about? Is not this what the mission of Christ's Body, the Church, is to be? To call sinners to repentance, to heal sin-sick and dying souls.

Now, notice here in our text that Jesus does not call the righteous, the Pharisees – those who think that they are such fine and good and upstanding people . . . those who imagine that they are right with God and spiritually well and whole. After all, people like this have, or think they have, no need for a Saviour from sin. They have no need for God's grace and mercy. They have no need for their minds to be enlightened by God's Word. They have no need for their hearts to be washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ in the blessed Sacrament.

And when we stop to think about it, is not this one of the main reasons why, for instance, church attendance is at an all-time low in our nation today . . . why there are so many people who neglect the hearing of God's Word . . . why so many fail to partake often of the Lord's Supper? After all, they falsely imagine and believe that they are already righteous and acceptable to God, that they are spiritually well and whole, that they thus have no need for a Saviour from sin.

But contrast, however, such people like this, like the Pharisees, with those like Matthew, the tax collector, with those who do recognize and admit their sins. For these are the ones who Jesus calls, as He says again very plainly and very simply: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

And what Jesus did for Matthew that day in Capernaum when He passed by the tax collector's booth and said, "Follow Me"; He also did for you at your baptism — calling us sinners to repentance . . . calling us who by nature are part of that group of people called here "tax collectors and sinners" to a new life, a life with God . . . bestowing upon us by means of that washing of water and the Word His forgiveness and healing, His righteousness and holiness . . . and bringing you and I — of all people — into His heavenly kingdom.

Now, in the Large Catechism we thus go on to read these words: "A Christian life is nothing else than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever continued." And this truth is also reflected here in our text; as we read: "Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me.' And he rose and followed Him." In other words, the call of Jesus to sinners to follow Him is also a call to now serve Him in His kingdom. It is a call to leave our life of sin . . . a call to throughout our lives "acknowledge our guilt and seek His face," as the prophet Hosea declares in today's Old Testament Reading . . . a call to bear fruit that befits repentance . . . a call to follow His will and His Word for our lives rather than our own wants and desires.

It is a call to, for instance, as St. Matthew did, invite Jesus to dine with us in our homes by praying those familiar words as we sit down to eat, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our Guest and let these gifts to us be blessed." It is a call to be His disciple by regularly and frequently hearing and learning His Word. It is a call to keep His commandments. It is a call to speak His Word of forgiveness and love and grace and mercy to other sinners. In short, it is a call to live out our baptism in the course of our daily living.

Now, there is in this call of Jesus to a sinner by the name of Matthew a historical footnote, as it were. For Matthew, of course, was called to a most unique and special position — called to be an apostle, an ambassador for Christ, a witness of Jesus' death and resurrection for sinners. And here in our text we see that almost immediately Matthew begins his apostolic task by inviting other tax collectors and sinners to come to his home and eat with Jesus. Later, as early church tradition says, Matthew would bring this Good News of Jesus calling sinners to repentance and to life in Macedonia, in Syria, and finally in Ethiopia where He would be put to death for following Jesus Christ alone as Lord and Savior.

But even more! For by inspiration of the Holy Spirit this former tax collector and sinner would write the first Gospel. For nearly 2,000 years countless numbers of people throughout the entire world have read it and heard it and have not been the same since. Only God Himself, who is rich in grace and mercy, knows how many sinners the Lord Jesus has called through the Gospel that bears the name of St. Matthew.

Yes, the Gospel of St. Matthew that contains those familiar words that we hear at the beginning of the Divine Service in the Invocation: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The Gospel of St. Matthew that contains those words upon which those healing words of the Absolution are based: "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." The Gospel of St. Matthew that contains those familiar words that we hear in the communion liturgy: "And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is My blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" The Gospel of St. Matthew that contains those words that are reflected in the Creed that we confess: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Gospel of St. Matthew in which is recorded those words of Jesus that we will pray again this day: "Our Father who art in heaven...Thy kingdom come...Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

And that all of us "tax collectors and sinners" might continue to hear and heed the call of Jesus to sinners, we thus say with the hymn writer:

"Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult Of our life's wild, restless sea,
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth, Saying, 'Christian, follow Me.'

Jesus calls us from the worship Of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us, Saying, 'Christian, love Me more.'

Jesus calls us; by Thy mercies, Savior, make us hear Thy call,
Give our hearts to Thine obedience, Serve and love Thee best of all." Amen.