

Sunday 06-February-22

A Call to Discipleship

Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come before the LORD

and bow down before the exalted God?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,

with calves a year old?

⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,

with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?

Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,

the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸ He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

and to walk humbly with your God.

Matthew 9:9-17

The Calling of Matthew

⁹ As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

¹⁴ Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?"

¹⁵ Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

¹⁶ "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. ¹⁷ Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

Sermon: A Call for Discipleship

Today – we're **continuing** our **series** on **Matthew's** Gospel – and we're **picking up** where we **left off last week**.

So, please have your **Bibles opened** up at **Matthew 9** – starting at **verse 9**.

Let me pray for God's guidance and understanding

Let's pray...

Intro (Disciple)

I came across this story from Dr. S. I. McMillen, [[in his book None of These Diseases](#)], He tells a story of *a young woman who applied for a university course -but her heart sank when she read the question on the application form that asked, "Are you a leader?" Being both honest and conscientious, she wrote, "No," and returned the application, expecting the worst.*

To her surprise, she received this letter from the college: "Dear Applicant: A study of the application forms reveals that this year our university will have 1,452 new leaders. We are accepting your application because we feel it is imperative that they have at least one follower."

We don't all have **to be leaders** – it's **okay to be a follower** – especially when Jesus is the leader as we'll see...

We **pick up the story** in **verse 9** where Jesus – the leader – **calls a disciple to follow**.

So, before we go any further - we **need to define** what a **disciple** is...

[PowerPoint 1-Disciple Definition]

Dictionary Definition:

- a. A special follower of Jesus Christ during His life, especially one of the twelve Apostles.*

- b. A **follower** or **pupil** of a teacher or leader
- c. Someone who **adheres to the teachings of another** or **takes up the ways of another.**

So, from our Bible passage this morning – we can learn some important **attributes of a disciple of Jesus** –

Attributes of a Disciple of Jesus

[PowerPoint 2-Attributes of a disciple]

First – as a disciple of Jesus - we need to **follow** – that’s in verses 9 & 10

[PowerPoint 2a-Follow]

In verse 9 – Jesus comes across a **tax collector** called **Matthew**

[He is referred to as Levi the son of Alphaeus in Mark 2:14 – it’s likely Matthew’s name was originally Levi and he became Matthew when he followed Jesus]

Tax collectors were seen as **collaborators** with the Romans against their fellow Jews. Nobody liked a man who sat at the tax office/booth. The Jews saw tax-collectors as **traitors** because they worked for the Roman government and they had the force of the Roman soldiers behind them to make people pay taxes. The Jews also saw tax-collectors as **extortioners** because they were allowed to keep whatever they over-collected. Tax collectors bid for a contract to collect tax in a city/town – like Capernaum; and because the tax-collector bid for the contract there was an incentive for tax-collectors to over-charge and cheat any way they could, so that they made a profit. The Jews also saw tax-collectors as **outcasts**; a tax-collector was disqualified as a witness in a court and in the eyes of the community, he was seen as a **disgrace** to his family. Note: in KJV – the word used for tax-collector is **publican** because the man dealt with the public and with the public’s money.

Jesus breaks protocols - Matthew as a tax-collector was seen as an outcast and people would not come up to him unless they had to pay tax. Jesus often broke down social barriers (He spoke to tax-collectors, lepers, prostitutes and Samaritans etc.). Jesus simply said to Matthew **“Follow me!”** – an **economy of words**. It suggests that Jesus had an air of authority about Him, that meant He could simply say **“Follow me”** and people couldn’t resist. That’s all Matthew needed to hear - to follow Jesus!

Why did Matthew follow?

Matthew knew he was an **outcast** – he knew deep down **he was ripping people off** – and for once in his life – instead of being rejected and treated with anger and contempt – **Jesus doesn’t reject him and says follow me!**

For us: **following Jesus** – means first – **admitting our sin and rebellion against God and against others** - and then **repenting** of that sin and rebellion [a **U-turn**]

Matthew **left his old lifestyle** and **left everything behind** except his pen and he actually wrote the Gospel – we’re reading today!

To be a disciple of Jesus, we must leave our old life behind.

What do we have in our lives that we have to let go off and leave behind?

(pause)

Matthew made a sacrifice – he gave up his **lucrative job** – some of Jesus’ other disciples – like the fishermen - **Peter and James and John** – **could return back to fishing** – **Matthew’s not going to be able to return to the tax office.** What sacrifice will we make to follow Jesus?

(pause)

Every Jew had written off Matthew, as a **tax collector**. **Many others in the community had been written off by society** – people like - the **lepers, prostitutes, the poor, the sick and widows.**

Who are we writing off that needs to meet and follow Jesus? We have no right to write any one off – The **Gospel of Jesus is for everyone** – all are welcome? Are we guilty of excluding someone?

[Share how Heather didn't write me off – she knew I need Jesus?]

Jesus didn't write anyone off – see v10 – Jesus even has dinner at Matthew's house with many other tax collectors and "sinners".

Why does Jesus do that?

To **show** that everyone is invited to follow him -- Jesus Kingdom is a one-class society – for sinners only! And according to the Bible – we are all sinners (Rom 3:23) even the religious Pharisees.

Having dinner with these people - was also an **opportunity** for Jesus to share His Gospel and gain many more followers.

Jesus' mission was to **seek and save the lost** (Luke 19:10) and because God loves people and wants people to be saved through His Son (John 3:16) – God sent Jesus His Son to die for sin to be forgiven - as Romans 5:8 says "*God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that whilst we were still sinners, Christ died for us*"

Now remember our **definition of a disciple** was that a **disciple takes up the ways of the teacher** – [Greek Word for follow – literally means to be in the same way as someone]

In other words – a **disciple imitates the teacher** – we must imitate Jesus

So – who can we be sharing the Gospel with – like Jesus did at Matthew's house?

Who can we invite for coffee, for a meal? Who can we invite to church?

That's not a suggestion – Jesus **commands us** – **to go and make disciples** (in Matt 28:16-20)

The Second attribute of a disciple of Jesus is: - we need to **show mercy** – that's in verses 11 & 13

[PowerPoint 2b-Show mercy]

Look at v11 – the religious elite of Israel – the Pharisees – complain to Jesus' disciples – "*Why does your teacher (Jesus) eat with tax collectors and sinners?*"

The **problem** with the **Pharisees** was that they **thought they were righteous** – and everyone else wasn't. They **saw most other people as “sinners”** and that they themselves were right. They **could honestly say they followed the letter of the law on every point** – but inside their hearts were **mean, unjust, uncaring, selfish and unmerciful**.

Jesus answers their **complaint** in v12 saying – *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick”*

Here Jesus paints a picture of Him being a **physician or doctor** – and **people as being sick patients**. But the **sickness he's suggesting is people's sin** – sin is like a disease – it **affects our spiritual well-being** and affects our relationship with God and each other. The **Pharisees thought they could fix their sin** themselves by being “good” and obeying the commands of God – and **they could not see any need for Jesus**.

But Jesus cuts them to the heart in v13

And what a cutting remark – he **tells the religious elite** – the **religious teachers** – they need to go and learn something – **something they should have learnt from scripture written hundreds of years earlier** –

Jesus says *“Go and learn what it means ‘For I desire mercy, not sacrifice’ - For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners”*.

Jesus was pointing out to the Pharisees – they **might have kept the rules and brought sacrifices to God** - but - they had no mercy on people like the tax-collectors, outcasts, poor, widows, lepers, prostitutes, “sinners”). Jesus quotes a verse from **Hosea 6:6**. In Hosea's day, God's people were still good at bringing sacrifices for sin (Hosea 5:6) but they did not practice mercy; in fact, they abandoned mercy because they did not understand that God is a God of mercy as well as a God who requires obedience and sacrifice.

Jesus' point is that the Pharisees have missed a **vital truth** in scripture – God doesn't want people making insincere sacrifices for their sins and giving Him lip service – He wants people to repent and have genuine faith and - **put their faith into action and show mercy!**

The Pharisees kept people bamboozled people with extra rules on top of God's rules – so they could **control people and oppress them** and so the Pharisees themselves could keep their positions of power and wealth. The Pharisees showed **no compassion or love or mercy to the poor, the needy, the homeless, the widows** – they thought these people were not worthy to know God. The Pharisees looked good on the outside but inside their hearts were corrupt. So, Jesus is basically saying – Pharisees, you are **hypocrites** – you declare yourself righteous – **you're self-righteous** – and you show no mercy to people – go and learn about mercy!

A couple of **things for us to consider?**

Are we like the Pharisees – **self-righteous? Judgemental?**

Are we like the Pharisees – and **not showing mercy and compassion?**

Perhaps we could pause for a moment and reflect – **write down the names of some people we need to show mercy and compassion to?**

What ways could we show mercy to people who are less fortunate than us – or show mercy to people who are struggling – or show mercy to people who are sick or feeling down or grieving?

As our OT reading from Micah 6:8 says: *And what does the Lord require of you?*

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

A general term we use in church - for acting justly and loving mercy – is **pastoral care** –
[\[Plug our pastoral care workshop on Wednesday\]](#)

The Third attribute of a disciple of Jesus –a disciple needs to **serve Jesus and not themselves** – that’s in verses 14 & 17

[\[PowerPoint 2c-Serve Jesus not ourselves\]](#)

See v14 - *John the Baptist’s disciples asked Jesus why they and the Pharisees fast and Jesus’ disciples don’t?*

Fasting was abstaining from food and sometimes drink, to focus on God for a particular need or help from Him. Sometimes fasting accompanied prayer to focus on a particular prayer need; and sometimes fasting accompanied repentance.

In John the Baptist’s ministry the focus was on people repenting and coming back to God; so, John fasted and his disciples followed his example. So, **their fasting was done with humble and sincere hearts knowing their need to repent of their sin to meet Jesus, the Messiah.**

The **Pharisees also fasted often twice per week** (Luke 18:12) but they didn’t do it out of humble repentance but **often just to impress other people with their spirituality** (see Matthew 6:16-18).

Whereas apparently, Jesus’ disciples did **not** fast and Jesus will go on to explain why.

Jesus’ explanation in v15 might seem a bit of riddle – He says:

“How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast”

Jesus sees fasting as mourning or grieving sin. So, His argument is that whilst He, as the bridegroom, is with His guests, the disciples, this is not a time to be mourning and grieving, and being sad, it’s a time for His disciples to have joy, because Jesus, the bridegroom is with them.

Also, it wasn't right for Jesus' disciples to imitate John's disciples, they fasted in **humble repentance and preparation for the one coming after John; which was Jesus and now He is here**. And it wasn't right for Jesus' disciples to imitate the Pharisees way of fasting because they were being hypocritical and showy in their fasting. They were **basically serving themselves and making themselves look good – and not serving God!**

But Jesus goes on to tell them at the end of v15 – there will be a time when His disciples will fast – in grief and mourning – when He is taken away from them and sent to the cross and crucified. This is the first indication/hint to the disciples that it will be the Pharisees who get Jesus killed because their system and power and status is being threatened by Jesus! However, the **disciples' sorrow and fasting would turn to joy, when Jesus' was raised from the dead!**

Jesus **uses two illustrations** in verses 16 and 17 to show how **His way** is a **new way of serving God**.

In the first illustration, He says people **don't sew a patch of unshrunk new cloth on an old garment**, it will just pull away from the garment; and in second illustration he says - **neither do people put new wine in old-wineskins, otherwise the skins will burst and the wine will be wasted; instead, you put new wine in new wineskins**.

These **two illustrations** were to **explain that Jesus did not come to repair or reform the old institutions of the Jews religion of Judaism but instead He came to introduce the **new covenant of His blood shed on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice for sins as opposed to the old animal sacrifices – and in doing so Jesus establishes the Christian church**.**

The **Pharisees wanted Jesus to fit into their rule-based old system** – but Jesus came with a new system – **a new way** – through His gift of grace – **through His death and resurrection** – which gives forgiveness and eternal life – **His new way** – **that requires people to repent** – and **have faith in what Jesus has done.**

The Pharisees were stuck in an old way of trying to work their salvation – and make themselves righteous – instead of realizing they were just like everyone else – they were sinners who needed a saviour – and here He is – **Jesus the Saviour** – and they must follow His new way – not the old way.

To follow Jesus' way – means to be a servant - not to be served or self-serving – the Pharisees couldn't do that – **they were so used to their status and power** – and people looking up to them.

Jesus turns everything upside down – as He says in Mark 9:35 - *Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.*

For us then – it's worth asking ourselves this morning – **how we can serve Jesus instead of ourselves?**

And we can't say to ourselves – *“Jesus doesn't want me to serve – what use am I?”*

Because Jesus calls a variety of people – to be his followers – **tax collectors, fishermen – prostitutes – the poor – the lame** – people from different walks of life – **and it's no different today!** He often calls the weak and gives them His strength!

A few ways that we can serve then...

- In preparation for serving Jesus – we **need to know Him better** – how about **joining** one of our Bible Study Groups – **Growth Groups** – called growth for a reason
- Serve on our rosters at church –

- Serve on our **committee of management** – forms available today!
- Oh - have I mentioned our **Pastoral Care Workshop** on Wednesday at 9:30am
- Teach our children at **Friday or Sunday Jaffa?**
- Teach our children **SRE at schools** – we're short of teachers – training is available
- Serve in the **kitchen** and with **hospitality** – and **through our ladies at PWA?**
- Serve Jesus – by **supporting our church family** by praying for them
- Serve Jesus – **by sharing our faith**

All of these – **require us to put Jesus and His kingdom first - before ourselves** – and perhaps give up some of our own time – but remember the Apostle Paul says – *we reap what we sow* (Galatians 6:7) – so for example, if we sow time say into teaching children about Jesus – **we reap disciples for Jesus** – who may become teachers of the next generation...

Conclusion

Just one final thought then – and I was reminded of this – when thinking about Jesus calling Matthew – **Matthew left his tax booth** – and **never looked back** – **only forward** – and **looking to what he would do as a disciple of Jesus**

When I felt God calling me into ministry – **I gave up my IT Work** - and **went to Bible College** –for a while - **I kept looking back** – to my old life...

This **verse spoke to me** and **convicted me many times** - from **Luke 9:62**

[PowerPoint 3-Luke 9:62]

⁶² Jesus replied, *“No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”*

I pray it might speak to each of us this morning...

Let's pray...

Father God, thank you for sending Jesus – our Lord and Saviour

Thank you that He calls us to follow Him – and to show mercy to others – and to serve Him.

Help us Father through Your Word and the Holy Spirit – to serve Jesus and His Church – and share the Good News – in your strength and not our own. And help us to look forward in our new life with Jesus – and not look back to our old life. In His Name we pray, AMEN.