

## Transcript

### The Jesus Story - the Call of Matthew

**Any preacher has the power to plant a thought into our minds. But only the Holy Spirit, can make it bear fruit.**

What I would very much like to do today is to plant a thought in all our minds and this comes in the form of a question: “Just how do I see Jesus?”

Now, that is a very simple question and there is a very simple answer to it. The answer to this question will depend on two things: what we know about Jesus, and our relationship with him.

It can be very helpful sometimes to see how other people see Jesus but remember the answer that we looking for today is: “Just how do I see Jesus?”

There are several testimonies that we find in the bible when different people described just how they saw Jesus. This is how Luke described Jesus when writing the book of Acts, in 10:38:

**38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power,**

Now, this was Luke’ testimony of Jesus:

**38 who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.**

Then, we have the testimony of the guards sent by the chief priests to arrest Jesus:

**45 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why have you not brought Him?”**

This was how they saw Jesus:

**46 The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this Man!”**

In John 9v24 when the Pharisees were trying to discredit Jesus we have the testimony of the blind man healed by Jesus:

**24 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, “Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.”**

**25 He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know.**

Now, this was the blind man’s testimony of Jesus:

**25 One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”**

By studying what the bible has to say about Jesus we can increase our knowledge of Jesus, but it takes much more than just a surface reading if we are going to allow our knowledge of Jesus to really increase. We need to study the word of God and to allow the Holy Spirit to bring it alive.

This is what we read in John chapter 16 when Jesus was describing to his disciples the work of the Holy Spirit

**13 “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into**

***all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.***

***14 “He will glorify Me, For He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.***

I believe that the more we study the life of Jesus and, the more we seek the help of the Holy Spirit the more it will greatly improve our relationship with Jesus.

Up to now we have been looking at the life of Jesus In the gospel of Luke, and, we finished up in chapter 5. In Luke chapter 5, we find that Jesus had been really busy.

In verse 6, we had the miracle catch of fish. In verse 13, we have the man who was full of leprosy healed, and in verse 25, a man who was paralyzed he was healed. I like the way that Luke introduces the next part of this chapter. This what we read in verse 27. ‘After these things.’

‘These things’, that seems to be a bit of an understatement. A terrific miracle of provision, two boat loads of fish. After listening to the instructions of Jesus, this is what we read: “at Your word I will let down the net.”

***6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.***

This was followed by, Jesus healing a man full of Leprosy.

***13 Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately the leprosy left him.***

Then we have that wonderful account of a group friends bringing a paralysed man, and lowering him down through the roof and the result of that was that:

Jesus said to the man who was paralyzed, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.”

***25 Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.***

In verse 26 we have the profound impact on those who were there.

***26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen strange things today!”***

Now we come to verse 27: After these things. Just what happened After these things? Well this is what we read in verse 27:

***27 After these things, He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.”***

***28 So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.***

***29 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.***

There, in just three verses, there is so much happening, that if we are not very careful, we can read this and pass on. When we are trying to find out the full story about anything, the more information that we have, the clearer the picture will be.

What I would like to do is to see just what we can find when we go a little slower, and

look a little closer, and find out at what we can get from this text.

I don't know if you have ever tried to imagine the circumstances that surround situations that we read about in the bible? It will help, I believe if we put the text back into its context.

This is the text: 'He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi.' Now, what about the context? Have you ever thought about the surroundings? At the beginning of the chapter; now this was before Jesus performed the first miracle, in this chapter, verse one tells us:

***1 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret.***

Jesus had to borrow a boat and push away from the shore to avoid being crushed. After preaching to the multitude he performs three wonderful miracles.

Now here is a reasonable question. How many people do we need to make up a multitude? The dictionary tells us that a "multitude" is a large number of people. The only real clue that we have of the size of a multitude was when Jesus fed the multitudes, because here we have the multitude counted.

This is what we read in Matthew 14:21:

***21 Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.***

Five thousand men and that was without counting the women and children. So, there is certainly a lot of people in a multitude. So we can be certain that there was quite a crowd on this occasion

In verse 26 we read:

***26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"***

This brings us back to our text in verse 27, 'After these things'.

Now, Jesus did not just pick someone out of the crowd. He had plans for one person and that was Matthew. He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office and He said to him, "Follow Me."

That is a good lesson for us to learn. As far as Jesus is concerned: "We will never be lost in the crowd" After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi.

We need to look a little closer at just what a tax collector was and then see what we can find out about Levi, who is called Matthew.

First the Tax Collectors. These tax collectors were Jewish by nationality but they collected taxes for the Romans. As a result, the Jews considered them to be traitors; they were generally hated, and they were classed with sinners.

Of all the nations in the world, the Jews were the most powerful haters of tax gatherers. To the devout Jew, God was the only one to whom it was right to pay tribute in taxes. To pay it to anyone else was to infringe on the rights of God. The Jewish people absolutely despised tax collectors.

Another reason was that the tax collectors were notoriously unjust. They were among the most hated and despised people. They were regarded as criminals and referred to as gentiles and sinners. They collected money that wasn't theirs.

After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi.

So far, most of Jesus disciples are fishermen from His own region. Matthew is not a fisherman, but a despised tax collector for the region. He collected Roman taxes and tacked on a collecting fee for his services.

He, was a tax collector for a foreign government. Matthew was a tax collector and lived in Capernaum and Jesus called him. Jesus called a tax collector. Jesus chose a man all men hated and made him one of His men.

And this gives us all hope: don't ever sell yourself short. If you are completely available to God He can use even you. Just look through the bible at the kind of people that God used.

When God wanted someone to speak on his behalf to the king of Egypt, He chose a man who stuttered: Moses.

When He needed someone to rule over His chosen people Israel He had the high priest to go and anoint a boy who was looking after a few sheep in the desert: David.

When God chose someone to introduce His Son the world He chose a wild looking aggressive man. John the Baptist. (John 1:29):

***29 "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"***

Who was given the great privilege of announcing that Jesus had risen from the dead? This was given to a converted prostitute Mary (Mt 28v1).

God does not choose people for what they are, He chooses them for what He can make of them.

We really need to keep this in mind. This is what Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth (1Cor 1):

***26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.***

***27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;***

***28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,***

***29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.***

This is something that is beyond our comprehension! Jesus chose a man all men hated and made him one of His men. And, this was the simple call of Jesus to Matthew: "Follow Me."

A little earlier we find the same simple call made to Simon Peter in Mt 4:19:

**19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me,”**

Now think about this. If you were drawing up a list to be on your leadership team, where would you place these two, on a range from 0 to 10?

Peter, the fisherman, the one who spoke more than he thought. His mouth would be working long before his brain was engaged. Or, Matthew a tax collector, a man that all men hated.

If you or I were picking our leadership team I doubt if either of these would even be on the shortlist. But how wrong we would have been.

Peter, the fisherman, turned out to be a rock in the early church, that others could lean on. He is the one who preached that great sermon on the day of Pentecost and saw three thousand souls saved.

Matthew, a tax collector, the average man would have thought it impossible to reform Matthew, but to God all things are possible. Jesus saw in Matthew a man who would be faithful in his duty, so He called him to be a disciple and later an apostle.

It is amazing that Jesus would call a publican to make him one of His most trusted followers. It took Jesus to see the potential in the tax collector of Capernaum. Matthew was unlike the other Apostles, who were all fishermen.

He could use a pen, and with his pen he became the first man to present to the world, in the Hebrew language, an account of the teaching of Jesus. It is clearly impossible to estimate the debt that Christianity owes to this despised tax gatherer.

Returning to our text:

**27 After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.”**

Just what was Matthews response to the call of Jesus:

**28 So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.**

The positive response of Matthew to the call of Jesus was to leave his tax collector’s booth and follow Him. He left all: This must have meant a considerable sacrifice, for tax collectors were normally very wealthy. Matthew must have been the richest of the apostles. Matthew gave up much to follow Jesus, but this did not make him sad.

I don’t think we grasp the real meaning of those three words: he left all. It was his all, and no man can leave more than that. Matthew was a wealthy tax collector, and you couldn’t give up tax collecting for the Romans on a whim, and expect to ever return. He cut his ties. He gave up his wealth and privilege and position and did so gladly to follow Jesus.

**28 So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.**

I really love this next verse:

**29 Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them.**

When Jesus calls this man to follow Him, immediately Matthew gets up and follows

Him. So enthusiastic is he about his call that he invites Jews to his home for a feast. Many of his “sinner” friends are there and this causes the Jews to murmur that Jesus is associating with sinners.

Jesus is associating with sinners, but not to share their sins, He was there to call them out of their sins.

Matthew was so thrilled about this decision he wanted to celebrate. He threw a great party and invited all his tax-collector friends. It was a feast the like of which few had seen in that time. He had found something of great price and he wanted to share it with his old friends and colleagues.

It has been suggested that Matthew had three aims in arranging this great feast. He wanted to honour Jesus, he wanted to witness publicly to his new allegiance, and he wanted to introduce his friends to Jesus.

Most Jews would not have eaten with a group of tax collectors. Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus did not, of course, associate with them in their sins or do anything that would compromise His testimony. But He used these occasions to teach, to rebuke, and to bless.

Matthew was happy enough to arrange a party for Jesus. One reason Matthew gave the party was to have his friends meet Jesus. This new disciple doesn't want to go to heaven alone.

Matthew made his identification with Jesus public by holding a great banquet in Jesus' honour at his own house. The righteous Jews of the community would not have responded to an invitation to come to the house of a tax collector.

So the banquet would be filled with other tax collectors and others who fell into the category of sinners. The words used, “a great feast,” a great company, plainly show that Matthew was a person of wealth and in good standing with his friends the other tax collectors.

There was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. They gathered together owing to the effort of Matthew who wanted to bring together his acquaintances and friends and his new Master for whose sake he had given up everything.

Jesus did not draw back from fellowship with these people. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law found Jesus' conduct most objectionable and challenged the disciples to explain why Jesus would fellowship with tax collectors and sinners. They believed that If Jesus was who He claimed to be, He would have sought their company rather than the company of the sinful crowd that He was eating with.

While the complaint was addressed to the disciples, it was Jesus Himself who explained why.

***31 Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.***

***32 “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”***

And, by righteous He did not mean those who were righteous in God's sight but

rather those who were righteous in their own eyes. Jesus had come to minister to those who acknowledged that they were sinners.

Now Jesus said that He had no ministry for the self-righteous. But, His message was to those who acknowledged their need and turned in faith to Him to meet that need. Jesus meant that the sinners who followed Him in faith were made righteous, while the self-righteous who rejected Him remained sinners.

As usual the Pharisees, when confronted try to change the subject.

**33 Then they said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?”**

At the beginning, remember I said it can be very helpful sometimes to see how other people see Jesus but the answer that we looking for is: “Just how do I see Jesus?”

To finish today I would like to look at just one more example, of someone’s relationship with the Lord. We find this in the Psalms: Psalm 116. David speaking, he begins in verse one with a very clear statement:

**1 I love the LORD, because He has heard My voice and my supplications.**

**2 Because He has inclined His ear to me.**

He then goes on to describe the state that he was in:

**3 The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Hell laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.**

He then tells us just what he did about it:

**4 Then I called upon the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!”**

This is how David saw the Lord:

**5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful.**

**6 The LORD preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.**

**7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.**

**8 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling.**

**9 I will walk before the LORD In the land of the living.**

David begins with a very clear statement: “I love the LORD”, because he describes the state that he was in and what he did about it. Then he describes the result.

**8 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling.**

That was David’s testimony. What David was doing was examining his relationship with the Lord. The question that we need to ask is. “Just what is my relationship with the Lord?” “Just how do I see Jesus?”

Whoever you are, you do you have a good reason to “Love the Lord”. If you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, well you need to know that He really loves you.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, In that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

If you are backslidden, you may have failed the Lord. 1 John 9:

***9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

You may be Cold in Heart. You may feel that you just need a refreshing in your spiritual life. 2 Chronicles 7:14:

***14 “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.***

Today it is well within your reach to see Jesus in a completely new light. You simply do what David did. Call upon the name of the Lord. This then can be your testimony.

***8 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling.***

You, like David, can have a completely fresh start.

***9 I will walk before the LORD In the land of the living.***