

FOLLOW ME

(Sermon Summary)

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Sunday Morning, 28th August 2022

Reading: Luke 5:17-32. (v5:27)

This account of the calling of Levi (or Matthew as we perhaps better know him) is related in three of the gospels. This is the Matthew who then supplies us with the gospel of that name. He is one of the 12. He lived in Capernaum which is where he was, in the tax office, when he was called away by the Lord Jesus and left all to follow Him. We see that later he has invited friends to come and meet the Lord and has provided a great feast. 'Leaving all' does not mean that we live in the wilderness and never again are allowed to enjoy good food and the company of others.

1. Hearing the call.

This is the call referred to in v32 when the Lord calls someone to follow Him. It is His voice, His truth, and His message.

The view of the mainstream religious authorities and most of the ordinary people was that you had to do certain prescribed things in order to enjoy the favour of God and be saved. In their view, there were certain people and certain occupations that disqualified you and made you inherently unclean. There was no hope, for example, for tax collectors who were called 'sinners' by those imagined themselves to be righteous in the sight of God. Anyone who in their occupation was tied up with supporting the Romans automatically was a 'sinner', unclean and without hope.

The Lord has to teach the people that these were precisely the people that He had come to call. Those who thought they were already righteous in God's eyes would see no need of a Saviour. Those who were under no illusion that they were regarded as unrighteous in the eyes of the public would need far less persuading of their bad position before God. These are people that were not full of themselves but who were poor in spirit.

When the Lord called Matthew, this was not a 'cold call' but there would have been a context to it. The Lord had been living and teaching in Capernaum, and we would be

right to imagine that Matthew was already acquainted with the Lord's ministry. This calling was a big moment in his life. It had been a big moment in Peter's life (Luke 5:11) and it was the experience of the apostles that they had left all to follow Him (Matthew 19:27).

Have we heard Him calling us yet?

With it comes the realisation that we have got it all wrong and not understood at all that we were not alright in God's eyes. We learn that God is actually angry with us, not pleased with us. We realize that we do not love God or our neighbour perfectly. We have to re-think and re-evaluate our position and make a choice. Matthew left the security of the tax office to follow Him.

We must not think that this call means that we will have to turn against family and friends, and have nothing more to do with them. This is the teaching of cults. But it does mean that we have to cede the place of authority and rule to Him. It is part of repentance to realize the 'old system' had failed and that we have merely ended up heaping up wrath against ourselves. We see that we have to find a new way, learn different things and that this means we accept the lordship of Christ.

2. Different relationships.

When we hear the call to follow Christ, it is like a 'great reset' in our lives. Christ is now all. So Matthew holds a feast in honour of the Lord and invites people to come, meet and hear Him for themselves. Matthew gives the Lord the best of what he has and makes his existing relationships now revolve around his newly found relationship with the Son of God. We must realize that we have an actual relationship with Him, not with an idea, or with a book. We are able to reflect upon Him, fellowship with Him and pray to Him. He Himself desires to have fellowship with us (Revelation 3:20).

Matthew's relationship with his friends is now different. He has not dropped them or 'ultra-separated' from them. He is not gripped by fear that he will be polluted by them if he has contact with them. He kept his friends but there is now a new agenda. These people now relate to Matthew as Matthew relates to Christ. These friends are able to see how important Matthew's relationship with the Lord is to him. It is not about 'church', but it is about Him. We see worth in Him and have pledged allegiance to Him.

But this feast was not like old feasts Matthew had held. There was not talk about making money or plans that they had for their future and how to improve their lot. It would now be a different conversation taking place and in keeping with the person of honour at the feast. The talk would not have been about themselves but about Him. So Matthew had not discarded his old friendships but these relationships were different now because of His love for the Lord.

3. Follow Him!

We are not called to follow the rules of a particular church. We are not called to follow a particular person's list of 'do's and don'ts'. We are to follow our Lord's rules and list of right and wrong things. We are to follow His laws, His commandments, the Ten Commandments, not the commandments of men. We are to listen to His voice as we find it in Scripture. It refines us, purifies us and produces obedience in us. It is a life of discovery and self-examination.

It is a massive re-set where we begin again, casting away idols, 'other gods', and coveting. We are not called to follow this man or this woman, this teacher or that leader. We are not called to conform to other people but to conform to Him. We are not to have our consciences imprisoned by others or to think there is one identical rule for us all. We are all different people, subject to different temptations and sins. Neither are we following our own voices, just hearing the things that we want to hear played back to us. It is a lifetime of discipleship, learning to discern His voice better, recognizing what are His commandments and His ways, and doing them.