

## INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Matthew chapter 9. Matthew 9. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Matthew 9. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, Matthew 9 will be on page **814**.

## INTRODUCTION: PE CLASS

The older I get, the harder and harder it is for me to remember details about my elementary school days.

- but there are some memories...
- that are just seared into my mind...
- and one of them was gym class,
- and our PE teacher, Mr. Sampson.

Now, Mr. Sampson was the stereotype 80s PE teacher.

- White sneakers.
- Triple-striped knee-high tube socks.
- Short shorts with that little slit up the side...
  - which I still don't know what that slit is for.
- Sh-medium tight polo shirt tucked into said shorts.
- Whistle around his neck,
- and a mesh-backed unbranded ball cap.

Mr. Sampson is seared in my memory.

And we'd play dodgeball,

- But when it was time to pick teams,
- here's what Mr. Sampson would say:
- *"Alright! Everyone line up!"*

And what happened next?

- Well in today's educational climate,
- gym teachers pick the teams themselves,
  - so that students are able to expand their circle of friends,
  - they don't feel ashamed or excluded,
  - and teams can be more fair.

Which is fine with me. But when I was in school...that ain't how it went.

- He'd take the two best athletes...
- and he'd make them "First Captain" and "Second Captain".

And all the rest of us are standing there...

- in that pressure packed line...
- as they picked teams.

And I don't know about y'all,

- but there were times when you're standing in line...
- and kids are starting to dwindle down...
- and the anxiety of getting picked last starts to crop up.

And then they pick the kid with terrible asthma before you...

- and you're like, "You've got to be kidding me!"
- He runs for like three seconds and has to be medicated."

And it finally came down to, like, you and a potted plant...

- and you're like, "GREAT! Is this the rest of my life?"

## TRANSITION

I'm calling today's sermon **SLIDE PICKED LAST**.

- We were all afraid of being picked last in gym class...
- and today's text in Matthew's gospel is a fascinating recount
- of Jesus picking Matthew...yes, the writer of this gospel.

Today he tells us of the time Jesus picked him...

- and as we'll see...
- he was the least likely to get picked at all.

He would've undoubtedly been picked last by any of his contemporaries... and yet, Jesus chose him to be one of his 12 closest followers.

Let's see what this teaches us. Matthew 9, starting in verse 9:

**BLANK SLIDE**

## MATTHEW 9:9

[9] 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.

## EXPLAIN: TAX COLLECTOR

Now, there is so much wrapped into this one verse that we need to take a bit of time here. So, Jesus sees Matthew sitting at the tax booth. That means Matthew's occupation was a tax collector.

Now, during the Roman occupation of Israel, the Jewish people had to pay a lot of taxes. One commentator estimates that these taxes could amount to have been as high as 30-40 percent when all were paid.

And tax collectors sat in booths to collect taxes. But here's how they got these jobs.

- Rome would essentially farm out the duties of a tax collector
- to a local resident of each city.
- And they would give the job to the highest bidder—
  - literally tax collectors paid Rome
  - to do the work of collecting taxes for them.
- Now, they did this because tax collectors would charge extra
- for “commissions” on the taxes,
- which became their pay,
- and it would usually make them considerably wealthy...
  - especially the more dishonest they were.

So, tax collectors were despised, as they are in history, and in many ways still are today.

## **ILLUSTRATION: TAX COLLECTORS**

I mean, in our last neighborhood,

- Maryse and I were outside
- and we met our neighbor across the street.

And the guy was so kind, and jovial,

- and we're just chatting and I ask him,
- *“Oh, what does your wife do for work?”*
- And his response was,
  - *“Oh, she works in the tax division of the IRS.”*

And as Maryse and I walked home I joked,

- *“She’s an IRS worker...”*
- *yeah, we’ll be sure to have them over for dinner...”*

It was a joke! But the underlying sentiment was there.

We don’t like people who take our money for taxes.

## TRANSITION

Well, tax collectors were among the most despised workers in the ancient world,

- because they were seen not only as a part of the system...
- but as traitors to their very country-men.
  - Matthew was a Jewish man,
  - who paid Rome for the right to tax his own people,
  - and he became wealthy because of it.

Are you starting to see why he would have been PICKED LAST?

## EXPLAIN: STARTLING

But Jesus says to this man, **“Follow me.”** That Jesus would call such a person to join his team would be startling at the very least.

- I mean, imagine the rift caused,
  - even amongst the disciples,
- from Jesus calling Matthew.

I just don’t think we can over-emphasize how unbelievably radical this was.

But listen... **Matthew’s immediate obedience is just as startling!**

## EXPLAIN: COUNT THE COST

It says **he rose and followed him**. Matthew leaves everything!  
Actually, Matthew probably left more than any other of the disciples.

- As a tax collector he would have been fairly wealthy.
- And while the disciples who were fishermen in the group
- would've had the option to return to their former occupations
- if this whole following Jesus thing didn't work out,
  - which they actually did for a minute...
  - after Jesus was killed.

But Matthew could never return to his former occupation,

- He was literally abandoning everything to follow Jesus.

We've said it for weeks now...

- What are you willing to pay to follow Jesus?
- He may be picking you...
- but will you follow?

So, that's verse 9...now let's see what happens next. Verse 10.

## MATTHEW 9:10

**[10] And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.**

## EXPLAIN: MATTHEW'S HOUSE

Now, Luke's account names this house as Matthew's house.

- So, Jesus calls Matthew...
- Matthew leaves everything...
- and they head to Matthew's house for a meal.

Now, a quick aside...church, I just think there's something here for us.

- Jesus doesn't just pick us and call us to follow him
  - With just a portion of our lives.
- No! He comes home with us,
- wishing to transform every nook and cranny of our lives.

He's already messed with Matthew's livelihood...

- his occupation...
- his social standing in the eyes of Rome...
- his social standing in the eyes of the Jews...
- but now he comes home with him.

## APPLICATION

Question: where in your life haven't you let him in?

You say, *"Yeah, I've got a relationship with Jesus Christ."*

- But has he come home with you?
- Has he come to work with you?
- Has he broken into your friend groups or your hobbies?
- What about your sexuality?
- What about your language?
- What about your finances?

Have you brought him into every aspect of your life?  
Again, discipleship is all-encompassing. It costs everything you have!

### **EXPLAIN: MEAL**

So, Jesus is at Matthew's house, and Matthew must have been wealthy, for his house was large enough for such a gathering.

Now, meals were important social occasions in the first century.

- They defined peer groups and social status.
- As the saying went, *"To share a meal is to share a life."*
- Sharing a meal was a kind of alliance...
- a declaration that a person was accepted into the group.

And did you notice who's at the dinner party?

- Who are your friends if you're a tax collector?
  - You bet...more tax collectors...
  - more sinners...
  - more social outcasts...
  - more hated individuals!

Talk about a dinner table full of those PICKED LAST!

- But Matthew meant this meal
- to introduce Jesus to his friends
- and to explain this change in his life
- and of his occupation.



## APPLICATION

Listen, do those around you...

- where you live
- or where you work
- or where you play...

Do they even know you're a disciple?

- Have you let them know that you follow Jesus...
- and that's why you're different?

But then I also love the little detail that Matthew adds that Jesus is accompanied by his disciples at this party.

- Not only is Jesus going to dine and fellowship
  - with this lot of questionable repute...
- but his very disciples...
  - the ones who likely hate the whole brood of tax collectors.
- You see Jesus working on them in this process.

And so it is with us, church.

- Jesus brings us to dine with sinners as his disciples.
- Who are the tax collectors and sinners in your life?

Oh, one of the great tragedies...

- for so many of us who have followed Christ for a while...
- is that we often can lose touch with those
- who Jesus would want us to dine with.

We talk of a Christian bubble,

- and I would use this passage to caution us to remember
- Jesus' radical mission to seek and save the lost...
- AND to use us to accomplish this mission!

When was the last time you had a tax collector or sinner in your home?

- To dine with you?
- To share Christ with?

Verse 11:

### **MATTHEW 9:11**

[11] And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

### **EXPLAIN: PHARISEES**

So, obviously the Pharisees weren't invited to the dinner...

- goodness, they would have considered this whole thing
  - a breach of the law,
  - and an act of gross uncleanness!

So, what were they doing there?

- Just peeping in the window?
- Creeping on the dinner party?
  - Just hanging outside
  - while Jesus, his disciples,
  - and a herd of sinners ate dinner?
- It's a pretty disturbing thought.

But these eaves-dropping Pharisees,

- obviously aghast,
- question Jesus.

But they ask it to the disciples...not to Jesus, himself.

- Maybe Jesus has no time for these fools...
- or maybe they're afraid to engage him at the source...

Oh church, it's so much easier to talk ABOUT someone

- behind their back...
- with a third party...
- in a text...
- in the comments on social media...

But Jesus hears them: verse 12

### **MATTHEW 9:12-13**

[12] But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13] Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

### **EXPLAIN: 3 STATEMENTS**

Jesus hears the Pharisees questioning him, and he gives three statements in an authoritative saying:

- First he makes a proverbial saying:
  - Those who are well have no need of a physician,
  - but those who are sick.

- Second, he quotes an Old Testament truth:
  - I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.
- And thirdly, he makes a ministry proclamation:
  - I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Let's break these down real quick:

## FIRST STATEMENT

The first statement was a common proverb in the ancient world.

- And Jesus coopted it for his own purposes.
- He, of course, uses it allegorically of spiritual sickness.
  - Here the strong and healthy are the Pharisees
  - and the weak or sick are the tax collectors and sinners.
- And he's not saying that the leaders are actually "healthy."

Rather, he's saying:

- *Those who THINK they're well have no need for a doctor...*
- *but those who KNOW they're sick."*

## SECOND STATEMENT

In his second statement he takes a little jab at the Pharisees when he starts with the words: *"Go and learn what this means."*

- 'Go and learn,' was a rabbinic expression for study,
- and in the context of the Pharisees
  - who prided themselves on their knowledge of Scripture,
  - he straight up jukes them!
  - *"Why don't you go and learn what this means..."*

And then he quotes Hosea 6:6, which they surely knew...

**"I desire mercy, and not sacrifice."**

- This is where the prophet is criticizing Israel
  - for following the letter of the law (sacrifice)
  - but forgetting the heart of the law (mercy).
- *"I desire action not simply external worship!"*

A major New Testament ethic...

- is that the way we treat others...
- shows our true relation to God.
- And by failing to have a heart of mercy toward sinners,
- the Pharisees show they are not right with God.

### **THIRD STATEMENT**

And then, in his third statement,

- summing up what Jesus was trying to do in his earthly ministry,
  - and then as an extension, in the church...
- he says, **"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."**
- again,
  - ***"I have not come for those who THINK they are righteous***
  - ***but for those who KNOW they are sinners."***

### **ILLUSTRATION: KID'S SPORTS**

So, when thinking on how to apply this to us, I thought about it this way.

This spring Harper wanted to play soccer. This is her first sport, and I'm pumped! Like ready to be a crazy Soccer-dad, pumped!

And so, I go to her games...

- and I'm expecting soccer...
- But have you ever been to a 5-year-old's soccer game?
- Man...that ain't soccer...

At times, I don't even think the girls realize they're there to play a sport!

- Cause I see them,
  - in-between each play,
  - run together and do, like, a group hug.
- And then, we taught Harper how to play rock-paper-scissors.
  - And while the other team is setting up to do a goal kick,
  - and I see her and her friend on the team...
  - playing rock-paper-scissors!
  - During the game!?!

And I'm like running up the sideline yelling,

"Pay attention! You're playing soccer!" I'm that dad!

And it's not just my girl!

I went to my nephew's little league baseball game a few years ago,

- and the left fielder...this kid...
- he was out in left field, literally AND figuratively!
  - He was wearing his glove on his face as a mask,
  - picking dandelions...
  - and spinning in circles!

And I'm like, "*Hey, whose kid is that?*"

And then you meet the parents and you're like, "Well, that explains it!"

And I'll never forget, at one ball game,

- I look over at the third baseman...
- and he's lying face down in the dirt,
- with his arms by his side,
- and he's using the brim of his hat
- to just scoop up a little mound of dirt!
- While a baseball game is happening around him!

Now, after the baseball game, and after Harper's soccer game,

- the coaches gather the kids in a little huddle,
- and I overheard her coach say things like:
  - *"You girls did great today!*
  - *I'm so proud of you!*
  - *You're great soccer players!"*

And I'm like, "Were we watching the same game? Are you serious!"

They asked me to coach, and this is why I didn't!

## **APPLICATION**

But I wonder...

- if God ever looks at me...
- and to him...
  - I'm lying face down in the dirt,
  - scooping dirt with my hat...
- and he's like, *"I'll pick him!"*

And an angel's like,

- *“Are you sure Jesus?*
- *Cause I'm not sure that guy*
- *has the basic intelligence necessary*
- *to play the game?”*

And Jesus is like, *“How'd you like to be a demon? I'm sure. I pick him.”*

- Church, when God picks you and me
- he doesn't start with the condition we are in...
- he starts with what he will make us, in Christ,
- and he picks us!

Is that not good news?!!

**God CALLS us to be his disciples...and THEN he MAKES us into one!**

And this principle of God picking those who the world would pick last is carried throughout all the Bible, and into our theology.

- So many people mistakenly think that activity precedes identity.
- That what you do defines who you are.

But that's just bad theology, church!

- No, activity doesn't precede identity.
- Identity precedes activity.
- And that's what we see here.

Matthew is picked by Jesus...his identity is changed...

and THEN he begins the journey of living it out.

We cannot miss this, church.

- **God chooses us AND THEN God changes us.**
- And the order is really important.



## CONCLUSION

So, today, some of you need to accept the fact

- that Jesus is picking you...
- that he's calling your name...
  - that you're not getting picked last,
  - or left out entirely,
- but that he's calling to you today.
- And you need to respond like Matthew...
- leave it all, and follow him!

Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord? We call that being saved, or converted, or being born again. He might be picking you today.

Listen, if you don't know, you talk to me today after this!

But for others in here, you might have become a bit like the pharisees...

- and you may have slipped into thinking
- that God picked you because you were great,
- and helpful,
- and a great pick!

But, you need to remember...

- that if he picked you...
- it's actually evidence that you fit into
- the Matthew, tax collector, sinner category!

I quote this verse often, and had it read over us this morning, but 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 says this:

## **SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11**

[9] Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

## **BLANK SLIDE**

### **SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU!**

- Some of you need to repent for forgetting
- that you were a Matthew...
  - a sinner...
  - waiting in line to get picked for dodgeball...
  - a kid with his face in the dirt...
- and Jesus still picked you.

You need to remember!

And then for all of us who are followers of Jesus...

- we see that Jesus is going to bring us along
- on his mission to call sinners.

Who is it in your life that you need to invite to a meal to share about Jesus?

This is a call for evangelism, church!

Oh, Fathom Church,

- may we stand in awe of the God who picked us to follow him,
- and may we be all the more courageous
- to share that hope with those who are sick around us.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

**RESOURCES USED:**

- Osborne, Grant R. Matthew: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.