

Place: Lurgan Baptist 30:10:2016

THE MASTER'S MEN

READING: Luke 5:27-32

12. MATTHEW

We live in a very qualification conscious society. There are qualifications for just about everything. For example we have to qualify to buy a house, to get a credit card, to apply for a job, to enroll in college or whatever else we want to do. It seems that everything we do requires that we qualify. Someone establishes standards that we have to meet because society has determined that it's only going to use qualified people. Yet one of the facts that stands out in the lives of all the twelve apostles is how ordinary and unrefined they were. *All twelve with the exception of Judas Iscariot came from Galilee.* That whole region was predominantly rural consisting of small towns and villages. Its people were not elite. They were not known for their education. They were the commonest of the common. They were fishermen and farmers, and so were the disciples. Isn't it interesting that the Lord Jesus passed over those who were aristocratic and influential and chose men who were from the dregs of society ?

My is this not always how the Lord works ? He exalts the humble and He lays low those who are proud. Do you know what the Lord loves to do ? He loves to take a nobody and make somebody of them. He's just like a junk dealer. He goes around looking for something finds it,

cleans it, shines it and uses it, and then people say “ *It must be the Lord.* ” So what kind of people does God use ? Stained glass saints ? No. Vile, wretched rotten sinners. You see, out of all the twelve no-one was more notorious a sinner than Matthew. Now in the first gospel he is called Matthew (9:9 10:3) but in Mark and Luke he is called first Levi then later Matthew. (Mk 2:14 3:18 Lk 5:27 6:15) Levi means “ *joined,* ” for this man was joined to the world and to making money, and Matthew means “ *gift of Jehovah.* ” Matthew, is of course the author of the first gospel. For that reason, we might expect to have a lot of detail about the man and his character. But the fact of the matter is we know very little about Matthew. We know that he was a tax collector and that he had his tax office in the city of Capernaum (Matt 9:1-9) He is also listed in each of the four lists of the apostles but very little is said about him. In fact the only picture we have of Matthew is given to us in this incident, and here we notice some about things about Matthew.

1. HIS OCCUPATION: IT WAS DESPICABLE

For Matthew was a publican. What does that mean ? Does that mean he owned a pub and sold drink ? No, the word “ *publican,* ” comes from the Latin word publicanus which means “ *the collector of Roma revenues taxes.* ” You see, here was a man who was,

a) *LIVING FOR ROME RATHER THAN FOR ISRAEL:*

Over in (Matt 10:3) when Matthew puts his name in the

list of the apostles he writes, “ *Matthew the tax collector.* ” It’s interesting that no other disciple in the list is associated with his job. Why does Matthew make reference to himself as tax collector ? Was it something to be proud of ? No. Matthew was the collector of Roman taxes, and by mentioning his work he was saying, “ *I could not have been engaged in a more despicable business, no more unlikely candidate to trust and follow Jesus Christ than me.* ” Do you know what his social status would be equivalent to today ? That of modern day Mafia members, or drug pushers. Now let’s face it we don’t like the people who take the tax off our pay today but in that day it was far worse. *You see, as a tax-collector, Matthew a Jew was hired by the Roman Government to collect taxes from his fellow Jews to give to the Romans.*

He was a first class traitor who worked for the oppressor. Matthew was hated because of his position and associates. For instance, tax-collectors were rejected by human society, if people saw them on the streets they would cross to the other side. They were spoken off as leaches. They were disqualified as witnesses in courts of law. They were scoffed at as common criminals, they were refused admittance to the synagogue, they were banished to the status of social lepers. My in the N.T. they were classified with sinners, prostitutes and the heathen. (Matt 9:11 18:17 21:31) Do you remember how they criticised the Saviour ? They said, “ *He is a friend of publicans and sinners.* ” (11:19) Bless God, the one who was rejected by society was accepted by the Saviour. The person the world did not want, Christ saved. The one the

world would not touch, Christ transformed. The man society criticised, Christ cleansed. My do you feel you are a lost cause ? Am I speaking to someone and you’re carrying a stigma ? Is there a stain on your name ? Is there a black mark on your reputation because of something you’ve done ? Has society rejected you ? Have your friends turned their back on you ? My *Christ is the friend of sinners.* And He wants to take you and someone out of you. (a)

(b) *LIVING FOR SELF RATHER THAN FOR OTHERS:*

As a tax-collector Matthew was not only hired by the Roman Government to collect taxes from his fellowman to give to Rome. *But Matthew bought the right from the Roman Government to collect taxes, so he bought into their system.* You see, what would happen was this. The Roman Government would stipulate a certain amount of tax had to be given to Rome, but then beyond that the tax-collector was free to keep anything else he collected. This enabled them to make as big a personal rake off as possible. Matthew not only collected taxes from the Jews to give to Rome, but he lined his own pockets in the process. Now I want to get bogged down in taxation, because I know you all love the taxman. But I want to tell you this. *There were two types of tax collectors the Gabbai and the Mokhes.* The Mokhes were the worst, they collected duty on everything.

But then there were two types of Mokhes, a Great Mokhes

and a Little Mokhes. The Great Mokhes hired someone to do the tax collecting for him, but the Little Mokhes was too greedy for that he just did it himself. Do you know what Matthew was ? A Little Mokhes, for him we see him “ *sitting at the receipt of custom.*” Here was a man guilty of extortion and dishonesty. (b) Is that you ? Do you know what God’s law says ? “ *Thou shalt not steal.*”

(Ex 20:15) Have you stolen ? Have you been totally honest in your business dealings ? What about stealing your employers time ? What about a full day’s work for a full day’s pay ? (a) (b) But something else,

(c) *LIVING FOR THINGS RATHER THAN LIVING FOR GOD:*

For Matthew’s whole life was in the grip of materialism. My it is not wrong to own things. God knows that we need things. God wants us to enjoy and use things. Paul writing to Timothy says, “ *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.*” (1 Tim 6:17) My God wants us to enjoy things and employ things for the good of others and the glory of God. Its not wrong to own things, the problem comes when things own us. Was that not the problem with Matthew ? *Is that not the problem with you ?* Even as believer is your heart wrapped up in things ? More things, bigger things and greater things. A Quaker was watching his wealthy neighbour move in next door. The Quakers believed in simplicity of life. The Quaker watched as the removal men carried in a great deal of furniture and all sort of knickknacks and different

furnishings. Finally, the Quaker called his neighbour over and said, “ *Neighbour I would have a word with thee.*” The neighbour asked, “ *what is it ?*” The Quaker replied, “ *Neighbour if ever thou dost think that thou dost need something come to see me and I will tell thee how to get along without it.*” Tell me, so you own things or do things own you ? Now are you starting to see Matthew (1)

(2) HIS SALVATION: IT WAS REMARKABLE

I wonder how much Matthew knew about Jesus Christ. I recall one day standing in Capernaum and thinking about the things the Lord did in this city. Did you know that Capernaum was the headquarters of the Saviour after He left Nazareth. (Matt 9:1) I mean, with Matthew living here, he must have heard of Christ time and again. The Lord had become the talk of the town. It was in this city that He healed Peter’s mother in law. (Mk 1:30) It was here that Matthew heard that Peter and Andrew, James and John had given up their fishing business to follow the Master. It was in this city that Christ had healed the palsied man. “ *Thy sins be forgiven thee,*” (Matt 9:2)

Probably Matthew wished that his sins could be forgiven. Then one day he met the Master. Would the Saviour speak to him ? Would He call him names as others did ? “ *Publican, Rebel, Sinner, Traitor, Swindler.*” No, rather Christ said, “ *Follow Me. And he left all, rose up and followed him.*” (Lk 5:28) His salvation was remarkable because it was,

(a) *A DISPLAY OF DIVINE POWER:*

Isn't it interesting where Matthew salvation comes ? In each gospel it comes immediately after the healing of the paralytic. In his own gospel Matthew is showing us that Jesus Christ came to forgive sin and then he slips himself into the account to show that Jesus Christ can forgive such a vile sinner as himself. (Matt 9:9) Matthew was saying, " *I'll tell you about a great miracle the healing of this man's body and soul, and then I'll tell you about an even greater miracle about an old despised sinner being gloriously saved.*" The man who was a reject by society, the man whose life was gripped by materialism, the swindler, the traitor and the crook was not beyond the power of Jesus Christ.

My do you think that your family is beyond the power of Jesus Christ to save them ? Perhaps you are this And you see for the very first time that you're not beyond the power of Christ to save you ? One day when the famous George Whitfield was preaching he made this statement, " *Jesus will take the devils cast-outs.*" After the service he was invited to lunch to an affluent home. While *having lunch one of the family said to George Whitfield " Mr. Whitfield I disagree with something that you said today. You said, Jesus will take the devils cast-outs.*" Just at that precise moment a servant came with a note for George Whitfield. It was from two women who were waiting at the door to see him. When he went to the door, two women who felt their cause was lost were standing weeping. They said, " *Mr. Whitfield we are the devils cast-outs will Jesus really take us ?*" When he assured them that Christ would, they trusted the Lord

there and then. My do you feel that you're one of the devils cast-outs ? Do you think that you are beyond the power of Christ to save you ? Never. For the Bible says, " *He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.*" (Heb 7:25) (a)

(b) A DISPLAY OF DIVINE GRACE:

I mean Matthew was not engaged in praying when Christ called him. He was not attending a church service when the Saviour said " *follow me.*" (5:27) He was not reading his Bible when he heard the call of God. He was sitting at his desk engaged in a degrading business. What a display of divine grace as he was gloriously saved and lifted to honourable apostleship. I wonder is the Saviour saying to you this " *follow me,*" ? Are you willing to place your faith in Christ ? Are you ready to take the initial step on the road of discipleship ? Wasn't Matthew's response amazing ? " *And he left all ... him.*" (5:28) I can almost imagine Matthew singing, " *I have decided to follow Jesus no turning back, no turning back.*"

(c) A DISPLAY OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE:

" *And after these things he went forth and saw a publican named Levi,*" you know in that one glance Christ saw what others could not see. Fancy the Lord choosing this man but He did. *Do you realize that Matthew's presence would Alter the Disciples:* since Matthew is listed 7th in two lists (Mk 3:16 Lk 6:13) it's likely that Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Nathanael were called before him. These men were fishermen and patriots.

Can you imagine how they felt when this traitor was thrown into their midst ? But the Lord knew what He was doing. This was part of the divine strategy to reach all classes and to include all types in His church. It would take more than fishermen to evangelize the world diversity would have to be among the evangelists. *Do you realize that Matthew's presence would Alienate the Public:* this seemed to be poor public relations on the part of Christ. I mean to the orthodox Jews the Saviour's choice was unthinkable. But the qualifications of the past make no difference to Christ He only see's the possibilities of the future. Matthew is sharp, clever, orderly, and methodical. From a human perspective a poor choice, but from a divine perspective a magnificent choice. You see, its Matthew who is going to write the first gospel.

Now wherever Christ would teach and preach there was Matthew at His side. The pen which once added figures, not took it all down. The keen mind which kept his ledgers now preserves for posterity the Word of God. My was this not a display of divine knowledge ? Did you know that D.L. Moody's famous song leader, Ira Sankey was engaged in the tax collecting business though legally. He was saved at 16 and met D.L. Moody in 1870 at YMCA convention at Indianapolis. Moody at once recognized in Sankey his God given gift. " *Where have you been ? I've waited 18 years for you,*" said Moody. He insisted that Sankey gave up his position in Pennsylvania and join him in his campaigns across the USA and Europe. But 30 year old Sankey had parents, a wife and three sons and at first resisted Moody. In his own state he was chief tax officer in a revenue bureau, and enjoyed a

comfortable lifestyle. But Moody was convinced that God's will was otherwise and finally Sankey in 1871 travelled to Chicago to team up in a series of meetings starting an association that lasted thirty years. What a loss had Sankey chosen to retain his tax collectors job but like Matthew before him, he followed God's path. I wonder is God stirring your heart to leave the place of business and follow Him ? Is He exercising your soul about laying your talents and gifts at His feet ? (1) (2)

(3) **HIS APPRECIATION: IT WAS MEMORABLE**

For immediately after accepting Christ's call we read in (5:29) You know this feast served several purposes.

(a) ***IT WAS COMMEORATIVE:***

It has been called Matthew's spiritual wedding feast commemorating the marriage of his soul to the Saviour. It was to commemorate his liberation from sin and the entrance into that wonderful life of union with Christ. And the Saviour to whom He owed everything was his guest of honour. You see, salvation had brought song, pardon had brought praise, deliverance had brought delight. Do you recall when Israel were brought out of Egypt by the blood of the Lamb ? " *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord.*" (Ex 15:1) They were simply commemorating their deliverance from bondage. My is this not what the Lord's Table is all about ? It's a remembrance feast. We are here to commemorate something. " *ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*" (1 Cor 11:26) On Sunday morning the 7th December

1941, 350 Japanese war planes bombed Pearl Harbour, in Hawaii territory. Eighteen battleships were sunk or destroyed, 200 airplanes were out of commission and 3581 servicemen were either killed or wounded. Thus USA cry as she entered World War 2 was “ *Remember Pearl Harbour.*” My at the Lord’s Table we have a battle-cry and it is “ *Remember Jesus Christ.*” Ought we not to come like the psalmist to this feast and say “ *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me ?*” (Ps 116:12) (a)

(b) IT WAS RENUNCIATIVE:

It was given to say goodbye to his fellow publicans. Matthew was now burning his bridges behind him. It was goodbye to everything that was shady, underhand or dishonest in his business. Is this not what being a Christian means ? It means being utterly honest before the Lord and others. The Bible says “ *a false balance is abomination to the Lord but a just weight is his delight.*” (Prov 11:1 12:22) This was like a sort of going away party. It was like believers baptism in which a person is saying pictorially that the old way of finished and the new way of life has begun.

(c) IT WAS IMAGINATIVE:

You see, Matthew wanted to witness to his old cronies and so he invited them for dinner. Would Christ be there ? My even if every sinner in Galilee were coming, Christ would come for He was, “ *the friend of sinners.*” (11:19) Can you imagine the spectacle this must have

been ? Matthew at the head of the table, the Lord Jesus in the seat of honour, and then all around a multitude of social outcasts, the scum of society, well dressed, greedy, money hungry men sat in astonishment at the step their business colleague had taken. And then presenting the Lord Jesus to all of his guests. You see, just as Andrew brought Peter, and Philip introduced Nathanael so Matthew used the imaginative strategy of a meal to introduce his friends to the Saviour ? Do we not need to be a bit more imaginative and creative when it comes to introducing others to Christ ? Many years ago I was asked to conduct a gospel campaign in Fraserburgh Baptist Church an hour outside the city of Aberdeen. In addition to the weeknight services the church put on a thing on Saturday evening called “ *The Andrew Meal.*” The church put on a salad and a Christian was not allowed to attend unless you brought an unsaved friend with you. Well, after the meal they put on a programme and then they gave me a twenty minute spot to preach the gospel.

That night a young man came in who had been in the meetings through the week. He was a bit of a ring leader among a group of lads. That night God worked in his heart and he was wonderfully saved. Have you ever introduced anyone to Christ ? Have you ever made a great feast in His honour and invited your friends to meet Christ ? John Walker a prominent business man in Ballymoney and clerk of session of Drumreagh Presbyterian Church was asked by his family what he wanted for his 70th birthday. *Do you know he said ? I want you to ask all my friends and family to the church and you make a meal ? But first they must hear George Bates give his testimony. I wonder*

are there other ways we need to utilize to reach folk with the gospel ? Do we need to be creative as we seek to reach the lost for Christ ? (1) (2) (3)

(4) HIS REVELATION: IT WAS INDISPENSABLE

You see, the Bible is God's revelation to man and part of this sixty six book library is Matthew's gospel. Between the book of Malachi and the book of Matthew are four hundred " silent years." (Neh 13:4-30 Mal 4:6 Lk 1:5-25) You see, after Malachi had spoken, heaven went silent. We could say that the Lord went off the air and there was no broadcasting for four hundred years. Then one day the Lord said to Matthew, " *Matthew I want you to write a book that will bring the Old Testament and the New Testament together.*" This is why in the Gospel of Matthew 15 times we read these words, " *that it might be fulfilled.*" Matthew is telling us that what is happening is a fulfilment of what was said in the Old Testament. Now are you beginning to see,

(a) The Potentiality Christ Saw in Matthew:

You see, who but Christ could see the potential in Matthew ? Christ saw beneath the surface to the sound quality in the man. He saw the skills that Matthew had. He saw the business man in Matthew. Is this not how the Lord looks at us ? Sure, He sees the actualities in us, but He see's the possibilities in us. He looks at you this and see's you not only as you are but as what you become as a result of being cleansed, controlled and consecrated to Him. (a) But think of,

(b) The Ministry Christ Wrought Through Matthew:

Dr. A. Whyte said when Matthew rose up and followed Christ, " *the only thing that he took with him out of his old occupation was his pen and ink.*" And do you know something ? He writes a gospel about Jesus Christ. Do you know how many verses he writes about himself ? One. Yes Peter gets into the foreground and James and John but not Matthew. *Matthew is seeking to prove that Jesus is the King the Son of David and his aim is to convince the Jews that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.* Tradition says that Matthew ministered to the Jews both in Israel and abroad for many years before being martyred for his faith. So this man who walked away from a lucrative career without ever giving it a second thought remained willing to give his all for Christ to the very end.

What a ministry, a ministry of preaching and writing that exalted the Saviour. For what is the message of Matthew ? It's this " *Behold your King.*" For in,

Chapters: 1-9 **the King is Revealed:**

Chapters: 10-16 **the King is Resisted:**

Chapters: 16-27 **the King is Rejected:**

Chapters: 28 **the King is Raised:**

The King is alive this ! " *King of my life I crown Thee now.*" Matthew challenges us with this question. Is Jesus Christ king of your life ? He demands every corner of our hearts. He deserves every inch of our lives. A King is more than a Saviour, a King is a Sovereign. Is the Lord

Jesus Sovereign in your life ?