



Part 1: Why Matthew?

Matthew 9:12-13

Matthew's gospel has been the most widely used manual for Christian discipleship, and we need to recover it in our cultural moment.

I. Why Matthew?

For the first two centuries of the Church, Christians automatically turned to Matthew's Gospel for the essential content for the teaching about Jesus.

Matthew was cited by the early church fathers more than twice as often as the other Gospels probably because Matthew arranged Jesus' teaching in five blocks.

"...it was Matthew's gospel which created the climate of ordinary Christianity." – R.T. France, *Matthew, Evangelist & Teacher*

We need to return to one of our original source documents of Christianity to gain a fresh vision of the gospel Jesus preached and the Christian life as one of his disciples.

II. God's Surprising Reach of Love

A. Beyond Religious Tradition and Cultural Expectation

Peter's response reveals how shocking it was for Jesus to choose Matthew as one of his disciples. Tax collectors were considered traitors for collaborating with Rome, and they were known for using their power to extort extra money above the taxes to be collected.

They were not allowed in the synagogues or past the court of gentiles in the outer Temple area. Therefore, the Pharisees are shocked that Jesus is eating with Matthew and his friends.

“It’s not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Matthew 9:12-13

Jesus responds with sarcasm to those who think of themselves as “righteous.” They believe their morality and religious devotion has earned their relationship with God like a contract (see Luke 18:9-14).

God’s reach of love in Jesus goes beyond our religious traditions or cultural expectations. All are invited to come to Jesus.

Q: What do you think might disqualify you from God’s reach of love in Jesus? Your past, your ignorance...? Only your self-righteousness will exclude you!

B. Called to be Disciples

Notice what Jesus didn’t ask Matthew to do: pray a prayer accepting him as Messiah and Savior.

*“Follow me...”
...Come be with me.
...Become like me.
...Live on mission with me.*

Q: When you were presented the gospel, how many of you were told it included becoming a disciple of Jesus? For at least the past 80 years, in the West we’ve made it possible to receive “salvation” without becoming a disciple of Jesus.

“The greatest issue facing the world today with all its heartbreaking needs is whether those who are identified as Christians will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners of Jesus Christ steadily learning from him how to live the life of the kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence. That’s it. Jesus is not looking for converts to Christianity. He is looking for apprentices to the Kingdom of God.” – Dallas Willard

*Forming disciples who love Jesus and follow His Way.
A disciple lives in union with Jesus to learn to live joyfully in
God’s beautiful Kingdom.*

C. Salvation is Rescue and Healing

“It’s not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Matthew 9:12-13

“We have also a Physician the Lord our God, Jesus the Christ, the only begotten Son and Word, before time began, but who afterwards became also a man, of Mary the Virgin ... He was in a mortal body; being life, He became subject to corruption, that He might free our souls from death and corruption, and heal them, and might restore them to health, when they were

diseased with ungodliness and wicked lusts.” – Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of John the Apostle

Many explanations of the gospel and salvation describe an arrangement more than an invitation and summons from Jesus. They offer a salvation that is more transactional than relational, more judicial than healing.

Most explanations of the gospel in America have offered some version of the minimum entrance requirements to get into heaven when you die.

Rather than announcing the free pass to get into Heaven, the gospel announces the availability of life now with Jesus in God’s Kingdom.

Note: In Mark 10, “salvation...eternal life and kingdom of God” are all used interchangeably to refer to the same reality.

“The gospel Jesus preached is the Good News that this eternal kind of life is available now. By grace. Through Jesus. Forever and beyond death. ‘Eternal life in the individual does not begin after death, but at the point where God touches the individual with redeeming grace and draws them into a life interactive with himself and his kingdom.’”

– John Ortberg, also quoting Dallas Willard, *Eternity is Now in Session*

III. First Principle of Discipleship

Matthew’s life was forever changed after Jesus called him to be his disciple. The Roman soldier watched in disbelief as Matthew walked away from his position of privilege and power.

There is no indication that Matthew ever regretted his decision to follow Jesus. In fact, he emphasizes the great treasure of the Kingdom in his Gospel. He gave to us a manual for discipleship to Jesus so that we too could receive the greatest treasure ever offered to man.

The first principle of discipleship to Jesus is this: we are always responding to God’s pursuit and love in King Jesus.

Note: when we speak about love, we need to distinguish between God’s love and the world’s love.

God’s love is His fierce commitment to destroy evil and restore His good design in us. The world’s love is its fierce commitment to seek life by its own design.