

# After the Amen (3): Many Are Called, Few Are Chosen

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(Matthew 9:9-13)

## I. Introduction

- A. When the Family Room was built, my old office was torn down and I was relocated
  - 1. For the length of construction, the stuck me in temporary office was in Classroom 9
    - a. That put me in middle of building rather than hidden away at end (*how elders like it*)
    - b. One day, a blur of brown shot by my open office door; few minute later, it shot back
      - 1) Finally, the UPS guy came in with package addressed to “*the preacher*”
      - 2) He said, “*I saw you, but you didn’t look like a preacher, but like a regular guy*”
      - 3) I told him that was the nicest thing anyone had said to me in a long time!
  - 2. Preacher before me (*whom I loved dearly*) was more careful to look like a preacher
    - a. He’d go home and put on a coat/tie if his wife called to ask to stop by the store
    - b. Not as bad as preacher down the road who would cut his grass in a shirt-and-tie!
  - 3. Their preacher school taught them preachers look like preachers, NOT regular guys!
- B. I must have missed that day, and so did the apostles; they looked like regular guys!
  - 1. In **Acts 4**, Peter and John are called before the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jews
    - a. They were preaching in the name of Jesus, and the court was going to put a stop
    - b. They’d turn on their high beams of power and intimidate these simple regular guys
  - 2. Apostles weren’t schooled men or rabbis; they also weren’t intimidated! (**Acts 4:13**)
    - a. The boldness of these fisherman reminded them of this carpenter they’d known
    - b. The very idea that a religious movement was could be led by bunch of regular guys
- C. We continue with “*After the Amen,*” our look at Jesus after the sermon on the Mount
  - 1. If the apostles are regular guys, today Jesus call an irregular guy as a disciple
    - a. Apostles had no special training above what every good Jewish male would have
    - b. But had that training, and they were all good Jewish men who followed the Law
  - 2. The man Jesus calls as his disciple today was not any of that—in view of most people
    - a. This guy was a tax collector— tax collector as in “*tax collectors and sinners*”
    - b. Those words go together like bacon-n-eggs, salt-n-pepper, or love-n-marriage
    - c. And as the old Frank Sinatra song says, “*You can’t have one without the other*”
  - 3. If tax collectors can be disciples, that should tell us something about being a disciple!
- D. Let’s read the text together and then we’ll talk about it (**Reading: Matthew 9:9-13**)

## II. Just Who Is Called: Many Are Called...

- A. The call of Matthew teaches us disciples don't special qualifications or credentials
1. A tax collector is the last person you'd expect to be on list of potential disciples
    - a. It wasn't that choosing a tax collector offended the snooty scribes and Pharisees
    - b. Everyone, even disciples, were rocked back on their heel when Jesus chose Matthew
  2. Tax collectors came to have a bad reputation the old-fashioned way— *they earned it!*
    - a. **First**, they worked for the Roman occupation and were traitors to Jewish nation
    - b. **Second**, cheated by collecting more taxes than were owed (*pocketed the difference*)
      - 1) Zacchaeus tells Jesus, “*if I have cheated anybody out of anything*” (**Luke 19:8**)
      - 2) That sounds like Zacchaeus expected it to be assume that he had been cheating
    - c. **Third**, so many were very wealthy men, making money off the backs of the poor
      - 1) They were ostracized by polite society; normal folks tend to resent the wealthy
      - 2) Their clique was other tax collectors— *so who is eating at Matthew's house?*
    - d. **Fourth**, and they were tax collectors; no one ever likes to pay taxes. Ever. No one.
- B. But Jesus calls a tax collector to be a disciple. *Called right from his tax-collecting table!*
1. Jesus calls him just like he calls everyone else—no asterisk or no special conditions
    - a. In fact, it sounds like the story; Jesus says, “*Follow me*” and he does (**Matt 9:9**)
    - b. It also sounds similar to the stories that we looked at last week... until the end
      - 1) Jesus said, “*Follow me,*” but those guys had excuses (they'd say— “*reasons*”)
      - 2) Matthew left his table (and maybe the money) and followed Jesus immediately
  2. Jesus assembled this rather rag-tag group, this bunch we call “*the Twelve Apostles*”
    - a. Peter, Andrew, James & John were blue collar guys with red necks & white socks
    - b. Matthew worked for the Roman government, raising funds to continue occupation
    - c. Simon the Zealot was a terrorist; his job was to cut the throat of guys like Matthew
    - d. Then there was “*James the Less,*” who probably had a huge chip on his shoulder!
  3. We really don't know all that much about apostles who aren't named Peter and Paul
    - a. Of course, there are many, often conflicting, church traditions fill in the missing
      - 1) Thomas preached in India; John was dipped in cauldron of boiling oil and lived
      - 2) Andrew went to Armenia; Simon martyred in Persia; Matthew died in Ethiopia
    - b. Some of stories are true; apostles did what Jesus said—*went into the whole world*
    - c. One thing we do know... When Jesus called them, none were qualified for the job!

### III. Just Who Is Called: Few Are Chosen...

- A. In **Matthew 22**, Jesus tells a parable that describes the kingdom to a wedding banquet
1. King sends invites many to wedding feast of his son; they refuse and kill messengers
    - a. He sends army to destroy and more invitations—this time people take him seriously
      - 1) Wedding hall is filled to the brim with guest who have come to honor the king
      - 2) Party-crasher isn't there to honor the king and pays the price (**Matt 22:11-14**)
      - 3) Jesus point is also the point of the call of Matthew—*many called, few chosen*
  2. Matthew shows that anyone, despite credentials or lack thereof can be called by God
    - a. But there's more than just Matthew; there are those who respond to Matthew
    - b. The response to call of Matthew emphasize that many are called, few are chosen
- B. Several things about Jesus consistently ruffle the feathers of the religious leaders
1. All three of these basic things are on display for us in the first half of **Matthew 9**
    - a. **First**, he seems to make bold proclamations above his pay grade (**Matt 9:2**)
    - b. **Second**, he refuses to follow accepted religious tradition and protocol (**Matt 9:14**)
    - c. **Third**, Jesus insists on hanging out with sinners (**Matt 9:11**). *Confused Pharisees*
      - 1) They saw holiness as ritual cleanness— *sin was basically like getting kooties*
      - 2) You caught it by hanging too closely (at all) with people who were sinners
  2. One thing that hung up religious people about Jesus— Jesus really LIKED sinners
    - a. This is the exactly the background for Jesus' best-known/loved parable (**Lk 15:1-2**)
    - b. Background of the disgust of the Pharisee in story of the sinful woman (**Luke 7:39**)
      - 1) Jesus showed contempt for the brokenness of fallen world by touching lepers
      - 2) It's the same when he touches and is touched by people who are broken by sin
- C. Many are called; few are chosen. It is no accident Jesus called a sinner like Matthew
1. What he came to do! "*I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners*" (**Mt 9:13**).
    - a. Of course, that all of us, right? Matthew had no credentials, but neither do we!
    - b. What made a nobody like Matthew think that he was qualified to be a disciple?
      - 1) Simple! It spells it out right there in **v. 9**, "*Matthew got up and followed him.*"
      - 2) That took great courage and great faith— what that took was a great Savior!
  2. Few are chosen because we keep looking at our credentials and qualifications
    - a. Matthew left everything— literally on the table. And he followed Jesus!
    - b. Many know the story of Jesus because he followed so closely he wrote it down

## IV. Conclusion

- A. Last year, we conducted a pretty extensive study on Wednesday night of homosexuality
1. One books that I leaned heavily upon was Preston Sprinkle's *People to be Loved*
    - a. In that book, Sprinkle speaks of doing a complete reboot of his study on the issue
      - 1) He went back to the Bible and restudied it in its context with an open mind
      - 2) He researched Bible's ancient Near Eastern/Greco-Roman historical context
      - 3) He looked at conclusions of psychologists, counselors, medical researchers.
    - b. His conclusion didn't change; what he did with it and how he approached it did
  2. What changed for him? Step from library and ivory tower and into the lives of people  
*I have enjoyed countless hours of conversations with gay and lesbian people, some who share my Christian faith and others who don't. I have invited their input and pushback through blogs, emails, Facebook conversations, and over many meals... Throughout my study, I have made many gay friends who have solidified my belief that homosexuality is not about an issue. It is about people.*
  3. Every issue is about people—people who Jesus came to seek and to save
- B. What gay and lesbian are to the church today, tax collectors were to the Jews of Jesus day
1. What did Jesus do? He called tax collectors. He sat and ate at the table with them
    - a. He chose their company over the fine upstanding folks who condemned them
    - b. What did Jesus mean by "*I desire mercy and not sacrifice?*" ([Matt 9:13](#), [Hos 6:6](#))
      - 1) Pharisees were standing on religions tradition and externals and appearances
      - 2) Jesus was saying what Sprinkle is saying "*It's not about issues; it's people*"
  2. Did Matthew have to make changes? *Sure, they started when he started following*
    - a. He left his money table behind just as surely as James and John left their boats
    - b. Acceptance isn't approval—accepting people does not mean approving behavior
      - 1) Jesus are with Matthews friends; he allowed the sinful woman to touch him
      - 2) He died on the cross for all sinners, right? Not just the ones he pre-approved
- C. Let me make two quick points (and they are different) and the lesson is yours—
1. **First**, you CAN be disciple; you can't do anything the blood of Jesus can't wash out
  2. **Second**, if we aren't up to welcoming the Matthews of today, we don't follow Jesus
    - a. If Jesus welcomed a tax collector into inner circle, who are we to refuse anyone
    - b. Jesus said, "*I didn't come to call the righteous.*" Why? Because there are none!
    - c. Following Jesus also means learning how to see sinners the way Jesus saw them.