

The Tax Collector and the Zealot

- Mt. 9:9-13; Mk. 2:13-17; Lk. 5:27-32
- Levi v. Matthew
 - Levi – Jewish name meaning “attached/joined” (Gen. 29:34)
 - Tribe of Levi joined to God in priestly duties (Num. 18:1-2)
 - For his parents to name him Levi indicates they were very religious, perhaps wanted him to be a priest if he were of that tribe
 - Instead, Levi became a tax collector and was known by name Matthew
 - Collecting taxes for Roman empire, he would have been despised by his countrymen
 - Tax collectors had reputation for extortion
 - Lk. 3:12-13 – John’s instructions to tax collectors who were baptized
 - Lk. 19:8 – Zacchaeus promises repentance/restitution to anyone he defrauded
 - Robbing brethren to serve the occupying Gentile empire, while making themselves rich
 - Levi likely turned his back on his family, tribe, country, & faith to be a tax collector.
- Still, Jesus called him – Mt. 9:9
 - “So he arose and followed him.” No delay
 - Lk. 5:28 – “leaving everything.” He quit his lucrative job immediately.
 - What did Jesus see in this tax collector?
 - One who could write a convincing testimony, using record keeping and literary skills he employed as tax collector...
 - One who changed/repented, as evidenced by feast at his house – Mt. 9:10
 - Wanted those he worked with to have opportunity to meet Jesus
 - Not ashamed of change—wants others to follow Him also
 - Humility – Notice how Matthew refers to himself in Mt. 10:3 (cf. Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15). His is the only career noted in the lists of disciples.
 - Matthew makes sure readers remember him as a sinner
 - Luke, not Matthew, tells us that he “left everything”
 - Matthew (like the other NT authors) doesn’t focus on himself, but Jesus
- Matthew v. Simon the Zealot – Lk. 6:15
 - All we know about the “other” Simon is that he was a Canaanite (Mt. 10:4) or Zealot – indicating his likely association with a radical revolutionary party among the Jews who expected the Messiah to overthrow Rome by force
 - More generally, he could have just been zealous for the Law of Moses
 - Either way (but especially as a member of the Zealots), how would he have cooperated with Matthew, the tax collector?!? He would have hated him before they both became disciples...
 - But Jesus could redirect that zeal in a better way and get these 2 to work together.
- Applications
 - Jesus calls all, wherever we are. Do we leave everything to follow Him?
 - Jesus sees value and skills in each individual that can be beneficial for the kingdom.
 - Matthew changed from companion of sinners to a key disciple of Jesus. Have you?