

Lesson 9 – Matthew Called

Text: Matthew 9:1-17; Mark 2:1-22; Luke 5:17-39

Main Characters: God, Jesus, Matthew (Levi)

Key Passages:

- Luke 5:20 – Jesus was able to see the faith of the men because of the actions they were taking.
- Luke 5:28 – After calling Matthew to follow him, Matthew left everything and obeyed.
- Luke 5:35 – Jesus alluded to the fact that he would eventually be taken from the disciples (killed).

Main Storyline:

Some time after Jesus returned to Capernaum, the people in the area found out where he was and flocked to him immediately, including some scribes and Pharisees. So many people gathered to the house that, at some point, no one else could even get near the door. Jesus took the opportunity to preach and heal people that came to him.

While Jesus was preaching, four men arrived, carrying a paralytic on a bed. Since there was no way to get into the front door, the men climbed up onto the roof of the house. There, they removed some of the stones covering the roof of the house, and, when the hole became big enough, they lowered the paralytic man down into the house where Jesus was. When Jesus saw the faith of the men, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

The scribes and Pharisees were wondering who Jesus thought he was; they knew that only God had the power to forgive sins. By claiming to have forgiven the paralytic’s sins, Jesus was claiming to be God. Jesus knew what the scribes and Pharisees were thinking, so he asked them, “Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you?’ or ‘Arise and walk?’” (In other words, Jesus understood that forgiving the man’s sins would have been easy to say, since there would be way to know if the man’s sins had been forgiven, and thus, no way to know if Jesus truly had any power. By healing the man, it would be obvious that Jesus truly had power from God, to not only heal people but also to forgive sins.)

In order to prove to the scribes and Pharisees that he truly was God, he told the paralytic to get up, take up his bed, and walk. Immediately, the paralytic got up and went home, glorifying God. Everyone who saw it was amazed and began to glorify God.

After Jesus left the house, he passed by a man named Matthew (Levi), who was a tax collector. He called Matthew to follow him. Matthew immediately left his old life behind and began to follow Jesus.

Matthew then gave a great feast in his house, inviting many other tax collectors and others, including Jesus and other disciples. When the scribes and Pharisees saw what Jesus was doing, they asked his disciples about why they ate with tax collectors (who were hated by the Jews) and sinners.

Jesus heard what they were asking and told them that, just as a doctor does not need to attend to the well, but the sick, he did not come to attend to the righteous, but to sinners. The sinners were the ones who needed to be called to repent. Furthermore, Jesus instructed them to learn what the phrase “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6) meant. He wanted them to understand God was looking for people with righteous attitudes, not people who were dutiful in their sacrifices but evil in their hearts (hypocrites).

At the time, the disciples of John and the Pharisees were fasting. Following the previous exchange, some of John’s disciples and Pharisees approached Jesus and asked about why he and his disciples were not fasting. Jesus remarked that no one mourns (fasts) while the bridegroom (Jesus) is with them, but that they would fast when, in the future, the bridegroom was taken away. Jesus went on to give additional illustrations to emphasize the fact that it would not be appropriate for the disciples to fast while Jesus was with them.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) If our faith does not motivate us to take action (change), we really do not have faith (James 2:17).
- 2.) Jesus called all of his disciples, as he does us, to live our lives fully focused on following him.
- 3.) Outward signs of “faith” are not what God wants; God is looking for faithful hearts (Micah 6:6-8).