

Open your Bibles to this morning's scripture text, which can be found in the book of Matthew, Chapter 9 verses 9-12. This can be found on page 687 in your pew Bibles. We begin a new series today titled Made for Mission. Scripture reveals God's call.

Our Fathers Word

Mt 9:9-12

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.

The Word of God for the People of God

Never in his wildest dreams could he have ever envisioned that he would end up here. If he could go back in time and make different decisions, he would do it in a second. His parents had turned their back on him. His friends wanted nothing to do with him. How could he blame them, he could barely look at himself in the mirror. All he saw was disgust on their faces, contempt in their eyes, and he knew what was on every person's mind as they would pass him by each day at his work post. "Sell Out."

In fact, they had made a special classification for people like him. He wasn't worthy to be thrown in with all the other "sinners." Instead, men like Matthew were one step worse, "Tax Collectors."

On one day Matthew was sitting at his post, a crowd of people surrounded a man teaching just a few feet away. Matthew inquired from a few nearby and discovered that *this* was the man he had heard so much about recently. He was Jesus, of Nazareth. Matthew leaned in to try to hear what the popular teacher had to say. A group of men interrupted Jesus mid-sentence and brought a paralyzed man right to his feet. Instead of being annoyed, Jesus immediately looked at the man and simply said "Your sins are forgiven."

Matthew was so shocked by His simple words, that he instinctively laughed out loud. Too loud. A number of people looked over at him with an irritated glare. Jesus also looked over and Matthew slumped down in his chair. Jesus then turned back to the paralyzed man and said, "Just to show you that I can forgive sins, get up, and walk." At once the man jumped up and the whole crowd stood in amazement. Matthew had seen nothing like this before.

Then Matthew looked up, and Jesus was walking directly towards his table. If Matthew didn't know any better, the teacher was looking right at him. Matthew glanced over his shoulder to see who else Jesus might be looking at but there was no one there. Jesus stopped at the table, leaned in, and whispered to Matthew just loud enough to hear. "Follow me."

Matthew hardly knew anything about this teacher Jesus. Not knowing where he was going. What he was calling Matthew for, or why in the world he'd selected Matthew in the first place. Matthew found himself immediately standing up and leaving his life of tax collecting behind. Somewhere in the deep part of his soul he knew that this was the most important decision he had ever made in his life.

Today we begin a new series titled Made for Mission. I firmly believe, the invitation God is going to give us, *equally* has the potential to be transforming for our lives, and the future of Pemberville United Methodist Church.

We believe that God has a mission for our life, but we all must decide what we want to do about it. Sure, we can just ignore it. Or we can flirt with it, and *sometimes temporarily* join God in what he's made us to be. But we can also LIVE ON MISSION. This is where we live our lives in *connection* with *how God made us*, and in *connection* with *how He's already working*. But we must **decide** to **make the connection**.

Most people are seeking a purpose for their lives that is part of something bigger. People will work for less, if they really believe in what they are doing. Wealth does not always equal happiness. People also want their life to be about something good.

Some time ago Stanford University did a study to find out which people desire more, happiness, or meaningfulness.

They discovered, that ultimately people really want a life of meaning. We were made for mission. Over the next 6 weeks we are going to spend some time discovering *that* about *your* life. Hear Jesus calling on Matthew's life, I earnestly believe it has incredible significance for our lives today.

(Matt 9:9) *As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.*

That Jesus approached Matthew says so much. Tax collectors were seen in that culture as the worst of the worst. Tax collectors were Jews that had sold out their own people in order to become wealthy. People hated them. If we could go back in time and freeze frame this scene, and then, pick out of the hundreds of people there *who* the last person Jesus would pick as His disciple to heal, equip and send out to preach the gospel the world, it would be Matthew.

This is incredible, but is it significant for us? If Matthew is called, then that means we are all called. JD Greer in his book *Gaining by Losing* says, "There is a widespread myth in the church that "calling into ministry" is a secondary experience that happens to only a few Christians. Their job is to do the ministry and everyone else's job is to just show up and foot the bill. Few lies cripple the mission more than that one. Each believer is called to leverage his or her life for the spread of the gospel. The question is no longer whether we are called, only where and how."

You are called by God! He has chosen you to be an active part of His mission. Since you're called, you need to start asking some big questions.

Those in the business world—why did God make me good @ business? Surely not just to fill up your life w/ all kinds of comforts so you can spend the last twenty years of your life on vacation. He has given you your talents as a means of blessing others and as a platform to spread the mission.

If you're a stay-at-home mom, ask yourself: What role do I play in the advance of the mission as I raise my kids? The same question applies if you're in the military, fire department, teacher or student. God may have not put you in a vocational pastor position, but He has put you on the frontlines for mission. The word "vocation" actually comes from the Latin word voca, which means "to call." What if you started seeing your job as an actual calling from God.

Illustration: In the morning you could get up and take a shower, get dressed, help the kids get ready for school, go to work, and come home to prepare to do it like everybody else. OR you could like you were MADE FOR A MISSION. (Cue Mission Impossible Theme Song) You wake up expectant of what God has in store for you today. You spend time with God through prayer and reading His word before you do anything to listen in for his instructions he has for you that day. You prepare your kids to live on mission too. Then you go to work, or go about your day with your eyes open, looking for opportunities to connect with God, and join in where He's already at work.

Now it would be awesome if God called you in morning—"What's up God? Ok talk to that person and encourage this coworker. Got it."

JD Greer says, “You don’t need a voice when you got a verse.” Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God wants to work through us to share his love with others.

Look at Jesus’ invitation to Matthew. He doesn’t say, “get in line” or “do what I do.” He simply says, “Follow Me.”

Jesus invites Matthew first and foremost into a relationship with him. The relationship was not the by-product of their ministry work, the relationship was the assignment. The ministry is what would come from their time spent together. The Christian life is not about doing a bunch of stuff for God. It’s about being with God.

From Matthew’s point of view he’s obviously shocked that Jesus approached him, but it’s also remarkable how Matthew got up immediately with no questions asked. Why drop everything? He had a good paying job, 90% of Israel was living underneath the poverty line at this point. He seemingly didn’t have to work hard. (He’s just sitting there) He was a part of something bigger. (the Roman Empire probably had a good retirement plan) On top of that—Jesus’ invitation was a bit vague. He just said, “Follow me.” He didn’t say his name, where they would be going, or what they would be doing. Jesus didn’t even say what would be in it for Matthew.

If you look at the first words of verse 9 it says, “As he was going from there...” That this was written by Matthew himself those words are hugely significant. Matthew saw everything that had just transpired. What did he see? He observed Jesus heal a paralyzed man. Even more importantly, he saw Jesus forgive that man of his sins. The question that must have been racing through Matthew’s mind was “Could Jesus forgive me of my shame?”

Jesus invitation is from sitting to following. Let's replay that scene for a moment. Matthew is just sitting there. Then Jesus walks up and says, "follow me." So then, what does Jesus call on Matthew's life require of Matthew? Movement! He must get up!

He had to get up. He had to make a conscience decision to make a move. He couldn't just stay in his seat and follow. The moment he took a step, he was on mission, but a step of faith was required.

For us, God is calling us to get off the sidelines and get in the game of being made for a mission. It will require you to consciously get up even if it may be a bit uncomfortable. That is where we are going the next six weeks.

Do you know significance of the number 3900-4000? That's the estimated numbers of weeks you will spend on planet earth. Don't you think it may be worth taking 6 of those weeks to figure out if you were made for a mission? If I do that, what might happen? Check out what takes place next in Matthew's case.

(Matthew 9: 10) *While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.*

There is this fear that if I put my Yes on Table, (def. Phrase meaning you are all in) then Jesus may move me to Africa or Antarctica. That could happen, but so often God says, "let's just start with where I have you now."

This next scene takes place at Matthew's house. Who do you suppose provided and cooked the meal that they were eating? Matthew did. Do you think Matthew had friends over to his house before? Sure, but this dinner would have felt different.

Previous to today, he was Matthew the tax collector. But now, he's Matthew the missionary. His ability to host, and to provide a meal, is now being used for the mission of God. When I go from *sitting* to *following Jesus*, God is going to change me from the inside out, which will also change the way I see things in my life.

God will transform how I use my resources. God has blessed us with everything in our lives, and *that* can be used for mission. Matthew used his house and food to be on mission. The same is true for us. You'll look at your finances differently. You'll look at your possessions differently. You'll look at your talents differently. You will look at your time differently.

God will transform how I see my relationships. Matthew would have had many meals together with his tax collector buddies, but this is the first time they had religious leaders join them. How do you think Matthew introduced these two groups? Maybe, "My sins were forgiven today—you could have that happen too." What do you think the conversations looked like between the two groups? What could Matthew hope for on this occasion? He realized that this was probably the best, if not the only chance many in this group would ever have in meeting Jesus. He would not waste this opportunity.

When you join God in a life on mission, you begin to understand that none of your acquaintances or friendships are coincidental. There are no coincidences with God. Only exacted perfection.

God has placed them into *your* life, because he needs *you* to be *His* heart, voice, hands and feet in Mission with them. Your desire for others to experience God's love, His peace, His joy and blessings will be your motivation.

At some point in our life, all of us had someone give us the good news about God, about our Lord Jesus, about the *salvation* that He alone offers — *we* get to do the *same* for others. What a privilege! Amen!?

Matthew was throwing a party! Who do you suppose the guest of honor is? Who is he throwing this for? For those present that he will benefit the most from, who will make all the difference in his life of riches and luxuries here on earth? Or for the *one*, who will give him the greatest gift; the gift of life.

(Matt 9:11) *When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”*

It’s hard for Matthew to believe that the Pharisees are in his home. Even the Pharisees must be thinking, “what are *we* doing in tax collectors’ home!?” They must be infuriated by what they see. Here is a third way God begins to transform us when we move from sitting to following.

God will transform how we respond to ridicule. The Pharisees were the rule keepers. The tax collectors knew that they were the bottom of the totem pole, but that still didn’t change the fact that they wanted to be in good standing with the Pharisees. Just one afternoon of following Jesus, and everything changes. Now they didn’t care about approval from the Pharisees, because they were too busy toasting their new friendships with Jesus.

We are not people pleasers, we are here for God’s pleasure. You were not made to fit in, you were made to stand out. When you’re in a life of mission you’re not living for approval from man, but from God. So we must not be afraid of ridicule.

(Galatians 1:10) Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Jesus constantly faced ridicule and persecution, so why would you expect anything different when you're following him. You will experience persecution too. Listen to Jesus' words in Matthew 5.

(Matthew 5:10-11) Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

For Matthew, maybe some of his tax collector friends had no interest in Jesus, and that stung a little. Imagine if just one of his guests stayed after the party, to share, that he wanted to have what Matthew had? How great would that be? Check out how the passage ends.

(Matthew 9:12) On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."

What is Jesus' mission? He's our great physician, a spiritual doctor rescuing sick, emotionally, physically, and spiritually wounded people. That means He came for you and me. He didn't come to judge or pile on laws and rules we could never attain.

Do you know who wrote the Gospel of Matthew? This guy! Matthew. He was sick and God saved him. How many millions have been saved through his writings?

It is so difficult for us to realize *how significant* the impact is, that God will make on *others* through *your* life. There is no greater joy in our journey of figuring it all out.

You have been called by God, and made for mission. What if every one of us simply had the attitude of “one more.” Jesus, would you use me to reach just one more person. If we all did that, we would double as a church immediately, and think of all the lives that would be impacted. Next week we are going to talk more about the mission that God has specifically and uniquely invited each of us into. I can’t wait! It’s time for us to do something that will make all the difference, because we were all made for mission.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for sending Jesus into this world, on a mission of love.

Father, we praise You for guiding us faithfully through this life.

Christ came to earth and followed Your will wholeheartedly,

never doubting and never straying. He knew what His purpose was in life.

It's not as obvious for us, Father, and we struggle

to find the path you have planned for us.

Forgive us, Father, for chasing after our own selfish ambitions, goals, and fortunes.

We confess the motives of our heart that steer us off of the path You have planned for us... the purpose You have placed in us.

Thank you for the calling you have placed upon our hearts,

For tenderly drawing us to you, uniting us with your will to serve others.

Jesus, take our hands and guide our feet.

Bless our choices in education, profession, and mission work.

Guide our reactions through victory and defeat.

May our hearts grow more like Yours each day,

as we look around at the people You've placed in our lives to reach.

Help us to love those people in Your honor, through our talents and gifts.

Through the distractions of everyday life, allow us to hear Your call and follow You always.

AMEN