

Sermon - St Matthew

Notes for sermon to Be preached on Sunday 21st Sept 2008

Are you affected by the Credit Crunch
Was your bank taken over this week ?!
Have pension funds been affected by loss of Lehman Brothers ?
Are you unable to afford a mortgage - just no loan available
Social housing - still waiting for home to be renovated or estate refurbished (e.g Norris Green)

What was St Matthew's attitude to money ? What is yours and what is mine ?

Is money a god that we worship. Well we say no it isn't but look at our behaviour

We know that we are supposed to make all the other gods with a small g - money, power, status, sex, etc - serve the one true God but it's a bit tricky to work out what we are doing.

Others see better than ourselves are attitude to money. They may be able to tell us whether it rules us or we rule it ! But in our defence we speak out - we don't want to be poor, we don't want to be a drain on others

Pink Floyd - money

Money, get away.

Get a good job with good pay and you're okay.

Money, it's a gas.

Grab that cash with both hands and make a stash.

New car, caviar, four star daydream,

Think I'll buy me a football team.

Money, get back.

I'm all right jack keep your hands off of my stack.

Money, it's a hit.

Don't give me that do goody good bullshit.

I'm in the high-fidelity first class traveling set

And I think I need a Lear jet.

Money, it's a crime.

*Share it fairly but don't take a slice of my pie.
Money, so they say
Is the root of all evil today.
But if you ask for a raise its no surprise that they re
Giving none away.*

In our Gospel we hear about the call of Matthew
Note that he is sitting in a booth - he's a manager, sitting on
cushions probably, doing no real work with his hands
Many of us suffer from these people - they go away on
conferences and come back with new ideas that give everyone
else headaches !
Some of us are these people !

Follow me says Jesus, he follows. He leaves the office without
even turning off his PC. He didn't even stop to fill up the box
with the picture from his desk and that rather nice paperweight
he got from the Tax Collectors Annual Conference in Jerusalem
in Ad 33.

I wonder about those people leaving Lehman Bros this week - I
hope some of them have heard a call. Not just to get their life
back, but to give their life to the son of God.

So Matthew joins a new gang of Jesus folk. He leaves the
corrupt world of the tax gatherers colluding with Roman Empire
and he finds himself with those smelly fishermen which Jesus
has previously called from their nets. Judas and those other
revolutionary types are there too. Strange company.

I wonder what that was like ? I had the occasion last week to
talk about my early work experience in an interview. I was
reminded of that day when I found myself as a youth worker at
Birkenhead YMCA. The idea of being a youth worker in a
Christian institution was right. This was my Time for God
placement and I wanted to to serve God by helping these latch
key kids... but the reality was far from romantic. The kids were
difficult, unpredictable and I had to learn the skills. I hadn't a
clue about youth work.

Tax Collectors and Sinners - who would you put in that category today ?

Who are the people that if you brought to Church might cause an eyebrow to be raised ?

Who are the people that are today a bit beyond the pale. These days tax collectors are fine - this suffer from cruel jokes at parties but we know that without them there would be no money to fund the hospitals.

ASK THE CONGREGATION

.. these are the ones who are called to follow like Matthew, like you and me.

Let's reflect on Matthew, who special day in the Church's year we celebrate today.

Matthew - apostle, Evangelist

Matthew- collaborator, money grabber

Matthew whose love of money led him to the custom house, and whose story asks us where does the love of money lead us ?

Matthew who was led away from his religious tradition by money and left his cultural roots for the lure of lucre

Matthew who must have caused his fellow disciples great pain.

Who will not have fitted. Who will have caused problems for the credibility of the whole group of Jesus followers

Matthew who Jesus loved and called - but must have made Jesus' ministry more difficult. The common people will have said Why him. The disciples will have said why him ?

Thank God for Matthew
for this gospel

Without it - no Magi from the East, No star of Bethlehem, No commission to make disciples, no commission to baptise the whole world in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit

We live in a complex global economy

Some of us do very well and are rich extravagantly - that's wrong

Some are poor and millions live on less than dollar a day v- that's wrong too

We know our God is on the side of the poor
We read it in the psalms and throughout the Bible
Bishop David Sheppard reminded us of God Bias to the Poor
Just a few weeks ago we heard the song of Mary at our
Patronal Festival

But, in Matthew we are reminded of the call to live beyond
money
Matthew gives us very compromised western people hope
We are called to follow too. Jesus calls ud away from our tax
booth and cushions to a new life.