

St. Matthew - September 21

Morning Prayer

First Lesson: 1 Kings 19:15-16, 19-21

Second Lesson: Matt 19:16-30

Homily

St. Matthew, as we know, was a tax-collector,
and thus considered by the native Jews
as a money-grubbing traitor,
enriching himself by serving the occupying enemy,
at the expense of his own people.

Perhaps most of this was true.

We do know that Matthew was very prosperous.

But Jesus saw more in him than that,
and called him to be His disciple,
and an Apostle, and the writer of a Gospel.

After Pentecost,

He preached in Judea and in the East,
ultimately dying for his faith,
either in Ethiopia or in Persia.

What memories must have gone through his head
as he wrote what we read today!

A rich young noble came to Jesus.
Perhaps he'd sensed a call

much like what Matthew heard.

Something drew him to the Master

What Jesus had, he wanted,

but what he already had, had such a grip on him
that he could not let it go,

and, instead walked away sadly,

with a deep emptiness in his soul,

that likely lasted all the rest of his life.

Matthew had the same choice offered him one day,
just as did Elisha in our Old Testament reading.

He was also prosperous.

Our text stresses that,

by mentioning twelve yoke of oxen,

that's twenty-four beasts,

seriously expensive livestock

There was a fortune at stake here,

but Elisha wound up his affairs and followed;

and so did Matthew.

Both of them gave up a great deal.

Neither of them had an easy life after that.

They'd both been used to comfort,
to wealth and a certain kind of prestige.

And now they'd given up their wealth,

their servants, their homes,

and became mere students of wandering preachers.

But they knew their destiny.

They had a word for the people of God.

Eventually the Prophet Elijah was taken up
in that fiery chariot, into heaven,
and Elisha continued his work on earth.
Eventually the Lord Jesus,
after He had died and risen,
was taken up into heaven,
and Matthew and the other Apostles
remained to continue His work on earth.

Nothing ever got easy for either of them,
but they carried on the work of God,
and His word and His salvation multiplied.
Matthew ultimately gave up his life,
but he sits today on one of the twelve thrones
around his Lord in heaven.

It's harder for a rich man
to enter into the Kingdom of heaven,
than for a camel
to go through the eye of a needle,
said Jesus,
but he went on:
With God all things are possible,
and Matthew illustrates that well.

Today's Scripture Lessons,
and the life of St. Matthew
present us with a tremendous and difficult,

but not impossible challenge:

We're Americans.
One thing that means is that we have stuff.
Even the poorest of us have enough
to make us look rich in the eyes of other nations.
We are blessed, and should be thankful.
But we hear the question today:
Do we have things?
Or do things have us?
When we hear the call of God,
are the things we need to leave behind
going to keep us from answering the call.
St. Matthew left his house, his riches, his comforts,
and eventually his physical life
in order to follow his Master.
The young nobleman couldn't do that.
How about us?

We Continuing Anglicans
have had practical choices to make.
Many of us were in comfortable churches,
with beautiful buildings and expensive programs,
and sometimes a lot of prestige.
Many of us have had to walk away from all that,
in order to answer the call of truth,
and it often has not been easy.

But are we letting ourselves get comfortable again?
Are we making decisions based more on
preserving what we now have
than on following Our Lord wherever He leads?
Are we valuing our present buildings
the way we valued the ones we had to leave?
Will what we no have hold us back?
Or is the love of Jesus the one thing that matters?
Is bringing that love to our neighbors
the most important thing in our lives?
Or have we gone back to our old habits,
and walked sadly away?

Let us pray.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most
gracious favour, and firther us with thy continual
help; that in all our works begun, continued, and
ended in thee, we may gloirify thy holy Name, and
finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Evening Prayer

First Lesson: Job 28:12-28

Second Lesson: 1 Tim 6:6-19

Homily to be written