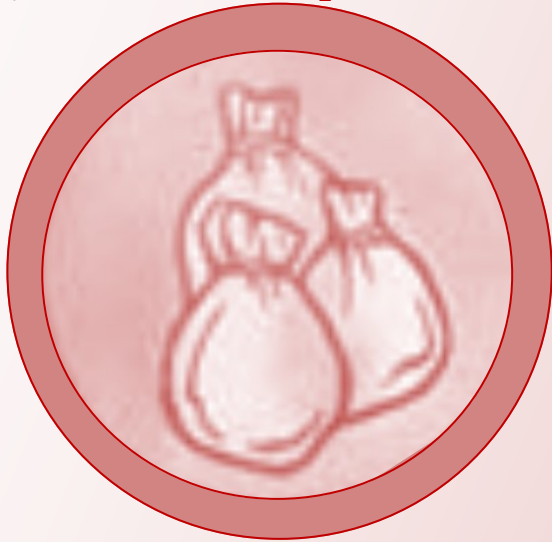


Matthew

“The Disciples”



Matthew is represented by money bags referring to his early occupation as a tax collector.

We first learn about Matthew when he was on the road to Capernaum. He was sitting in his tax booth collecting money. He probably had already paid what was owed to the Roman Empire, and whatever he could collect from the people was his. Tax collectors were notorious for stealing from the people. At this time, his name was Levi. When Jesus called Matthew to be a Disciple the name was changed to Matthew which means “gift of God.” When Christ called him, Matthew responded not only by accepting the call, but he threw a party for all the people so they could also come to know Jesus. Other tax collectors were there also. We can wonder

“You are like salt for all mankind. But if salt loses its taste, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown away and people walk on it.” Matthew 5:13 Good News for Modern Man

why he chose Matthew. The Jewish people hated the tax collectors because they were victims of their stealing. Yet, Matthew was one of the men who wrote a gospel and he spent the rest of his life serving his new master. Can we also accept why the “authorities” were so upset, not only with Christ, but with the disciples who would dare to invite other people, especially other tax collectors, to learn about Christ?

Matthew was told that he was like salt. What does that mean? Have you ever thought of yourself as salt? Alone it is just a tiny thing extracted from the earth in various forms and it doesn't cost much, but it is that added thing that brings out the flavor in food and preserves it. If we are but one grain of salt, working with other grains of salt, can we make a difference? How important is salt? How often do we hear people say that a certain food item would be much better with a little salt? How much better is our life when we have Christ in it?

THE MESSAGE words it *“Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.”*

The route of the Christian is never clearly laid out beforehand. Like Matthew the tax collector, the disciple is simply called out. He is not immediately told where he is going, but he knows the One who has called and promises to walk with him. Consequently the journey, although never easy, is joyous and fruitful.
~ Lyle W. Dorsett

If we look at Matthew's life after the death of Jesus, we could wonder why he followed so willingly. Matthew didn't hesitate. He arose and followed him immediately. If we are willing to be the salt, what is demanded of us? Are we willing to be a disciple?

We think about it, and at times the mercury (our spirit) goes so high in the thermometer built inside of us. We are willing to serve on a committee or maybe even talk with someone about coming to church and getting to know Jesus, our Savior. Then other times we say “Let's not work too hard at it and ask them if they know Jesus.” After all, that requires a commitment. If we are the salt, we must make a difference. Or have we lost our zeal – “our saltiness”?

I think that Matthew and Christ shared a sense of humor in getting the attention of the people. There are several places in the book of Matthew where either he exaggerates or Christ exaggerates in their illustrations. It may be called humor or hyperboles or just a way of getting the people's attention just as Christ used parables in telling a story so people could understand what he was saying and remember it.

Examples are in Matthew 7 when he writes from the Sermon on the Mount *“Why do you notice a splinter in your brother’s eye but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye.”* And later he says *“Let me remove that splinter from your eye while the wooden beam is in your eye.”* Then he told them not to throw pearls before swine. He warned of people who would light a candle and put it under a bushel. Who would do that and then of course there’s always the famous one about the man who built his house on the sand and the rain fell and the floods came so the house fell. No we don’t really think that anyone built his house on the sand, had a log in his eye, or would put pearls down for the cattle to walk on? Each one of these hyperboles had a wonderful message for the people gathered then and for us today. And these are remembered today. Christ spoke and Matthew wrote in a way it is still remembered today. We just need to listen.

When Christ approached Matthew, he did not hesitate to follow even though it meant giving up all his wealth and status. He had probably been despised by the people because he was a tax collector, but now he was loved by someone that he didn’t even really know. He knew that power and money could not compare with being a follower of Jesus Christ. That is something that we also need to know. Matthew was not promised an easy road, neither are we. But we aren’t required to give up everything.

All that is asked of us is a tenth of our income to help spread *“The Gospel.”* Matthew didn’t just accept Christ. He gave his money, his status, his easy life

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:46-48 ESV

to follow Jesus. He saw Christ perform miracles. He went out into the world after the crucifixion of Christ and continued to tell the love of Christ.

Readers and hearers of the Sermon on the Mount understood these sayings and knew they were not intended to be taken literally, but, to a considerable degree, it is the literal text that makes the teaching so memorable. And this Jesus fully understood. It is not humor, satire, but almost sardonic in approaching what we should understand and do.

Matthew is given credit with writing the Gospel of Matthew, and the final command in that book is still a command to us today to carry on the work of Christ. In Matthew 28:19-20 Christ says *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father so many times we look at nature and see the beauty and take it for granted. We eat food daily, and sometimes we stop to give thanks for it. Help us to realize that we are the salt of the world, we are the light of the world, and only through us can You forward Your work to others on this earth so that someday we may all join You eternally. Help us to be proud to be the salt. Help us to make a difference. Help us to show love to all, even the publicans and sinners like ourselves. In thy name we pray. Amen.

1. Are we just salt - a tiny grain in the world? Aren’t we more important than that?
2. Are we guilty of doing the things that Christ mentioned in the sermon on the mount through his hyperboles?
3. Are we willing to follow? Do we ever use hyperboles to get our point across? Ex. I’ve told you a zillion times.”
4. What is the reward? What was the reward for Matthew?
5. Are we the salt of life? Can we make a difference in someone else’s life by what we do, say, and even think?
6. Are we willing to give all that we have on this earth to have eternal life with Him?

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