

Follow Jesus by Following Matthew

- Lst wk J tght us: by nature, we lost. In sinful nature, aprt fr faith/Xp, we all: lost in unbelf, seprtd fr God, condmnd etrnal dth – lost like: shp stuck in thck, or coin burd undr dirt flr. But J found us: brght us faith & made own. And not just us. J has S/F many other lost shp/coins, incldng splcndl we get think re today: man, Mt (Levi). Wish knew why 9/21 was dsgrtd St. Mt's day. Lookd into; cldn't find answr. All know: going back as early as 400s, Xians've set aprt 9/21 as day remem/thank God for Mt. And whnvr we celbrt these minor festvls (saint days, like St. Mt), we certnly not: worshpng, prayng, elevtng divine status, or expctng intrvsn in lives. We wrshp Lord alone; he: helper. But Mt: real prsn; & J chose him as 1/12. Mt: apstl. Means: walkd/talkd w/J; saw mrcls; was givn ability perfrm mrcls (dmns; sick); at table when J insttd HC; at mnt/Olvs when J ascnd hvn. And if all that not engh, Mt: also chosen by HS write insprd acct J's life: bk we call Gos/Mt. Mt: both apstl (12) & evnglst (Gos-wrtr). Only other prsn both A/E: Jn, afr whom ch namd. So Mt: pretty imp guy – not bec so holy/splcnd in/of self (as soon see). But Mt is an exclnt exmp for us of what means follw J. **Vs. 9b.** J calls us follw him too. And we can learn lot re what means follw J by follwng Mt & his exmpl.
- Mt: tax collctr; means despisd by fellow Jews – 2 reasons. 1) Workd for Rmns. Jews hatd Rmns bec contrlld land & ruled over ppl. Working for Rome made you traitor to own ppl. And 2) Way tax collctr earnd income: by chargng hefty % above base tax rate. So, if Rome reqrd 18% tax, guy like Mt cld chrg 25/35%, and just pocket extra. And just like today, ppl hate paying taxes. But back then, nvr sure how much going to: Rome & some greedy tax collctr's prsnl bnk acct. To be a tax collctr like Mt meant you: despisd traitor who stole fr own ppl to make dishonest profit & support Rmns.
- And of all ppl to be his follwr, J chooses Mt tax collctr! **Vs. 9b.** We can learn lot re follwng J by follwng Mt's exmpl. 1st, to follw J, Mt left behnd very good paying job. M: probly one w/ltst ppl in Gal (nice home, fancy clths, plnty fd/drnk). But quit job, left all behnd, bec recgnzd sin/occpn (love/\$, greed, dishnsty); and priortzd J over \$. If we going follw J like Mt did, then we too need leave behnd whtvr sins may be part our life. Maybe our sin is same as Mt's: love/\$, greed. We certly: w/ltst ppl (nice homes, fancy clths, plnty fd/drnk). And not wrong be w/ltst. But what is wrong: loving yr w/ltst more/J, priortznd \$ above J. If you fail to consstntly give genrs offrng to Lord (10%/incm always baseline), then you're stealing fr God & loving \$ more than Lord. If you: not generous w/w/ltst, helpful to others; if you are greedy, stngy, dishonst – then those: sins you've got leave behnd in order follw J. And doesn't have be \$-related sins. God: be sexually pure; no sex outside marg; no filthy imgs/vids. Be verbally pure; do not curse/swr/lie/decv or use filthy lang. But if sexual or verbal sins have chrctrzd our lives, then we've got look at those sins, say: I'm done w/this! Leave it behnd. Leave tax clctng booth, for good. Have that level of complete commtmnt to Sav, like Mt did. That's how we are going follw J.
- Nxt, we can follw Mt's exmpl of follwng J by sharing Gos w/frnds. Look what Mt did: **vs. 10.** Mt threw dinner party for J & invtd frnds: probly other w/ltst tax collctrs & inflntl bsnssmn (Phars: sinners). Mt got'em all tog so could meet J. When J called Mt to follw him in faith, that was so life-chngng for him: wanted others to exprnc J too! So intrdcd them to J. What if we did same thing? What if we intrdcd our non-Xian frnds to J? What if invtd them to a gathrng where they'd meet J & hear Word? And wldn't most natural gathrng place for that kind/mtg be right here, at ch, in wrshp; isn't this our usual get-tog? What if we invtd our frnds to this, just like Mt invtd his frnds to meet J? It's called frndshp evnglsm, and it is today statistcly by far most effective form/outreach: persnlly inviting ppl to come to ch & sitting w/them in wrshp. Mt did it centuries ago, setting an exmpl for us to follw.
- Here's anthr way we will follw Mt: as follwrs/J, we will be lookd down upon by wrld. Non-Xians will think less of you spcfcly bec you: Xian. **Vs. 11.** That: wasn't genuine reqst/info; acctn belittling J & his ppl. In last few decades, a seismic shift has taken place: Xianity's gone fr being genrly acceptd in seclr culture to more/more being unacceptd, even villainizd as relg of bigotry, prejudice, and hate-spch. Gos has always been hated, but an alarmingly increasing # ppl are speaking out vs true Xianity very publicly, negtvlly – which means our chldrn/grndchldrn'll grow up in wrld that's much less accepting of Xp than our prnts/grndprnts wrld. We need undrstd that & be prprd for it! J: **"Whvr wants be my disc must**

deny selves & take up their cross & follw me” (Mt 16:24). Mt: probly martyrd for his faith. Bearing a cross & follwing J will become increasingly chllngng for us, as well – J promsd would be. But also promsd incrdbl blessings & peace for his follwrs. Mt knew that; we know it too.

- Anthr way to follw J by follwng Mt: turn to our Dctr. J: **vs. 12b; 13c.** J not come into this wrld to gather the good ppl (righteous/hlthy) – bec there are none! He came gather ppl who knew they: sick/sinful – and make them better. We call J: Great Phscn body/soul bec he not only heals our physcl ailments; also restores sin-sick souls. But we’ll nvr exprnc that healing fr Dctr J if don’t first recgnz our sprtl sickness. Phars thought perfly hlthy. Mt knew sick. If we ignore our spirtl sickness (like Phars), then it’ll only get worse & evntly kill us. J wants us turn to him as our Dr/Physcn/Sav who alone can heal us. His sinless life heals us; dth cross heals us; his res fr dead heals us. Mt trstd in Dctr J. We follw his exmpl when we put our trust in our Dctr/Sav.
- Finly, J seeks a sincere hrt. Why quotes proph Hosea: **vs. 13ab.** Well, God wanted scrfc; commndd them. But what really wants: your hrt. Don’t come to ch, go thru service, give your offrngs, volntr in cong – just going thru motions. Do it w/sincere hrt. **Vs. 13ab.** J: “Yes, I want your offrngs but even more: I want your hrt. I want you see my hrt/mercy twrd you. I lived/died/rose for you, bec I love you w/my whole hrt. And I forgive you when you don’t love me w/your whole hrt. But I still want your hrt.” When we see how J loves us w/his whole hrt, that moves/motvts us to love J (wrld/will) w/our whole hrt.
- So, **vs. 13a.** One way go/learn: read bk Mt wrote, Gos/Mt. Did you know Mt is only Gos-wrtr to record J saying: **“You: light/wrld... Let your light shine before others, that they see good deeds & glorify Fr/hvn” (5:14-16); “Come to me all weary burdnd rest; take my yoke upon you & learn fr me, for I gentle, humble/hrt; and you’ll find rest souls” (11:28-29); “Where 2/3 come tog in my name, there I am w/them” (18:20); “Come, you who blessd by Fr; take your inhrtnc, kngdm prepd for you since crtn/wrld” (25:34); “All authrty hvn/earth givn me. Thrfr go make discs, baptzng FSHS, & tchng them obey evthng cmmndd. And surely I am w/you always very end age” (28:18-20)?** These precious wrds/J were recorded only by Mt. Mt went fr being hated traitor to chosen disc; fr dishonest tax colctr to A/E of J. It’s only by grace that J called Mt; and only by grace that J calls us. He calls us to follw him in faith. And today we can learn lot re follwng J by follwng Mt & his exmpl. Happy St. Mt’s day!

Matthew 9:9-13

⁹As 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.

¹⁰While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

¹²On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

