

✠ Matthew 9:9-13 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

The prophets and preachers of God do not go where they want. God sends them. He sends them among the children of men to proclaim His Word, His Gospel. It does not matter whether the people hear with hearing ears or whether the saving message falls on infertile, deaf soil. The message does not change and the mode in which it is conveyed does not change. It is preached, proclaimed.

The preaching may occur as a sinner reads the Bible, or the preaching may come from the lips of a preacher, but the hearer only hears if the words are preached. That is why the feet that bring good news are beautiful, because they travel with a message worthy of hearing. The apostle Matthew was just such a preacher. A gift from God. He proclaimed the message just as fervently and boastfully as did St. Peter or St. Paul. He spoke equally to crowds who wanted to stone him and to people who sought his knowledge of the Christ.

It was the sinner, this tax collector, who God chose to be an instrument of the Gospel. Matthew recorded the Gospel in written words, given to the Church as a gift from God. It is nothing less than a divine miracle that the preaching of the apostle Matthew is available at every bookstore. You needn't have a degree in Greek or a Masters in Biblical studies to hear this gift from God, you simply need to open it and turn the page. Thus, the apostle continues to preach in all the world, just as he was called and ordained by our Lord to do.

Preaching is not like story telling. It is not like prose. Preaching is authoritative on its own accord. The hearer does not infuse authority into the words he or she hears, but the words, which have authority because they are God's words, infuses faith in the heart of the hearer. Thus, faith comes by hearing, and that of the Word of God.

But men are fickle and easily sidetracked. Often what passes as preaching is merely moralistic do's and don't's, rather than proclaiming the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross. Often what passes as preaching is actually praise of human achievements and perceived advances in tolerance, society, and science. Often what passes as preaching is not preaching at all, but rather men bolstering men in vain pride and self-worship.

Often, even though it has the right words, preaching does not proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, giving the living bread to the starving multitudes, but rather strives to make men feel secure in themselves by telling them that they are not condemned by what they do or think. The world's preaching preaches that man is only condemned when he condemns others for what they do or think, whether he is a prophet of God or a father instructing his children. What passes as preaching most often is man's attempts to justify himself. Thus we hear so-called preachers preaching the inherent goodness of man and the viability of any of man's choices and actions.

But the Lord's preacher keeps on preaching. He continues in his given dictum, "Thus says the Lord God," whether they hear or refuse to hear. The preacher is not free to preach his own

message or agenda, but must eat the scroll with the words of the Lord on it so that what is in his heart will pour forth from his lips. St. Matthew's preaching continues to call the children of men sinners and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those sinners. Yet the preacher does not remove himself from the crowd of sinners. Just as Paul would call himself the worst of all sinners, so, too, Matthew tells us that he was the worst of sinners, a tax collector.

Thus the preacher hears his own preaching, the words of Jesus, and is convicted and consoled. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." Hearing Jesus say these words was just as wonderful and powerful to Matthew as it is to you. For like you, Matthew was a sinner, a man guilty of sinning against God and man. And he was called just as you are. Not with bells and whistles, not with pomp and circumstance, but with the Word of God. It is the Gospel that called Matthew, and it is the Gospel that calls you.

"Follow me. Follow me for I am Life. I will lead you to still waters and I will quiet your soul. I will heal your wounds, and I will heal your sicknesses. Do not think to yourself that you are righteous, for I do not call the righteous, but rather confess your sins, for it is sinners that I call to righteousness."

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠