

Hosea 5:15-6:6

Matthew 9:9-13,18-26

Romans 4:13-25

“Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and pay your vows to the Most High.” AMEN!

“No time left for you...
Not time left for you...
I got, got, got, got no time!”

(I know my limits!) :-)

That one's from the band, Guess Who.

“Busy, busy, busy.” We say.

Work keeps you busy, appointments
tie up my time, and if you have children,
forget about having any free time to yourself.

No kids around?
You're perhaps retired? HA!

That's when you get really busy.

There are books and apps that help us organize
and try to find time to relax and meditate,
but it's not long before that even
becomes another task to complete.

Busy, busy, busy... We got no time!

People are busy in today's gospel.

With the calling of Matthew, we find
the tax collector is busy at work
cheating people out of money and
collecting taxes for the Roman empire.

I mean he's actually doing it because
we're told he's "sitting at the booth."

Busy, busy, busy...

You and I are hopefully not "busy"
like Matthew the tax collector, but
watch as he drops everything and
follows Jesus.

He walked away from something that
was making him rich...
extortion was/is lucrative work.

His "slithering" surely kept him busy
while sitting at the tax booth.

Then he said "yes" to Jesus and
"no" to his former life. (Pause)

Now, there are all sorts of assumptions we can make.

Perhaps Matthew knew Jesus.

Maybe they'd met prior or he'd heard
Jesus speak and watched
what he was doing.

Maybe the voice of Matthew's conscience
finally got the better of him and he found
he could not longer swindle his
own community for financial gain.

Who knows?

The better question for us to consider is,
"What did Jesus see in Matthew
that know one else saw?" (Pause)

One day, a long time ago, a six year old boy
was baptized and he joined the church.

It wasn't because he'd wanted to
be baptized and join the church.

It was done because that was
what his parents wanted.

He'd rather be playing outside or tackle
the latest Atari video game.

The kid found no joy in the rituals of religion like his parents.

Mom sat on one side and the dad on the other, as patient and attentive as possible, while the boy fumed in the middle.

He participated in other things at the church, but not because he wanted to.

The child simply had no choice.

The parents had decided and they followed through on their commitment to get him to church.

Years later, the boy's feelings of atheism were stronger than ever as he sat in the pew, now at age 17.

Then, the pastor said something shocking to him after service.

She said, "Have you ever considered entering seminary and becoming a pastor?"

The young man chuckled at the pastor's question and said,

“No, I’ve honestly never thought of that!”

Then to himself, he said,

“How could a non-believer become a pastor?”

Time marched on but, the question
from the pastor stuck with him.

And as it goes in life, he moved away
was thrown some life-changing experiences
and other encounters with people.

He ran for a while from the pastor’s question,
but found himself at his wits end.

With no where else to turn he went
back to church at age 30.

Two years later, he entered the seminary
and became a pastor.

What did the pastor see in the boy
that know one else saw?

How could a shy, fearful,
hardly anything to say boy -
minister to other people?

It’s hard to put into words, but it must be close

to what Jesus saw in Matthew.

Something that no one else saw.

Now before you conclude that I'm talking about
my call story let me stop you.

This account was one from
Pastor Wayne Keller's sermon.

You've likely heard similar accounts from
past vicar's that have come
through St. Stephen.

While each witness account is unique
they all have a common thread.

"God never calls us to something,
without first calling us away
from something." (Pause)

So, Matthew was not just a tax collector.

It is so compelling, I think,
to consider Matthew there
doing "business" behind his booth/table
and then he came out
from behind it to follow Jesus.

What kind of barrier might you be hiding behind?

What is keeping you from following Jesus, today?

It doesn't have to be a table or a desk.

Perhaps it's an addiction or some other barrier
or space you're occupying and
need to walk away from.

Maybe, like me - you have the
"I got no time," excuse.

Remember this,
"God never calls us to something,
without first calling us away from something."

What does Jesus see in you that no else does?

We all have opportunities to speak
the good news to people we cross paths with,
not in hurtful or forced ways or through
some evangelism program.

There, in the everyday events of our lives,
we meet new people or join in conversation
with people we've known for a long time.

In both of these new and old relationships

we have the chance to listen to people.

Sometimes they'll reveal their pain or worry.

They may ask you how you're able
to find joy in a world full of hurt.

We needn't punish or make anyone feel ridiculed.

Nor do we need to scare them into Jesus' arms.

We simply listen to what the other is saying
and tap into the feelings beneath their words
and offer an invitation to be called into
a new experience.

Contrary to the bickering on social media.

We cannot change anyone.

That's the business of Christ's Spirit.

We simply invite and offer ourselves
as good news sharers.

In other words, instead of buying into
the cultural assumptions of who is "in" and
who is "out," we accept Jesus' invitation
to look at people through his eyes,

and see what he sees.

AMEN!