

Matthew Meets Jesus

One day Jesus was traveling through a town called Capernaum. As he was walking, he saw a man named Matthew collecting taxes from the people. People usually don't like tax collectors because people usually don't like to pay taxes. They don't like to have to give part of their money to the government even though that money helps to pay for important things. It is against the law to not pay taxes, so everyone does it even though they don't like it. But in that time, they hated it even more than people do today. Back then, the tax collectors would always try to trick people into paying too much money and then keep the extra for themselves. Some tax collectors collected a little extra because that's what they were told to do so they could get paid to do their job, but some tax collectors were greedy and sneaky, and they would collect a lot of extra money to keep for themselves. Some tax collectors were very rich from all the extra money they collected.

When Jesus saw Matthew, he walked up to his table and said, "Follow me." Matthew had heard of Jesus and believed he was the Son of God. Instantly, he did just what Jesus told him to do. He stood up and followed Jesus. Right there in that very minute, Matthew decided to quit being a tax collector and become one of Jesus's disciples, one of his special helpers, and follow him wherever he went. Matthew took Jesus to his house and invited all his tax collector friends over for a meal so he could introduce them to Jesus. Jesus sat and ate with lots of tax collectors that day.

While he was eating with the tax collectors some very important men called Pharisees walked by and saw him. The Pharisees didn't like Jesus. They didn't believe he was good enough to be the Son of God, so they weren't very nice to him. They wanted to make him look bad. They asked Jesus why he was even hanging around such bad people. They thought if Jesus was really the Son of God, he would only want to hang around with nice people who tried to follow the rules. Jesus told the Pharisees that he loved all people. He didn't think of people as good people and bad people, he just thought of all people as people who needed to be loved and told about God's love. Then he said, "people who are not sick don't need to go to the doctor." Just like doctors help people who are sick, he was helping people who didn't know about God. If doctors didn't go around sick people, sick people would not get better just like if he didn't talk to people who didn't know about God, they would never learn about God. He wanted to be sure that everyone could know just how much God loved them and everyone means everyone, even the people who might be a little harder to love.