

## **Minor Festivals: St. Matthew, Apostle, September 21**

### **Museum or Hospital?**

Some people have the impression that the “Church” is a museum in which the “righteous and holy people” are put on display. Because of conscience and the natural law that God has written on the hearts of all, such people don’t think they are “good enough” to go to church. They say things like, “If I step into church, lightening will strike or the building will collapse.” Why do they have this impression? Because by nature their knowledge of God is incomplete. By nature, they know that God is a righteous Judge who punishes sinners. By nature, they know that they are sinners who deserve God’s just punishment in hell. What they don’t know by nature is that God is also a compassionate God who loved us enough to become one of us in the womb of the Virgin Mary so that he could live perfectly, die innocently, and rise victoriously from the dead so we might have forgiveness and life. Because the natural knowledge of God can only bring guilt and fear of God, they assume that the people in church are perfect and so they don’t come in. They don’t realize the people in church know they are unworthy of God’s love. They know of their sins and confess them to the LORD. They know that Jesus died for their sins and freely gives them forgiveness and release from their guilt. Unbelievers don’t realize that we go to church because we are sinners in need of a Savior.

Someone once said that the Church is not a museum in which perfect people are put on display, rather, it is a hospital for sin-sick souls. Jesus taught us that truth. One day he came upon a tax collector’s booth. The tax collector was a Jew named Matthew. As far as the Jews were concerned, anybody who was a tax-collector was on his way to hell. After all, how could a self-respecting Jew work for the dreaded, hated Roman government? Tax-collectors were known for over-taxing the people and stuffing their pockets with the cash they bilked out of the people.

Jesus said to Matthew, “Follow me.” Immediately he left his lucrative tax-collecting business and followed Jesus. Matthew knew he was a sinner. He rejoiced in Christ’s priceless forgiveness. He showed his joy by inviting his fellow tax-collectors and friends who belonged to the underbelly of society to a great banquet in honor of Jesus. He wanted to share with them the precious news of sins forgiven through Jesus.

When the self-righteous Jewish religious leaders saw Jesus rubbing shoulders with such scum, they said, “Why does Jesus eat with tax-collectors and ‘sinners’?” Jesus put them in their place by saying, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick.” In other words, people who don’t think they’re sinful—like the Jewish religious leaders—won’t rejoice in the message of a Savior. But those who know their sin and feel their guilt rejoice that Jesus shed his blood for them.

So, what impression do we give to those who don’t yet know Jesus? Do we give others the impression our church is a museum for the righteous by displaying a holier-than-thou, self-righteous attitude? Or, with humble, repentant hearts and attitudes, do we give others the impression our church is a hospital for sin-sick souls where we never run out of beds for those in need of treatment?

Pastor Zuberbier

*After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read Matthew 9:9-13.*