

Matthew 9: 9-13 // Even so, come

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Date: 07 June 2026

Preacher: Earl Buchan

[0:00] That's Matthew chapter 9 verses 9 to 13. How honest do you want me to be right now? Do you appreciate honesty? I'm assuming you do. I do. So I'm just going to freely say that this sermon is pretty unfinished. It's the way the week went and every time I went to finish it and I got here at like five in the morning kind of thing. Five thirty I think it was. And the Lord's like no, no.

And so I just pray because I realize, OK, he's either going to teach me something through catastrophic failure this morning or he has something else planned and I'm riding that wave. So I truly fear for you. But anyway, I will just say this. I've set Murray up to fail earlier with the announcements.

Like I write them on a sheet here just trying to make it bulletproof. But I realized that I even named it wrong. It's just an evening service for FCC.

And it's not to gather more people to do more things in the sense of work and busyness. I'm going to start out doing the sermon and playing my guitar by myself.

And I'm assuming and hoping that people will feel called to gather around and that will change where I'm not doing everything very quickly, hopefully before we even start. So I'm praying through this next little while. And one of the things was I was like, OK, Lord, you want me to do this?

[1:25] Like I don't have a guitar at the moment. I gave my last one to my eldest son. And then, you know, my my new friend Aaron was like, well, I can loan you mine. I'm like, OK, all right. So obediently stepping through it. So it's an evening service.

It's not going to affect our Sunday morning at all. I will be teaching through another book altogether. Well, the Bible, you know, just to be clear. Yeah.

Anyway, the morning of honesty. Here we go. All right. Matthew chapter nine, verses nine to 13.

And thank you, Emma, for reading that so well.

We have to kind of take a step back and look at what what's happening here. I did this a little bit of a test this morning where I asked the discipleship group that meets in our new room over here just simply, what's your favorite part of this passage or what do you get from it?

And everybody very understandably and myself also gravitates towards the latter part of this passage where we look at the beauty of what is being said here.

[2:34] That the Lord desires mercy and not sacrifice. But I wanted to redirect because two of my favorite words in this passage are follow me. And we have to understand who it is that Jesus is talking to and his particular situation, because then it makes the last part of that passage that Emma just read for us make a lot more sense.

Matthew was a tax collector. The author of what we're reading from today was a tax collector. And we have to understand what that is. This is a person that would have been hated by his own people, considered a traitor, hated by his own people, so much so that he was considered a tax collector, would have been considered ceremonially unclean.

And if you came near them, if you had anything to do with them relationally, you too would then be considered a sinner and ceremonially unclean. He was not allowed to go to synagogue.

He was an outcast that way. This is our Matthew from the book that we're reading right now. And this is Matthew that we're going to be learning from and reading from.

The same Matthew was an outcast to his own people and hated. His testimony was not allowed in any court because a tax collector was considered on the level of a thief and a murderer.

[3:57] So you think, well, okay, maybe Matthew found some buddies with the Romans. Thank you. This is who he's working for. So he obviously picked a side. The problem is that he didn't because the tax collectors were very, very well known at padding things.

So you owe me 10 bucks? Well, actually, you owe me 15. Nothing you can do about it. I'll tell the Romans. So people hated him. But then the Romans, he would lie to or could lie to as a tax collector and say, you know what?

They skipped their taxes. You're going to have to be extra hard on them and just pocket what they did give him. So you see, the Romans didn't trust him. His own people hated him. He was a man that was stuck in between.

And I don't know about you, but there's moments of my life where I have felt in between. And I've just thought, you know, Lord, if there's a way where I could have a reset button right now and just start over, I would take it.

And sometimes those come in our lives. They're oddly enough, and I didn't orchestrate this, but there was a guy named Matt in a place that I worked. And he knew I was a Christian. And in the lunchroom, which a lot of evangelism can happen in the lunchroom if you're praying for it.

[5:11] And he comes in, and he just looked white. Like, really, you know, and somebody just looks exhausted. Their life has just handed it to them, and they're tired. And Matt was sitting there, and I'm like, Matt, what's wrong?

Oddly enough, he was the accountant of the company. Wow, see, the parallel is crazy. Anyway, so Matt, the accountant of the company, sits there, and he's telling me that he's had some serious problems in his marriage.

And he starts just, you know, trauma dumping a bit, going through it all. And I'm listening there, just eating my sandwich, just listening. And I said, Matt, you ever just want to have a reset button in your life? Where you just kind of restart and just reboot and wake up again and just have that fresh new start to your life?

And he's like, man, I would do anything for that right now. I said, would you let me tell you how I met Jesus? Are you that desperate? And he's like, no. I said, well, then you don't want to restart, because Jesus was my restart.

And he said, okay, okay, how do you mean by that? And I shared with him how I met Jesus. I shared with him the restart that Christ was in my life and continues to be. So I look at our little accountant here that we're reading about, Matt, Matthew.

[6:22] And I wonder if this man in between, hated by his own people, distrusted by the employer, if he wasn't looking for a restart this day. I don't see any evidence that Matthew and Jesus were complete strangers.

I don't. It's quite possible that Jesus passed by Matthew at his booth fairly often. There's nothing to say otherwise. It's possible that Matthew, any time he heard Jesus speaking, like on this day, he just kind of hung around the fringe.

Maybe climbed a tree, depending on your translation and the book that you're reading in. He would do anything to kind of see, because there was something about this message, this life-giving message, that appealed to that man within Matthew, who was hated by some, distrusted by everybody, who just wished he could have a restart.

It's awful to feel in between like that, to have no home, to have no friends, to have no people that really you can just relax with and be with. But the people that he did know, the friends that he did have, society would shun other tax collectors, people that would be considered harlots.

Matthew related with these people, the kind of people Jesus would hang around with and is about to. So let's just read verse 9 and I'm going to dive in.

[7:49] As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, follow me. And he rose and followed him.

Jesus sees not only who we once were. He sees who we can be. I don't know about you, but that's an incredible thought of hope.

Jesus doesn't just see. He knows who we were. He doesn't look at that. He knows who we can be. And in your life, maybe right now, the Lord is saying, follow me.

But Lord, I've done all of this. I don't deserve that. I've made these mistakes. Yeah, yeah. Follow me. But Lord, I'm not educated. I haven't studied this. No, yeah. Follow me.

But Lord, I've committed all of these things over here. I've done this. I've lied about that. Yeah. Follow me. He's not asking for Matthew's resume. He's asking for his feet to get up and walk and follow him.

[8:52] I wonder at times if Matthew didn't wonder if it were too late for him to start again. And maybe there's someone here right now that just thinks, just too late.

It isn't. It's never too late. Never too late. Follow the Lord.
Follow the Lord. Matthew heard Jesus' invitation and accepted it. He lost some aspects of his life. There's things that we have to give up.
There are things we have to walk away from. When we listen to the words, follow me from the Lord. He lost a comfortable job. But he found destiny.
He lost a good income. I mean, you know, untoward, thieving kind of income. But he was wealthy. But he found his honor.
[9:50] He lost a comfortable security in the world. There would always be a need for tax collectors. But he found an adventure. And as we know, it was an adventure that was worth dying for.

And he did. But we'll read about that another day. We may accept the challenge of Christ. And if we do, we find ourselves losing some things to gain everything in Jesus.
I don't know what you'll have to give up when the words, follow me, come to your ears. Maybe you've already been giving them up. And you're already following him. Maybe. But think about those things that you'll have to give up if you were Matthew in that marketplace.
And Jesus just looks at you and says, follow me. Follow me. Maybe our worldly ambitions have to go.
But we'll find peace and joy in a life that we've never known before. I like to think, just imagine this for a moment. That the years that Jesus spent with these guys would have been around times of campfire as well.
[11:03] Laughter. I'm sure. Hardship. Persecution. Yes. But brotherhood and community and something real? Absolutely. Can you imagine the belonging that Matthew must have felt in those times?

Where he would not have felt that prior? He's one of the guys. I wonder if sometimes he was kind of sitting there and just, somebody pinch me. This is amazing. I'm one of the guys.
I'm not hated. I'm loved. I'm accepted. And we all want that, don't we? And we can only find that truly in Christ.
So when he says, follow me, it's not just simply follow me and come and die. Because that is a part of the call. Even if it's just a death to yourself.
Okay? But that come and follow me is into belonging and meaning and community and purpose. It's something powerful in Christ. Something more than we had before.
[12:05] It's into a life that is yet to come, but we're living now. And it's a promise that the Lord gives us. That he'll be with us even to the end of the day.

Matthew left his tax collector's table, but he took his pen with him. Because, you see, some of the things that we bring with us when the Lord calls us are the talents, skills, and abilities.
He brought his pen. We have the book of Matthew to thank for us. Thank that for. I don't know if the other 12 were particularly good at writing. I don't know that. But I do know Matthew was.
And we have this gospel as a result. This account of this adventure. Verses 10 to 13. And as Jesus reclined at the table in the house, Behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.
And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? But when he heard it, he said, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

[13:17] Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. You know, I find interesting this verse 13. Go and learn what this means.
His audience was to the Pharisees and the scribes. They knew their scripture. You know, Jesus is basically telling them, Go read your Bible, guys. Right?
Go read your Bible. Right? Go and learn what this means. You know the words, but you don't know what they mean. Okay? He's telling learned people in the scripture to go back and read it and figure it out.

I desire mercy and not sacrifice. Because Jesus not only called Matthew, but he sat at a table with all his friends. People that were also rejected.
He went where the need was greatest. The doctor's calling and place in this world should be with those who are sick and need help.

[14:17] And at the time, the religious establishment, they wanted people to be well. They weren't cruel. They didn't want the sick to remain sick. They just didn't want to have anything to do with it and thereby infect themselves.

So long as it was at arm's length. Jesus just got right in there. That's where a doctor really needs to be. Is right in the thick of it.

Right in the action. Jesus never said that there were some people so good that they didn't need healing and salvation. It's important to understand that.

He didn't say that there's some people that just don't need salvation. That's not what he was saying. Jesus came to invite everyone to his life. But those who are so self-satisfied that they're convinced of their own goodness, they don't see the need of a savior in their life.

And therefore, the invitation is something you can pass up. It was pointed out earlier that I thought it was a really interesting parallel with the rich young ruler. Jesus, you know, this guy comes to him and says, teacher, I've done this.

[15:23] I've been a good boy. You know, I've learned the scripture. I've done all this kind of stuff. And Jesus is like, great job. You've done well. Now go and sell everything and come and follow me. And it says the young man went away sad because he had much wealth.

By contrast, it's not that Matthew didn't have much wealth. He had a lot to lose. But when your heart is ready for the doctor, you give away everything for him.

When your heart is ready. And that's why Jesus knows that the healthy don't need the doctor. It's not that they don't need to be saved. Everybody does. It's just that they don't think they need help. And Matthew was aware that he needed help. He was a man in between, hated and mistrusted. And therefore, when Jesus said, come and follow me, he knew it was the restart button that he needed in his life.

It's the same restart you and I need. It just depends if we see it that way or not. Those who are very aware of their need, they sin, and why they need a savior, accept the invitation to a new life freely and easily.

[16:40] The people who know why they are saved. It's very interesting. You meet people along the way in the world. You know, we worked for the Salvation Army for, I don't know, I think a couple of years.

And in different roles. I was a youth outreach coordinator. And it was really interesting. Because we, like, I'm one of those students where if I'm going to take a course, I'll try and read the materials before the course starts.

Just because I want to have a better understanding, I'm annoying that way. Anyway, and so we were thinking about becoming officers, which is their version of pastors in the Salvation Army. And so I read the officer's manual before I even applied for anything. And there's this funny little clause in there that one of the rules is in your dormitory, you have to keep the window open one inch minimum at night.

And I thought, well, that's kind of weird. That's a little controlling. What if I wanted an inch and a half? You know, what if I want it open or closed? I mean, what, you know, what do you care?

[17:46] So, of course, being myself, I had to ask. I'm like, I asked the captain, I said, what is all this about? You know what it is? It's because people were being saved and commissioned into pastoral roles so quickly at the time that this was written that personal hygiene wasn't on par.

Okay? Keep the window open because you all stink, right? You haven't figured out that personal hygiene like deodorant and washing up and stuff like that. But you know what? You know Jesus. You love him.

So get to work. Go and tell people about Christ. And that's why they had to have that. And I can't help but think this sometimes that when I read this about Matthew, it wasn't looking at his resume. It was checking him out. Come. Follow me. Let's go. I've seen you here. I know your job. I know that you're hated by everybody, distrusted by most, but I want you to come with me.

The Father in heaven gave me your name. You come and follow me, son. And he gets him and follows. So it's a funny little thing. Keep your window cracked open an inch.

[18:51] Because that's how fast the movement moved. That's how many people met Jesus so quickly they couldn't commission pastors fast enough. Imagine that.

Imagine if our church culture kept up with that. We couldn't commission pastors fast enough. That personal hygiene would have to actually have a footnote in an officer's manual.

Crazy. Anyway. I'll leave that gross bit for later. The Pharisees and the scribes were more concerned with the keeping of their own holiness than helping another in their sin. They were like doctors who refused to visit the sick so they wouldn't catch what was going around. Well, we'll pray for them. But we're not going to go visit them. Well, this person's stuck in sin. That's great. But you know what? If I'm near them, I'm going to associate with them. People will think when they look around that I'm like that person. That's how twisted it was.

[19:55] Jesus never operated like that. You know, I do have a funny story. One that Maria hates. And I'm going to say it anyways. But I knew a lot of hookers in Vancouver.

Okay. And what I mean by that, just to be really clear, is that it was a part of the street ministry that I was involved with. You got to know a lot of people in a lot of different ways of life.

Okay. And sometimes I would say that, and people are like, that sounds pretty weird. And it does. Until you understand the context. Okay. Because one of the things that I worked with, Vancouver Police, for a very short while, because this was quite depressing actually, is the people that wanted to get off the street, they would have a van.

And because the Johns, the guys who controlled the hookers, were really never very far off at all. You'd go up to them and say, do you want out? And if they said yes, then there was a hand signal, right?

Which was just simply, you know, moving down and tapping your leg. The van would drive up. She would get in. And they would drive away. She would never be seen again. And I mean that they would take her to a safe house outside the city where she'd transition.

[21:03] They'd give her food, lodging, work, a new life, and help her on. So when I say I knew a lot of hookers, it's in that context. Okay. Just to be really clear. It's a beautiful, beautiful ministry.

It still goes on to this day. The police still help a lot of people. Right. And do you know how many of those women meet Jesus after that? It's off the hook. Because they've been given a restart in their life.

A new life. And it takes people to be willing enough to go down and be this close to them. Okay.

And say, do you want out? Because a lot of people wouldn't want to be seen with them.

I just have something broken up in here and I don't care. Right. And that's the beauty of it. Is that if we are able to be around people that other people don't want to associate with.

We'll start to see this grace where God says, no, I desire mercy. I desire mercy. I desire more than your religious observance. I desire mercy to those who need mercy.

[22:07] I desire mercy. Says the Lord. So sometimes you've got to get your hands dirty. Sometimes you have to be around people that may tarnish your reputation if seen around them.

It's okay. Right. God's bigger. Jesus wasn't worried about that. I mean, think about Matthew. If he, if Jesus were building a brand or like a speaker profile or an itinerant preacher profile, he would kind of want to, well, who is it going to be?

I can bring around me. That's going to make me look good. Matthew was not that guy. None of the disciples were for that matter, but certainly not Matthew. And do you think Jesus cared about that? Not for a second. He was like, follow me. There was no insecurity in Jesus. He knew exactly who he was. He knew what he was here for. Anyway. When we see someone struggling with something, we should rush to help them and not condemn them for their mistake.

This is something we have to be very, very careful with. I don't know about you, but I know when I mess up. I don't need people to say, you know, I usually got a pretty good idea when I've sinned.

[23:16] Okay. When I've made a really big mistake. And if I don't, then please tell me anyways. I don't mind being called out, but if it's a personal thing and I know I have strayed from the Lord and I've made a mistake, I don't need a billboard to tell me.

What I do need is someone to say, it's going to be okay. It's going to be okay. This is not world ending. There's going to be a dawn tomorrow morning.

You're going to see it. And I'm going to help you get there. That's what we need people to do when they come to us with tragedy and difficulty in their life. When they have made mistakes and the things have blown up and their world is on fire.

They don't need people to throw gasoline on it and say, I told you so. Right? It's the last thing we need to hear. We need mercy. They preached the Pharisees a goodness that came with condemnation rather than forgiveness and sympathy.

They'd sooner leave you in the gutter than give you a hand up. And we actually see that with the Good Samaritan in a way, don't we? That story. They practiced a religion that looked pretty on the outside, but it never really equated to practical help.

[24 : 26] It's kind of like when I was saying a couple of weeks back. When I talked about, you know, do unto others as you'd have them do unto you. In this line of thinking, if you're doing the speed limit down to 54 to Stratford, good for you.

You want everybody to do that, right? No erratic driving. Just, you know, do the speed limit. Get to Stratford, wherever you're going, and that's fine. And you're doing good by doing that.

But if someone's broken down on the side of the road, do you pull over and help? See, we can follow the law and not do the right thing. And that's the difference when it comes to mercy.

Is that we can follow the law, like, well, I'm sure glad they're coming to church. Did you go up and tell them that? Did you go up and say, I'm really glad you're here. Thank you for trusting us with being here.

I know you're going through a rough time. What do you need? How can I help? There's a difference between the two. Hosea, chapter 6, verse 6.

[25 : 29] For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. We may go through all of the motions of looking good in church. We may show up and have perfect attendance and everything may be good.

That's great. But if we never help the person in need, then our religion can be about ourselves and not the Lord. Because if the Lord doesn't care about his reputation, if the Lord isn't worried about standing beside a hooker with his arm around her, if the Lord doesn't care about these things, neither should we.

And it's a challenge to all that we hold dear. It really is. I know. It's rough. But there's beauty on the other side of this. Matthew, you want to come and follow me?

Great. But you know what? Let's have a feast. Invite all your friends. Invite everybody. Because I'm here to heal the sick. I'm here to be with the outcasts, the ones that are stuck in between.

I'm here to be with the hated. I'm here to be with the ones that are marginalized, mistrusted, that feel they have no hope in their life. Bring them over, buddy. Bring them. And he did.

[26 : 41] Many tax collectors and sinners came. In verse 11, And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, Why does your teacher eat with the tax collectors and sinners? And the answer is very simple.

Jesus is a friend of sinners. He is. Jesus, friend of sinners. Romans 5.8, But God shows his love for us in this, that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

There will come a day of judgment. There will be a day of justice. There will be a time where the Lord sets all things right. But never forget that Jesus came to save sinners and the lost.

And he came to bring salvation. And for whatever reasons that are beyond my understanding, he works with us, our hearts, our hands and feet, to come alongside of the hooker and say, Do you want out?

Who are you going to come alongside today? Who is it in your life that you have to take a risk and say, I love you. And we're going to get out. And you're going to be okay.

[27 : 49] Who is it? The Pharisees thought sinners were just common people. Anyone who didn't live up to ceremonial cleanliness and purity. And they believed a good rabbi like Jesus would never, ever be associated with them.

Never. Verse 12. But when he heard it, he said, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. And this was an idea that the Pharisees could not understand.

Because the Pharisees were like doctors who wanted to avoid all contact with sick people. It sounds weird to say that out loud. But that's exactly what it was like. They wanted to be doctors. They just didn't want to be around sick people. Jesus came to benefit those who know their need. And the proud who do not see their need, they don't see that they need Jesus.

The invitation is often rejected. Verse 13. Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

[29 : 01] Mercy is more important than ritual or religious service. A transformed heart is more important than religious performance and what we look like.

Compassion for people is more important than guarding our reputation. Let it slip. Let it slide. Let it slide. If it's for the name of Jesus. God would rather see us forgive others, help the broken, love the

outcast, and extend grace to everyone, than have an unwelcoming life or an unwelcoming church. Let's be a church without walls, figuratively speaking. I'm glad for these walls. Okay? But let's be a church without walls when it comes to our hearts.

I'm going to read just this last part of Matthew 9, verses 35 to 38, before I pray. And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every affliction.

And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. I want to stop right there. Harassed and helpless.

[30:14] You know that he's referring to his religion. Harassed with rules they could never possibly live up to. Never. Not in a million years.

You can't tie a knot, but your wife can on that day. It's just so hard. They would go into it forever. He saw them harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

People desiring for fresh, clean water. For grass that they could eat from, for a tree they could be safe under. A sheep without a shepherd. And that's how many people we see.

And I would dare say there's hundreds of them in Texoma. Hundreds and hundreds of them. That our people are desiring for a restart in their life. They would love nothing more for someone to say, I know where you've been, but there's someone and somewhere better.

Let's go. Come with me. Follow me. I know that there are hundreds and hundreds of people here that are sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

[31:21] Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Let us be so quick to send people to do the work of God that we've got to have a clause that says, crack your window an inch.

As silly as it may seem, whatever it may be for us. Everybody's got pretty good hygiene here. I'm just saying, you know. Let's just be really good at field commissions.

Go. Follow Christ. Follow him. If it's down the street, go. If it's in this church, go. If it's in another country, go. Follow him. Let's pray.