

# St. Matthew

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Preacher: Father Randall Russell

[ 0 : 00 ] In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Today we celebrate the Feast of St. Matthew, who is the patron saint of bankers and tax collectors for obvious reasons.

Before St. Matthew was called to be one of our Lord's twelve disciples, he was first a tax collector, which meant that he had to know a thing or two about money.

But what I personally find so very interesting about St. Matthew's conversion isn't so much anything he did as it is something he did not do.

For St. Matthew did not serve as the treasurer for our Lord's ministry, which means that he was not the one who oversaw all the financial donations our Lord would receive.

No, that task instead went to, of all people, Judas Iscariot. For in John chapter 12, we read, Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.

[ 1 : 25 ] And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who would betray him, said, Why was this fragrant oil not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?

This, he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because Judas Iscariot was a thief and had the money box, and he used to take what was put in it.

But why? Why wasn't that one disciple who clearly had a financial background, who before he served as an apostle for our Lord, first served as a tax collector for Rome, why wasn't he?

Why wasn't St. Matthew the one put in charge of our Lord's purse? Or for that matter, why wasn't St. Nathanael, an Israelite in whom there is no deceit?

He certainly sounds like a trustworthy guy to me. Or what about St. Peter? Or St. John? Or what about any one of our Lord's disciples other than Judas Iscariot to serve as the treasurer of our Lord's ministry?

[ 2 : 49 ] I mean, why him? Why Judas? Why entrust a treacherous thief with money? And whenever I ask this question, the only answer that makes any sense to me is the one that is found in Isaiah chapter 55.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For the kingdom of heaven is not like the kingdoms of men.

The values are different, and what each kingdom esteems the most is not the same. And maybe that's why a former tax collector named Matthew was entrusted to write a gospel, while a thief like Judas Iscariot was entrusted with money.

Because Jesus said, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where thieves break in and steal. And by entrusting Judas with the money bag, our Lord provides us with an example of precisely what he meant.

For Jesus said, Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. And by entrusting Judas with the ministry's purse, our Lord shows us the tragic end of all those who treasure the wrong thing.

[ 4 : 27 ] For Jesus said, No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, for you cannot serve both God and money.

And in Judas Iscariot, a man who sold the Savior of the world for 30 pieces of silver, we are given a horrific example of exactly what loving money and hating God can look like.

But although St. Matthew was a tax collector, he was certainly no lover of money. He was instead a lover of God in a day and age when no one thought that a tax collector could even be a lover of God.

But that is exactly the way our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, works. He chooses the foolish things of this world to put to shame the wise and the weak things of this world to put to shame the mighty. He entrusts someone who is both a traitor and a thief with what the fallen world prizes most, but entrusts someone who was a talented and experienced tax collector with what the fallen world prizes the least.

[ 6 : 00 ] After all, money is not what makes the world go round, but Jesus is. And St. Matthew knew that.

He believed that. In fact, in fact, St. Matthew lived that. For St. Matthew left a comfortable and lucrative career as a tax collector for Rome in order to become an apostle, an evangelist, and even a martyr for Christ.

For in the end, St. Matthew paid the ultimate price for his faith, trusting that only God and not money can provide for eternal security and peace.

So the next time you get some cash, and you see those words, in God we trust, printed on it, think of St. Matthew.

Think of a man who clearly did trust in God and who really did put his money where his mouth is.

Think of the patron saint of bankers and tax collectors, but even more than that.

[ 7 : 13 ] Think of the brilliant evangelist who recorded the Sermon on the Mount, the only evangelist to recall the sad end of our Lord's parable of that unforgiving servant who refused to forgive even though his own debts were forgiven.

And think of the man who gave up everything, even his very life, in order to help spread the faith.

Think of St. Matthew and give all glory to God for all the grace that God has shown us through just this one, one apostle's life.

For as the body of Christ, we owe an awful lot to St. Matthew, but all St. Matthew asks in return is for us just to pay it forward and to love and trust in God even more than the fallen world loves and trusts in money.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.