

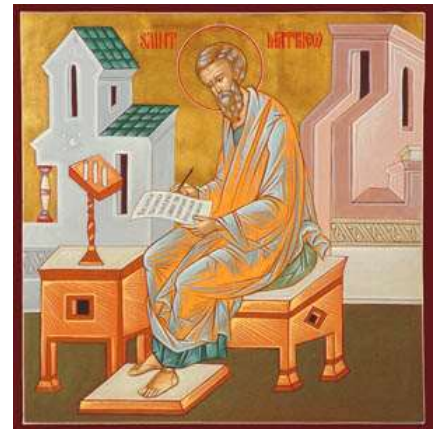
Matthew

Matthew had the spiritual talent of being an “arranger” which he demonstrated by the elegant way he designed his book as a bridge between the Old Testament and New.

People exceptionally talented in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to determine how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity (see Gallup link at bottom of this article).

Matthew

As Jesus was leaving, he saw a tax collector named Matthew sitting at the place for paying taxes. Jesus said to him, "Come with me." Matthew got up and went with him. Later, Jesus and his disciples were having dinner at Matthew's house. Many tax collectors and other sinners were also there. Some Pharisees asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and other sinners?" Jesus heard them and answered, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. Go and learn what the Scriptures mean when they say, 'Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be merciful to others.' I didn't come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners."



Matthew 9: 9-13

Background

While we know very little about Matthew as a person (Clement of Alexandria does tell us Matthew was a vegetarian), we do, however, know quite a bit about his profession. He was a “publican” or civil servant employed to collect Roman taxes from his own countrymen.

The Romans were very clever. They sought educated outcasts to do their dirty business for them -- people who didn't mind collecting vast sums of money from their fellow countrymen. The privilege of collecting taxes went to the highest bidder. This often led to greed and corruption. These publicans were considered unclean and not allowed to worship in the temple.

Matthew worked in Capernaum, which was located on the main Roman highway to Damascus. The name "Capernaum" even comes from the Greek word for "custom house." The town was a busy harbor trafficking in fish, fruits and produce, eastern silks, and spices. Tax collectors in Capernaum were very busy and as a result were very wealthy men. Matthew would have collected taxes from fishermen like Peter, Andrew, James and John and carpenters like Joseph and Jesus.

One day Jesus passed by and said, "Follow me," and Matthew simply rose and followed. Jesus did not need to ask him a second time. Matthew may have been ready for a change. Possibly he realized that Jesus had given him the offer of a lifetime (and beyond). Matthew stopped alienating others by serving Rome and collecting money. Matthew now would serve God by sharing charity and forgiveness.

Mark and Luke identify Matthew's original name as "Levi." His name is a clue that he was from the tribe of Levi. The tribe of Levi was set aside to serve the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:9). They were commanded to have no possessions because the Lord was their only inheritance. Levi (Matthew) was finally living up to his name.

The Levites were a highly educated tribe. Matthew had the unique talent of writing. Matthew the tax collector used these gifts for selfish reasons that harmed his own people. The transformed Matthew was able to use his literary skills for the sake of the kingdom.

After Matthew was called, he wanted to share his good fortune with his former colleagues. He had a banquet for a large company of tax collectors in his home. Matthew wanted others to know that he gave up a well-paying job because he discovered the greatest treasure of all!

The "religious authorities" (Pharisees and Scribes) rebuked Jesus at Matthew's meal and accused him of eating and drinking with publicans (tax collectors) and

sinner. Jesus responded, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. Go and learn what the Scriptures mean when they say, 'Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be merciful to others.' I didn't come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners" (Luke 9:12-13).

The Gospel of Matthew is particularly critical of the abuses by some of the religious authorities of the day. They are described as:

- poisonous snakes (Matthew 3, 12)
- blind guides and whitewashed tombs (Matthew 15)
- hard hearted (Matthew 19)
- hypocrites (Matthew 22)
- hostile to Jesus (Matthew 27, 28).

Jesus condemned them saying, "You Pharisees and teachers are in for trouble! You're nothing but show-offs. You're like tombs that have been whitewashed. On the outside they are beautiful, but inside they are full of bones and filth. That's what you are like. Outside you look good, but inside you are evil and only pretend to be good. You Pharisees and teachers are nothing but show-offs, and you're in for trouble! You build monuments for the prophets and decorate the tombs of good people. And you claim that you would not have taken part with your ancestors in killing the prophets. But you prove that you really are the relatives of the ones who killed the prophets. So keep on doing everything they did. You are nothing but snakes and the children of snakes! How can you escape going to hell?" Matthew 23: 27-33

It's important to remember that Jesus only criticized corrupt religious leaders. There is a special place in God's kingdom for those who faithfully respond to God's call to become religious leaders. These pastors, priests, and rabbis are special gifts from God. No part of the Gospels should be interpreted as, or used to justify, hatred of Jews. Jesus teaches love and acceptance, not hate and rejection.

(Note: I realize that early copies of this gospel do not provide a clear link from Matthew to Levi the tax-collector. This linkage was commonly understood in early church writings. I believe after thorough investigation that the early church was correct. Matthew and Levi are same person.)

Reflections

I've often wondered if Matthew had originally prepared for the priesthood and left because of some corruption in the temple. At least tax collectors were open about their vocation and betrayal of the people. Matthew as tax collector would have been barred from the temple and worship life. Matthew may have longed for God's presence in his life. Jesus gave him that second chance.

I'm sure Matthew readily followed Jesus because he knew that we never find true happiness with worldly possessions. Jesus makes all things new. The transformation of Matthew shows Christ's ability to restore lost relationships with God and each other. A sure sign of Matthew's conversion was his desire to share his newfound joy with other tax collectors.

Tax collectors are hired hands. Disciples and religious leaders are called. It is a special vocation for those with unique gifts and a desire to help all God's children.

Levi's name was changed to Matthew, which means, "Gift from God." The name is quite appropriate. Levi placed his trust in money and possessions and was willing to do anything to obtain them. Matthew knew that Jesus shared the greatest treasure there ever was. When Jesus called Matthew, it was an act of God's grace. Only God can love and forgive us with such generosity. That's why we call this grace amazing.

There was a nationwide poll a few years ago that asked, "What would you most like to hear?"

1. The number one response was "I love you."
2. The second was "You are forgiven."
3. The third was "Supper is ready."

On that very special day that changed his life forever, Matthew heard and shared all three. God loves and forgives us. Together we gather at the Lord's table and give glory to God!

Based on Matthew 21: 1-9...

*All glory, laud, and honour, to thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children, made sweet hosannas ring.*

*Thou art the King of Israel, thou David's royal son,
Who in the Lord's name comest, the King and Blessed One.*

*The company of angels, are praising thee on high,
And mortal men and all things, created make reply.*

*Thou didst accept their praises: accept the prayers we bring,
Who in all good delightest, thou good and gracious King.*

Bishop Theodulf of Orleans, Spain, 750-822

Other poems at https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/st_matthew

Strength Finders talent: Arranger

<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/249827/understanding-investing-arranger-talent.aspx>

I will cover this in the Bible study, but Matthew “arranged” his gospel to honor the Pentateuch. Matthew’s Gospel can be easily divided into five main books.

The Sermon on the Mount is portrayed as a mountain top experience where they learn “dos” and “don’ts” of the faith.

Matthew and many of the people he chose to write about are from the “Executing Domain” which is known for getting things done. Matthew certainly was an action leader.

<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252086/executing-domain.aspx>

Enneagram connections: ONE

Matthew comes across as a healthy One. He likes to implement order wherever possible. He casts a missional emphasis for the church (like any good consultant would). He understood churches with outside focus tend to be healthier.

Ones are known for anger. Matthew demonstrates this with his powerfully criticizes religious leaders for not doing what they were called to do. I suspect he left the priesthood because of those abuses. Jesus showed him a better way filled with “grace”. Matthew in turn writes a Gospel that is a framework for healthy churches everywhere. “The Great Commandment” plus “The Great Commission” make for A Great Church. Matthew is also only gospel writer who uses the word “church.”

While Matthew comes across with “zeal”; I do believe he is “self-Preserving” because of the focus on grace that defines this gospel.

More details about Ones are at:

<https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-one>

All these materials are pre-publication portions of new book by Rev Dr Wonhee Kang and Rev Dr Robert Driver-Bishop. We welcome your insights and suggestions to improve. These are not intended yet for publication or distribution without prior permission. We are willing to share but ask you to respect this process encouraged by our publisher. Thank you!