

Weaving the Word

Recalling Matthew

Part 70 – April 2, 2017

Welcome to where we count the cost to follow the One who paid the price!

What business are you in? Manager? Teacher? Parent? Sports?

Those are all means to an end. So, what business are you *really* in?

Paying the bills? Building a house? Raising a family? Making a name? Earning respect? Getting rich? Chasing the wind? It's all the same in the end. *Depending ...* on what business you're *really* in.



We're weaving together Jesus' big day, in Capernaum, which hasn't technically ended; because it actually began at sunset the day before.



Hundreds of Scribes and Pharisees, from every town in Galilee and Judea, (Lk 5:17-18) were gathered in Jesus' house when He forgave the sins, and healed the body, of a paralyzed man lowered through the roof.



The Gospels contain two types of stories: "anchors" (that offer specific timeline information) and "floaters" (that can only be anchored by clues in the accounts). Today's short story is a classic anchor.



Let's weave together Matthew, Mark, and Luke:

After this, As Jesus went on from there, Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. As he walked along, he saw a tax collector by the name of Levi son of Alphaeus a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi Matthew got up left everything and followed him. – Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:13-14; Luke 5:27-28 NIV



I've told you before that I don't like TV Jesus; He's usually cheesy and mystical and namby-pamby and just a cog off.

And because of budget restraints He never seems to attract much of a crowd. He passes men He's never met and says, "Follow me." And, they just leave their boats or tax booth under TV Jesus' hypnotic spell.

TV Jesus is a consequence of breaking the anchored stories.

One of the reasons I'm *heaven-bent* on weaving together the Gospels, is out of a passionate desire to know what'll emerge, and what we'll see, if we simply keep all of His anchors in place.

For instance, in today's story *Mark* anchors the timeline on the day before, when Jesus finishes teaching His parables.



The Sea of Galilee near Capernaum

The Twelve ... asked him about the parables ... That day when evening came ... A furious squall came up ... He got up, rebuked the wind ... They went across the lake ... When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs ... the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. ... Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. – Mark 4:10, 4:33-5:17 NIV

Now, *Matthew* takes the baton and anchors the timeline *from here*.

... they pleaded with him to leave their region. Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town. Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. – Matthew 8:34-9:2 NIV

And, here we are. So, **why do you suppose so many attempts at harmonizing the Gospels (170 at last count) break these anchors?** Because of preconceived notions they refuse to part with.

You see, "After this, As Jesus went on from there," He called Matthew.

Yet, *Mark's* anchor chain *begins with*: "The Twelve ... asked him about the parables".

So, if you secure every anchor, *Matthew* has been appointed as one of Jesus' *Twelve* long before Jesus calls him to follow, here. And, every harmony I've read, attempts to "fix" this by breaking the anchors.

But, when *Andrew* is called to follow, everyone agrees that he's already been assisting Jesus, *as a disciple, for months*.

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, [same neighborhood] he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother **Andrew**. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. [That was their business] "Come, **follow** me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and **followed** [akoloutheō: attend; accompany] him. – Matthew 4:18-20 NIV

Same call. Same response.

Same word even: "followed" in this sense simply means to attend and assist.



So, there's no reason today's story isn't about Jesus calling Matthew in the same way as Andrew (after he'd been serving as a disciple). But, this turns the story on its head. Like **Jesus turns the religious establishment on its head, by allowing one of His chosen Twelve to collect taxes in Capernaum during his down time!**



We don't have a problem with Peter fishing after *his* calling, but *tax collecting?! It was a despised job; but, it wasn't a sin.*

Zacchaeus repented and made restitution, but he didn't quit his tax-collecting job. Jesus never said don't collect taxes; in fact, He said: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." (Mk 12:17)

So, what is God's?

You ... and your *business* – whatever it is.

But, if Matthew had been in Jesus' house, many of the Pharisees Jesus needed to assemble that day, wouldn't have come inside. Now, let's read again:

After this, As Jesus went on from there, Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. As he walked along, he **saw** [all three Gospels use this word, (*eidō*) which has two main definitions: knew and saw. Context dictates. It was just used in the story of the paralytic, when Jesus "knew" the Pharisees' thoughts (Mt 9:4)] a tax collector by the name of Levi son of Alphaeus a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's **booth**. [His office. His desk.] "Follow me," Jesus **told** him, [*legō* (Mat, Mark): said; commanded; directed. *eipō* (Luke): said; told; commanded] and Levi Matthew got up left everything and followed [*akoloutheō*: attend; accompany] him.



No hypnotism. No spell. **Just a young man who knew what business he was really in, first and foremost, and prepared his other obligations accordingly.**

He left his deadlines to follow his lifeline, to what? A party!

Matthew isn't being recruited, he's being deployed!



Matthew collects the tax-collectors for a big ol' banquet with Jesus! Remember the parable of The Wedding Banquet? **Those who were fortunate enough to be invited traded their place at the king's celebration for other, lesser, obligations.**

Don't trade your banquet for temporary obligations.

Are you a slave to your goals? Chained to your desk?



Stuck in your taxing booth while Jesus passes by calling you to come? *Oh, what a toll that'll take!*

Matthew left the tax table for the King's table, because **he knew that we can only have one supreme obligation**, and that, first and foremost, **he was in the business of following his Lord.**

The writer of Hebrews says ...

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. – Hebrews 12:1b NIV

"But, I can't really serve, read the Word, give, or go, because of my obligations."

We need to hold onto the things of this world with open hands.

Like Matthew, we can keep our day job and our obligations; *that's where we're used most.*

Just keep in mind that placing *anyone* above Christ isn't loving them *more*, it's loving them *less*.

Because, **when we love God most, we love others best.** That's why we must reserve the position of *supreme passion* for *following* Jesus, *learning* Jesus, *loving* Jesus, and *serving* Jesus.

Jesus won't allow us to *drag* our desk and follow Him.



If you say, "I'll follow *wholeheartedly*, *WHEN* my career thrives, *WHEN* my health improves, *WHEN* I have more time," then **you're following after the *when* instead of the *Way*** and the *Truth* and the *Life*.

And, when we listen, we'll hear Him call in little ways throughout each day. **God calls us when it's time. We don't call Him when it's convenient.**

Some of us, who think of ourselves as followers of Christ, have yet to decide what business we're *really* in. We can make the mistake of only asking Jesus to join *us* in *our* pursuits and partner with *us* in *our* undertakings. But, **if we've only asked Him to come and sit with us in the tax booth, we've made a grave error: we've asked Jesus to follow us!**

In *your* life, what business has no business outranking Jesus?

And, what are you going to do about it?