# “Who, Me?” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 2 – June 7, 2026

I. **Matthew 9:9** – “[9]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.”

II. **Today’s bulletin cover is a picture from the artist, Caravaggio**.

a. He’s an Italian painter from the late 1500s to early 1600s and was famous for his use of light… which would be more visible if you had a full-size version on your bulletin.
   i. I have to give credit to Pastor Phil Brandt for pointing this out to me, but Jesus is looking at Matthew and pointing to him… calling him to follow.
   ii. Matthew is pointing to himself as if to say, “Who, me?” – as in, “does this man know who He’s talking to? I’m a tax collector… one of the bad guys…”

b. Yet, as the Scriptures say, Matthew got up from his tax booth and followed.
   i. I was mulling over this verse over the past week, and it dawned on me, oh yeah, Matthew is the one who wrote this Gospel.
   ii. It’s funny how he tells the story of his conversion… no fanfare, no extra insight… just, as Jesus was going along He saw a man sitting in a tax booth and told him to follow Me… so Matthew got up and followed.
   iii. Ho hum… like any other day in life… no big deal… What?? This is a huge deal! It’s a turning point in Matthew’s life as he would walk away from the life he had built, only to follow the Christ into a completely transformed life.
   iv. So, Matthew (or Levi as he is also known) goes along with Jesus, trusting that Lord’s guidance was true and right, and they make their way to Matthew’s house for a meal to celebrate.

c. Before I talk about the meal, I think it’s important to consider that Jesus called others, and they were unwilling to move on or give up their lifestyle.
   i. Some had things they needed to do before following, while others were not fully prepared to follow because it was a life without any comforts or status that you had before. (Matthew 8:19-22)
   ii. We cannot know what Matthew was thinking, but it parallels the story of Jesus calling Peter and Andrew from their fishing boat… They just dropped everything and followed Jesus. (Matthew 4:19-20)
   iii. You see, following Jesus is more than just talking about it… there is a surrender that takes place… in other words, we give up our lives to follow Him.
   iv. It doesn’t mean you have to go out to the mission field or check into a monastery to be more holy… it means that whatever is going on in your life is about following Jesus in it… your vocation in employment,

parent, sibling, retirement, or whatever is going on – you follow Christ.

d. Again, Matthew could not be more casual or short in Jesus' call to him.
    i. Yet, in his astonishment, Matthew somehow came to believe that Jesus was indeed calling him… in spite of his standing with the rest of society and his fellow Jews.
    ii. To make this point clearer, Jesus gathered up a group of likeminded people of Matthew's sort and sat down for a meal.
    iii. The Pharisees couldn't believe it… Jesus was a rabbi teaching from God's holy word… a man people were listening to and following… and He ate with sinners and tax collectors… the people who lived unrighteous lives.
    iv. And what was Jesus' response? Go back to school.
        1. You Pharisees know how to follow all the rules, but you don't understand that we also love and show mercy.
        2. Go ahead and go through all the motions… pray, give your tithes, go to the temple and worship, follow the law… and you are not pleasing God when you show no love and mercy toward others.
    v. Finally, Jesus says that the people who understand they fall short… the broken… the sinners… and all who know they don't measure up are the ones He wants to find and heal… not the arrogant and prideful people who think they are fine by their good works.

III. **I suppose if Jesus walked into this sanctuary** and pointed at you and said, "Follow Me," you might look a lot like Matthew in our painting today.

a. Who, me? What am I supposed to do? How am I special? Does this guy know who I am or what I've done? I'm not sure I'm right for whatever He has in mind.
b. Certainly, things are different for us than Matthew and the others who literally followed Jesus without any idea where they would sleep or their next meal would come from.
    i. Yet, in our lives, we are called by God just the same… called to faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior… and our lives reflect a change that goes beyond following "the rules" to a care and love for others.
c. Unfortunately, many people's understanding of the Christian faith isn't all that different than the Pharisees who Jesus told to go back to school.
    i. We think that doing good things like praying, giving tithes, going to church every Sunday, or volunteering as a helper at church is all it takes to be on God's good side… and the people who don't do these things are kind of like sinners and tax collectors in Jesus' time.
    ii. When we think these good works… or what I often call *sacrifices* in our Bible studies… are all that God wants from us, we are sorely

mistaken… because He wants hearts to surrender… and lives that walk in His ways.

iii. Each one of us has a call from God to live our lives in following Him… and that is much more than coming to church on Sundays… it is turning to Him in every way… every day.

d. Some of us have become Christians in name only… we say we are Christians… we wear a cross necklace for all to see… we have a little fish on our cars… but we couldn't care less about the things Jesus cares about.
   i. In a rather clear picture today, Jesus says that you can go through the motions all you want, but I desire mercy… compassion… grace to be shared among the sick.
   ii. Your cold hearts that could care less about the people around you cannot please God by reading a couple of extra chapters of the Bible or throwing in a few extra dollars in the offering plate.
   iii. Jesus came to seek and save the lost… He came to heal the broken and sinful… not to heal them so they became rule following robots.

e. By the grace of God, Jesus saw fit to call us like He did Matthew – no, it wasn't in person, it was by the power of the Holy Spirit through our Baptism and faith.
   i. In that gift comes a life that follows… surrenders… and walks in the way of the Master… the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

IV. **As we follow Jesus through the Gospels**, we see how many times He makes the least likely choice to give time to the outcasts and sinners.

a. Why does He do this? Why does He go to the brokenhearted… the rebellious… the rejected?
   i. He goes to them… and to us… because He has the healing we all so desperately need… the forgiveness of sins and an eternal relationship with Him.

b. The proud and righteous don't need God and His forgiveness… they already have all the answers… just mindlessly follow the rules.
   i. Yet, all of us who know that we fall short of God's glory also know that we are in need of His grace and forgiveness on a daily basis.
   ii. We are not in this place today so that we can impress God or others by how good we are for climbing out of bed and making it to church.
      1. We are in this place today for healing, forgiveness, and restoration that comes in the presence of Jesus Christ our Savior.

c. Consider the gifts of the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and Confession and Absolution – all of which bring us the forgiveness and healing we need after falling short of God's will throughout our walk with Him.
   i. Jesus wants us to receive the full blessing of His forgiveness won on the cross… His blood and life poured out for you… that sin and

brokenness would have no power to make you sick any longer… only freedom and healing.

d. Yes, the Lord has called you… for much more than following rules… but to a life of walking in His mercy and love toward others… sharing that love that was so freely given to you.
e. The miracle is not that Matthew followed Jesus, but that Jesus called Matthew in the first place... and He has called you too. Amen