

St. Matthew's Sunday 2011

Commissioning of Deborah Caby-Sojourner and Missioner

Texts: Proverbs 3:1-5

Psalm 119: 33-40

2 Timothy 3: 14-17

Matthew 9: 9-13

“ As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And he got up and followed him.” Matthew 9:9

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen.

I wonder what Matthew was thinking that day in the tax booth.

I wonder if he was thinking, “There has got to be a better way. There has got to be a better life.”

I wonder if he was thinking that he was sick and tired of being despised by the Romans, whose dirty work he was doing, as well as being sick and tired of being reviled by his own people.

I wonder if Matthew was just at the end of his rope and ready for something completely different when Jesus came along.

My guess is that not many people spoke to Matthew in his tax booth-not nicely anyway. So imagine someone coming along, with Matthew contemplating his thankless life, at the end of his rope, and this someone looks him in the eye and says, “Follow me.”

It was as if Jesus knew that Matthew had just about had it up to here. It was as if Jesus was saying to Matthew, “I am the better way. I am the better life you are seeking.”

Two words changed Matthew's life forever and these two words continue to be spoken two thousand years later and continue to change the lives of the people who hear them.

Matthew's journey wasn't over. Matthew's journey was just beginning. St. Matthew's journey isn't over. St. Matthew's journey is beginning anew. It begins again and again and again every time anyone of us here in this parish decide that we are going to take the way and the life that

Jesus promises us. It is renewed every time anyone of us decides to take Jesus up on his words and on his promise. Our journey is made in thousands of little steps and hundreds of little decisions every day of our lives.

Our journey starts with Jesus saying, “Follow me” and doesn’t end until we stand before him face to face to hear the words of the hymn we just sang, “Servants, well done.”

This hymn is an invitation, just like Jesus’ invitation to Matthew, to come work for Him. There is so much work to do every day of our life.

There is so much work because there are so many factions, so many self interests, so many people and institutions in love with power rather than invested in the power of love, that if we give up, if we give into the disillusionment of the culture around us, than we are giving up the very work and the very promise that Jesus came to earth and died for.

Giving into the prevailing culture and cynicism, thinking our efforts don’t amount to much or change anything is easy to do. But this hymn reminds us, “Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fear! No arm so weak but may do service here: by feeblest agents may our God fulfill his righteous will.” We are the weak. We are the feeblest agents. And yet it is through us that God has decided to fulfill his will and to bring his reign into being here on earth.

No matter how old or young, no matter how able bodied or disabled, no matter how weak we may perceive ourselves or be perceived by others to be, it has always been through the least likely that the Gospel has been proclaimed.

In one of my favorite verses of this hymn we are told to “claim the high calling angels cannot share.” I find this verse absolutely awe-inspiring. Think about it for a minute...we are given the calling of sharing the gospel, of telling our stories about the difference in our lives as a result of Jesus and that is something not even the angels of heaven can do. I find that amazing-absolutely, positively amazing.

But we are also reminded in the next breath that our time to do so is limited and fleeting. Our lives on this earth are but a blink of an eye in

the grand scheme of things. Every opportunity we have to share the gospel needs to be taken because every opportunity we don't share it is an opportunity lost.

Today we are doing something very, very important here at St. Matthew's and it is very appropriate that it happen today-St. Matthew's Sunday. In a few moments we will lay hands on Debbie Caby and pray for the pilgrimage on which she is about to embark.

Debbie has heard Jesus' words of "Follow me." She has heard them and is on a journey to discover what that might mean for her life.

Sometimes the way we are to follow is very clear and at other times it can appear very murky. It isn't important that she or any of us for that matter know where it might lead. What is of utmost importance is that we be willing to follow.

"Follow me." These two words changed Matthew's life forever. They have changed Debbie's life and they will change our life forever. And in changing us, these two words will change the world.

Amen.