



Growth Group Questions April 21, 2024 “You Are Called”

Context:

In the Gospel of Mark, we find Jesus calling one of His disciples to come and follow Him. This man is Levi. Levi is also named Matthew, whom we believe wrote the Gospel according to Matthew.

In chapter 2, we find him working as a tax collector. This was a lucrative job but it became more and more lucrative the more you could extract money from the people through taxes. And because he was working for the Roman government, he was able to use their threat of force to accrue funds through fear.

In the time of Jesus, it was likely that Levi joined all of the other boys in going to Hebrew school and was not accepted into a discipleship role because he wasn't chosen by a rabbi to follow in that rabbi's footsteps. Instead, Levi chose the role of tax collector.

Tax collectors were in service to the governing body, which at the time of Jesus, was the Roman Empire. The job was to use the power of the Roman Army and the Empire to extract the taxes from the Jewish people and send that money to Rome. Since there weren't exact numbers on what to collect, and since some people tend to be greedy, the tax collectors were known for taking more than they were supposed to, because this was their income.

As a Jewish person, you were already upset that the Roman Empire had come in and conquered your nation. This meant that they sent their money to Rome. King Herod was known as a patsy who advocated more for the Romans than he did for the Jews. Therefore, he was living comfortably while the people did not benefit. This caused even more tension.

Jesus deals with this issue of taxation more in Mark 12:14ff as He is trying to be trapped by the religious leaders. Jesus answers their question about if it good to pay taxes and gets out of the trap by seeing through their hypocrisy. This illustrates the tension with paying taxes to Rome.

Levi is called to a life as a disciple of Jesus and is able to convince him to leave his job and lifestyle. We know Levi as Matthew, which would be more of his Greek name, whereas, Levi would be his Hebrew name.

We then can fast forward to the future where Levi (Matthew) becomes a leader in the early church and the author of the Gospel of Matthew.



Scripture:

Mark 2:13-17

¹³ Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him. ¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him.

¹⁵ Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.) ¹⁶ But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees^[a] saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?^[b]" ¹⁷ When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

1 Peter 2:9

⁹ But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests,^[a] a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

Genesis 12:1-3

¹² The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

² "I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.^[a]

³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."^[b]



Questions:

1. The title of this week's sermon is "You are Called." What does it mean to be called by God?
2. Pastor Chad said that when we respond to God's call, He changes the narrative of our lives. What does that mean to you?
3. In Mark 2:14, we read that when Jesus saw Levi sitting at his tax collector's booth, Jesus said: "Follow me and be my disciple." What is a disciple?
4. Levi responded immediately to Jesus' calling, but Pastor Chad told us that he didn't automatically become a disciple. How does one become a disciple of Christ?
5. In 1 Peter 2:9, we read that God called us "out of the darkness into his wonderful light." What darkness is Peter talking about? What is he referring to when he says: "his wonderful light."?
6. Pastor Chad said that God calls us to be a blessing to others. What does that mean to you?
7. What does the Bible tell us about blessing others?
8. When the Pharisees saw Jesus eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked the disciples why Jesus ate with such people. Why do you think Jesus responded: "Healthy people don't need a doctor – sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."? What lessons should we learn from this?
9. Pastor Chad told us that God calls us in three ways: (1) to become disciples, (2) to come out of the darkness and into the light, and (3) to be a blessing to others. How can we best respond to these three ways in which God calls us?

