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Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, He Said - She Said is a venue to share differing perspectives.

## Who is My Matthew?

*Bob's Perspective:*

This is an idea that has been circulating through my mind for several weeks now. Finally, as I sit down to scribe my thoughts, it turns out that today (September 21<sup>st</sup>) just happens to be the Feast of St. Matthew. (A little [Twilight Zone](#)-ish if you ask me.)

Although the jury was out for me in the very beginning, I have grown to be a fan of the TV series, "The Chosen." One of the intriguing things about it (at least for me) is their characterization of Matthew. As we all know, Matthew was Jewish, and he was a tax collector. He was most likely ostracized by his countrymen and viewed as a traitor of sorts, in cahoots with the Romans. Although he probably lived well by economic standards, he would have been a social outcast.

All that being said, Jesus had a quite different take on Matthew. According to the Gospel, when Jesus called Matthew to follow him, Matthew did so immediately. Very soon after that, Jesus invited himself and the disciples to Matthew's house for dinner. Jesus saw the good in Matthew that most others probably didn't. He created a social situation at which no one could help but interact with Matthew and visa-versa. I'm sure that dinner was quite awkward. Here are a bunch of people that had distain for Matthew, being hauled into his house by Jesus, who expected him to be a good host, with people that held him in low esteem.

There are a number of lessons that come from this event:

- Jesus saw good in someone that most others didn't. He sensed Matthew's hunger for social acceptance, for forgiveness and mercy, and fed him.
- Jesus gave the opportunity to Matthew to reach out to a group of people that he betrayed in a manner of speaking, and instead to do good where he had wronged – the opportunity to begin to make a way for healing.
- Jesus taught his entourage to accept people who wish to change or grow, to make amends and allow forgiveness and healing – to see the good in someone that others may not see.
- Jesus taught them all to look for the good and the strengths of others, rather than their faults and shortcomings.



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I'm sure this dinner gathering didn't immediately turn into a lovefest. There was a lot there to unpack, and I'm sure it didn't all happen in one event. But it was the catalyst for the beginning of a new way. Of everyone, Matthew was one of the least likely people that the disciples would have chosen to join their ranks – but in hindsight, his Gospel has not only survived the ages but has brought countless thousands to Christ. A tax collector who could have easily been overlooked, or worse yet, cast aside, significantly contributed to the greatest life-changing event in the course of human history.

While none of us are the Messiah, we are all still called to walk in his way, to see how he sees and to love how he loves. So, who is my Matthew? Who is the one who is hungry for the nourishment of knowledge, or friendship, or forgiveness that can come from me? Who is the gospel writer that I've overlooked, or worse yet, cast aside? Who is my Matthew?

*Mary's Perspective:*

One of the most fruitful things that has come from the *He Said-She Said* blog, at least for me, is the constant reminder of how two very different people with very different perspectives can work their way around to common ground. Whether it's our gender difference, or age difference, or simply genetic makeup, Bob and I can discuss, argue, and adamantly dig our feet into a particular stance, only to discover that we actually do agree once we hear each other out. This whole concept about Matthew presents one of those times.

Bob is a wise old owl who is a teacher at heart. No matter what he is doing, there is a lesson – and usually a “system” that he has invented to accomplish whatever the task is at hand. He innately thinks as a teacher. He writes as a teacher. He lives by example, teaching others by his actions. This is not a judgement; it is simply an observation. Bob's reflections on Matthew come from a teacher's heart.

When I approach writing this blog, I try to remember that not everyone who reads it is a liturgy nerd, or maybe even a “churchy” type, and we need to be mindful of that. I try to find the ways our writing can be meaningful to folks in secular industry, or retired, or those who, quite frankly, aren't as immersed in (obsessed with?) all things liturgical. My observations of Matthew come from that perspective.

Matthew was a guy who was probably plodding along in life, like many of us. He had his own circle of influence, worked to support his needs, and faced challenges along the way. Matthew had stuff. We all have stuff. Perhaps one of Matthew's challenges was that he felt,



somehow, incomplete. Something was missing, or he questioned the meaningfulness of his days sometimes. I suspect we all do.

Then Matthew found something in Jesus that money could not produce. He was drawn to Jesus, left his old ways, and followed. Jesus worked with that, inspired Matthew, challenged him, and commissioned him. Out of simple obedience, Matthew began to write words that would become exponentially fruitful in transforming lives. Like the old Breck shampoo commercial, literally, he told two friends, and they told two friends, and so on.

I point these things out because Matthew wasn't some polished professional. He wasn't a CEO with lots of employees, nor some enigmatic leader of a group of like-minded workers. Jesus tended to hang out with a motley crew. I don't know about you, but I feel like I know more people that belong in the category of "motley crew" than those who are polished and professional. Heck, I add myself to that group! So what?

If an ordinary knucklehead like Matthew can risk changing his life, follow Jesus, and, with simple obedience, rise to the challenge in such a way that exponential numbers of people experience transformation, then what can I do? We all have potential within, and we all have a circle of influence. Maybe we are called to make a pivot in life, to turn from some sin in our past or maybe simply turn closer to Jesus. Maybe we are called to take what we have and do good with it. I intentionally chose those words – we want to be well and *do good*, as in deeds or actions. I don't have to be the head of some corporation to be able to transform lives. I can live by example in the everyday encounters at the grocery store or the parking lot. I can share positivity with a neighbor or perhaps encourage someone who is lonely. Transformative actions don't have to mean moving mountains – we help those around us grow one relationship and one interaction at a time.

So, while Bob sees things from Jesus' perspective, I challenge you to look from Matthew's perspective. How can you, simply by being obedient to the Lord's call in your life, make a difference in your circle of influence?