



**WORSHIP AT HOME – 18 JULY 2021
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

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SCRIPTURE READER **Mary Thomson**

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus calls us to praise and prayer, to song and silence; Jesus calls us to worship.
Jesus calls us to hearing and healing, to service and solidarity; Jesus calls us to love.
Jesus calls us to advocacy and action, to protest and provision; Jesus calls us to justice.
Let us heed the call of Christ. Let us worship together with joy.

HYMN - Jesus calls us here to meet him CH4 510 (words on page 7)

PRAYER of APPROACH, CONFESSION and THANKSGIVING

Loving God, we thank you that you come to us now in our lives as we look ahead once more. In worship you speak to us. In our journey through life, you go with us. When we look for a way, we can see it in your son Jesus. For your love which calls us to follow, we praise You God.

As we turn to you for guidance and direction Lord, we thank you that you hold firmly to us, even when we try and struggle from your grasp. We thank you that your patience is never exhausted, no matter how many times we let you down. Father, may we learn more deeply to trust you to provide us with all we need; to see the difference between the simple things we need and the many things we want. May we more easily choose to serve rather than being served, to give rather than to take, to contribute rather than consume.

God of grace and glory, in humbleness of heart we confess our sins. We forget to love you and serve you, and wander from your ways. We are careless of your world and put its life in danger. We talk of our concern for others but fail to match our words with action. As we look upon the world may we see the unseen, love the unlovable, and bind up the broken hearted wherever we find them.

In silence we confess our failings and acknowledge our part in the pain of the world Lord, may we say “Yes” to what you call us to do, always remembering the great things you have done for us.

This prayer we ask in the name of the Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour who taught us to pray saying: Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 9: 9-13 (read by Mary Thomson)

Jesus calls Matthew

Jesus left that place, and as he walked along, he saw a tax collector, named Matthew, sitting in his office. He said to him, "Follow me."

Matthew got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having a meal in Matthew's house, many tax collectors and other outcasts came and joined Jesus and his disciples at the table. Some Pharisees saw this and asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such people?"

Jesus heard them and answered, "People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. Go and find out what is meant by the scripture that says: 'It is kindness that I want, not animal sacrifices.' I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts."

HYMN - Will you come and follow me? CH4 533 (words on page 7)

JESUS SAYS "FOLLOW ME"

Let us Pray. Breathe on us, O God, that we may be filled with your Spirit and led by your living word. Bless the words of my lips and the meditations of all our hearts. We ask this in your name. Amen.

In his sermon two weeks ago Rev Tom Blair spoke about how Jesus lived his life influences ours and today we hear of the invitation of Jesus "Follow me" and its impact on Matthew and for us in 2021.

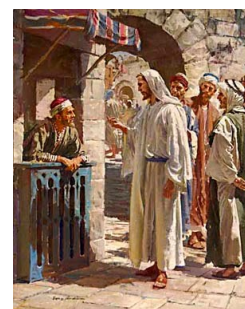
So when Jesus met Matthew it was the best of times and it was the worst of times; it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair; the people had everything before them, the people had nothing before them.

It was the best of times because a young Galilean, Jesus of Nazareth, came with a message breathtakingly new, and spoke with an authority the like of which no-one had ever heard before. He brought a Gospel which did not stop at words but was translated into deeds. Its brilliant light drew people like a moth to a spotlight, a light so bright it seared and burnt. No room was left for forms of piety which were nothing more than veneer and sham. Everything Jesus did made a statement about what he saw his mission to be. He crashed into people's consciousness with deeds, attitudes, and actions that had never been done, seen or even heard of before. He took the canvas of his life and painted a message big enough, bold enough, and bright enough for everyone to see. He came preaching that he might defeat all ignorance; he came teaching that he might defeat all misunderstandings; he came offering healing and peace.

This is the Jesus who prefers the unpredictable and the spontaneous to those who are control freaks and bound in the chains of traditionalism. This is the Jesus who feels more comfortable with those who are marginalised and ostracised than he does with the old boys' club and those who perpetually live on the inside of every situation. This is the Jesus who numbers among his friends men and women from whom the orthodox good people of the day shrank in loathing. This is the Jesus who prefers those who are sick, to those who are truly sick and think they are well. This is the Jesus who prefers those who acknowledge they are sinners rather than those who strut about in self-righteous acknowledgement of their own accomplishments and achievements.

But it was also the worst of times for in this Chapter of Matthew's Gospel we see the first shadows of the gathering storm; we see the opposition beginning to grow; we hear the first hint of the charges which are going to be levelled against Jesus, and which are finally going to bring about his death. By dining with tax-gatherers and sinners Jesus was in effect accused of being an immoral character because he kept company with immoral characters. How true the saying, "give a dog a bad name and hang him."

The Gospel lesson tells us of Jesus involved in a recruitment campaign at the offices of the Inland Revenue. There he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his desk doing what he always did every day, a man who had grown fat off his nation's shame, a man whom the community regarded as a throwaway for to him there was never a phone call, and to him no dinner invitation was ever delivered. He was a man who lived in the shadow of his own loneliness, a man who sought for what he knew not, a man who was empty and barren but yet receptive.



But if Matthew was despised by his community, Jesus saw something quite different. He saw a man, a human being; Jesus saw his heart, his mind, his thoughts, his hurt, his pain, his loneliness, his lack of meaning and purpose in life. Jesus saw a life that was being wasted. Jesus saw a man who needed a Saviour. And when Jesus told him: "Follow me," a dramatic change took place in Matthew's life. He put down his pen, didn't even finish the form he was working on, pushed back his chair, got up and just started heading for the door without once looking back over his shoulder. Just like a lot of the decisions we make that end up changing our lives for good or bad one way or the other. He got up and left behind everything he had been doing, everything that had given his life meaning and purpose up to that point and committed himself totally to Christ.

And the first thing that Matthew did after accepting the invitation of Jesus was to throw a party. He didn't go to Church, he didn't go and have a moment of meditation, he didn't go to a solitary place for a time of reflection; this man who knew loneliness as his constant companion was freed to ask what few friends he had to a party with Jesus as chief guest. That was what stuck in the throat of those Pharisees: not merely that Jesus was associating with tax collectors and other 'known' sinners, but that he was enjoying himself with people whose lifestyle and reputation was disapproved of and who were excluded from respectable company. Jesus simply had bad taste or, worse, no taste as far as his religious contemporaries were concerned. He hung around with 'the wrong crowd of people' and it was too bad his parents hadn't raised him differently!

When we stop and reflect on the calling of Matthew, isn't it interesting what Jesus didn't ask him to do? He didn't ask him to worship him; he didn't ask him to believe in him; he didn't ask him to join the Church, he said; "Follow me." To follow him meant, as it does for us today, that in the very next decision that we have to make, Jesus becomes the foundation, the point of reference, the centre of our decision making; he is no longer simply a swear word used all too often in our everyday language, or insurance when domestic and private and social life becomes chaotic or is at crisis point, but instead Jesus becomes a

living companion. When Jesus looked at this man, in the same way as he looks at us now, he says “whoever you are, wherever you are, and whatever you are, pick up the tattered edges of your life and follow me, be ready for the greatest trip you have ever made, walk with me into tomorrow without fear and every step that you take stay close, and follow me and let us see what happens.” Are we up for that challenge?

If we are, then we will be on a journey in which God accompanies us, a journey in which God from time to time does special things, a journey in which we will experience all of life—both good and bad—a journey in which sometimes we will falter and fall by the wayside where we’re picked up by our loving Father, a journey during which ordinary things will happen—birth and death, sun and rain, drought and plenty.

Being a Christian is more than being a disciple, or student of Jesus; it is about being a follower of Jesus. Being a follower of Jesus means committing the way we live our lives, the way we shape our life, the ideals and aspirations of our life, all of these things—to Jesus. Being a Christian means a call to follow Jesus into the world, and to live life differently so that others might see what the Kingdom of God Jesus promised might look like if people were willing to live a life that made a difference. We might not end poverty, or cure covid or cancer, prevent famine, but somehow, because of the way we choose to live, the world might be a little bit better, a little bit brighter, a little bit kinder, a little bit more like Jesus and the Kingdom Jesus came to point us towards.

For this encounter between Jesus and Matthew encapsulates the world of work and the messy reality of public life. It calls us too into that same place today. It moves to the home, to the meal, to the human heart and in those most intimate places opens up the possibility of love and mercy as the beginning of a life of acceptance. For some it will mean what was important in the past, but proved not to be worthwhile, has to be let go so that something different might emerge. For some it might mean finding a new way to serve, or help. For some it might mean taking a long hard look at the life they are leading, and asking ‘Am I really the best that I can be? Have I the courage to square my shoulders one more time, and be the better person God knows, and I know that I can be?’ The Spanish theologian St Ignatius put it this way: ‘Am I striving to be the person God created me to be’.

So what we do or don’t do affects our neighbours, often more than we realise. We can’t live in a tight little circle of comfort and belief, looking inward, pretending nothing else exists or matters. There are people out there, important issues, each demanding a response from us. Being Christian isn’t a let-out. It doesn’t allow us to spiritualise it all, to withdraw into prayer circles and leave the world to others. It’s our world, a shared responsibility. We’re one with the rest of humanity, one before God. Whether we like it or not we are our brother’s keeper, and there’s no way we can shuffle out of it.

These locked-down months have made many of us to examine who we are, what we might do, how we might behave, what we actually believe, where we might go next. Politicians talk of ‘building back better’, and of ‘facing uncomfortable truths’. Often Jesus looks to us to swim against the tide, challenging attitudes which we know in Christian terms are wrong and refusing to find them in any way acceptable.

And that’s not easy; it’s not a stroll through a rose garden because all of us are such an infinite kaleidoscope of variety. We all have a good side and a shadow side. God has made all of us with infinite patterns of response, that who we are, our own unique soul, our personality is fashioned and crafted by the events of our lives, those great high moments on the mountaintop, those desperate low moments down in the valley, those bland moments on the plateau, those dead ends, those curves, those bumpy roads, all of it comes together to make us who we are. God has created all of us with different experiences so that when things happen to us we respond in particular kinds of ways.

Life is unpredictable, an unpredictable adventure, but Jesus is in it with us, even though we can't always see him, don't always recognise him. He tells us to look for goodness in unlikely places, to find him in unlikely people. If we accept the life changing challenge of Christ it might mean sacrifice. It might mean struggle. It might mean not being completely successful. It might mean being about as faithful as we are able. But it will mean following Jesus. Choosing to follow Jesus. Deciding to follow Jesus. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,

We give you thanks for your followers of every generation: apostles, theologians, mystics, reformers and the faithful of every century and culture. And now you call us to follow in your footsteps, not simply to believe, not merely to declare our faith and confess you as Lord, but to keep on following wherever you lead. Lord Jesus, help us!

We pray for all those weighed down by the stresses and strains of daily life; those who long for peace of mind but cannot find it. We pray for those who cannot let go, those who find it impossible to relax or unwind. We pray for those who lose themselves in busyness masking their true feelings and running from their emptiness. Lord Jesus help us!

We grieve the fact that our world is divided, and we ask that you work powerfully in our small lives and our big world to break down the walls that divide. We hold up before you, Lord Jesus, those who are persecuted for their faith, and those in exile, driven from their home and country. In a world of much suffering, in all its brutality, we pray for peacemakers, for the gifts of dialogue and mediation, for respect between enemies, each of us bearers of your image. Lord Jesus, help us!

We pray for our country and community, for children growing up in poverty, for parents unable to cope, for those who are sad because someone they have loved has died, for those who are ill or in pain either in hospital or at home, for those who are struggling with finance or are facing the prospect of unemployment, for those who are unhappy because of an unkind word or action. In all of this we pray for a more humane, just and caring society. May we desert our love of money, possessions and status, overcoming the ego's destructiveness, daring to imagine a world in which self-sacrifice is our highest virtue. Lord Jesus, help us!

In this world of Covid we pray for vaccines to be made available across the whole globe. As the Covid restrictions relax we pray that we would be ever mindful of the personal situations of others and not ask of them, or place them, in situations in which they feel uncomfortable or at risk. Lord Jesus, help us!

We pray for ourselves as day by day we are confronted with the need to choose, sometimes the choice is clear, sometimes confusing, sometimes easy, sometimes hard, sometimes mattering little, sometimes much, but help us, whatever the case, to gladly accept the responsibility of choosing recognising that it is a privilege of being human. Lord Jesus help us!

And now in a time of silence we bring to you our own personal prayers.

Grant us the peace of your presence, the healing of your touch, the blessing of your guidance and the assurance of your constant love. In following you we cannot remain the same. Ask much of us, expect much of us. Enable much by us, encourage many through us, accept our lives and accept our prayers this day and every day. Amen.

HYMN - Amazing Grace CH4 555 (words on page 7)

BLESSING

Jesus calls us to step out in faith, to follow where he leads, even if what he calls us to do seems impossible. So let's go forward with courage, trusting in Jesus's presence and power, and eager to do his will.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all this day and evermore. Amen.

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JESUS CALLS US HERE TO MEET HIM

Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

2. Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

3. Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are;
creed and colour, class and gender
neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

WILL YOU COME AND FOLLOW ME

"Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?"

2. "Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare,
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?"

3. "Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?"

4. Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

AMAZING GRACE

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

3. Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
'tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

4. When we've been there a thousand years
bright shining as the sun;
We've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun.

Jesus calls Matthew

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Loving God,
Thank you for being with us this week in every place we've been and every thing we've done.
Thank you that we are always welcome in your presence.
Today we come to worship you, to read your word, to learn. Give us understanding and open our eyes to you who are and how much you love us.
Amen.



Question...

Have you ever been chosen by someone for something? What did it



Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in **Matthew 9:9-13**. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

Here's a video of the story: [Jesus calls Matthew - Saddleback kids](#)

Today's story is about a man whose life was changed when he met Jesus. Everyone does things wrong, or makes bad decisions sometimes, but God chooses to forgive us, helps us to change to be more like him and invites us to be part of his plan. He can use us to do great and important things for him, just like he does for the man in today's story. Jesus chooses you, no matter what other people think about you.



Talk together...



- * Why do you think people didn't like tax collectors?
 - * Tax collectors took money from people and gave it to the Roman government. People didn't like tax collectors because they often cheated people by taking more money than was owed and keeping the extra for themselves.
- * Why do you think Jesus chose Matthew to follow him when he knew Matthew was cheating people?
- * Why do you think Matthew left his table and followed Jesus?
- * Jesus told the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees, to find out what this verse from Hosea means: "I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices". What do you think it means?
- * What can we learn about Jesus/God from this story?
- * What can we learn about ourselves/humans?

Make together...

Tissue paper hearts

You'll need—tissue paper, heart shape cut out of card/cardboard, glue. Spread glue over your heart shape then use small pieces of tissue paper to decorate it. You may want to use flat squares, rolled up balls or use squares and the end of a pen to create a 3D effect like the picture on the right. You may also want to punch a hole in the top and add some wool or string to hang your decoration.



Pray together...

Jesus, thank you that you are always ready to forgive us and give us another chance, just like you gave Matthew another chance. Thank you for choosing us. We ask that you will change our hearts and help us to put you first in everything that we do.

Amen

Play together...

Fast reflexes

Lay out a deck of cards face up. They could be regular playing cards, Uno cards, Go fish etc. Everyone gather around the cards. One person (or take it in turns) calls out a type of card (number, colour, shape etc). The first person to touch a card of that type gets to keep it. Keep going until all the cards are gone. The person with the most cards at the end is the winner.

Praise together...



[Jesus friend of sinners](#) – Casting crowns

[You say](#) – Lauren Daigle

[Our God is a great big God](#)

[God's love is big](#) – Vineyard kids