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Located by Grace: The Call of Matthew

By Revd. Adam

We are worshiping God the living God, a loving God, a gracious God, a caring God. This is the one that we have all come to experience and to encounter.

Today we gather with holy communion, so those who are online, you can get yourselves prepared with your bread and water or your drink.

Matthew: Did You Hear His Story?

Did you hear his story? Matthew the tax collector. When I speak about Matthew being "located," I want to be clear on what I mean by that term. To be located by grace means that no matter how hidden, no matter how forgotten, no matter how isolated a person feels, God's grace specifically finds them.

For me, it doesn't matter if you are hidden, forgotten, or isolated. The point is this: God has a way of locating people. Maybe there is someone here who feels that well, nobody thinks of me, nobody bothers with me, nobody cares. But how grace works is that grace locates. That's how God operates. That's his nature. That's his attribute.

God's grace is especially directed towards those who have been forgotten. Those in the margins, those in the peripheries, those who are outcasts, those who feel ignored by society, by community, by families, by relatives. What does God do? God locates. God will go out to look and to search for those ignored and uncared for. He searches like a magnet.

Think about it this way: when you feel that nobody cares about you, that's where the surprise comes. God has found me. At least God has found me. So at least God loves me. So God cares for me. So God sees me. Because there are people who are not even noticed. To be noticed, you know, you struggle, you suffer, you go, and nobody notices. But oh, God at least notices. At least God notices.

When he notices, he said, "I can, I have seen what you're going through. I understand what you're going through."

Matthew the Tax Collector: The Context

Now, let me be clear about the context. In Jesus' time, tax collectors carried a heavy social stigma. Stigma, you understand stigma. Yes. Because they were seen as collaborators with the Roman Empire. They collected taxes on behalf of Rome, which made them traitors in the eyes of their own people.

But here's the thing: not only were they seen as collaborators, they were also known for extortion. Tax collectors would often collect more than what was owed and pocket the difference. So they were despised, hated, and considered irredeemable by society.

Yet Jesus saw Matthew. Jesus looked at this man who was despised, rejected, and written off by everyone else. And Jesus said, "Follow me." Just like that. No conditions. No judgement. No lectures about his past. Just, "Follow me."

And Matthew got up and followed him. He left everything. And then he threw a party. He invited Jesus to his house, and all his friends came to celebrate. Because he had been found. He had been located by grace.

The Pharisees were scandalized. They asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" They wanted to know how a righteous teacher could associate with such despicable people.

Jesus' Response: Mercy, Not Sacrifice

But Jesus responded, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Do you hear what Jesus is saying? He came for the sick, the broken, the lost, the forgotten. He came for those whom society had thrown away.

This is revolutionary. This is radical. In a world where people are valued by their utility, by their wealth, by their social status, Jesus comes and says, "You matter. You are seen. You are loved." Not because of what you can do, but simply because you are.

The Healing Stories

In the same passage, we have two healing stories. A synagogue leader's daughter is restored to life. A woman who had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years, an illness that had made her ritually unclean and socially isolated, is healed by touching the fringe of Jesus' cloak.

Both of these people are brought back. Back into life, back into the community, back into

wholeness.

The Message for Us

So what does this mean for us? It means that if you feel like nobody cares about you, God cares. If you feel forgotten, God has located you. If you feel like you don't matter, you matter to God.

God's grace is not earned. It's not something we achieve through good behaviour or moral superiority. It's something God gives freely to those whom everyone else has given up on.

Matthew became one of Jesus' twelve apostles. He became a disciple. Later, he became a Gospel writer. His story changed completely the moment Jesus located him and said, "Follow me."

Your story can change too. God sees you. God has located you. God loves you. That's the promise. That's the gospel. That's good news.