

*Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness*

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Through Jesus' words and miracles, He gives us an illustration of the One, True, Living God whom He serves. St. Paul writes that *There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* This principle is of a restrictive character: bringing the world from the worship and service of many gods to the humble submission to the One, True, Living God; limiting it to one faith, and one Baptism into the family of the one God. This is the new rule and law which leaves no room for speculation. This turns the proud world of the ancient Jews on its head. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, between the less-than-Samaritans and the self-righteous Jews. The only difference remains between the self-righteous Pharisee and the humble Publican, between the proud and arrogant follower of the narcissistic self and the humble follower of Jesus.

This past Tuesday the Church celebrated the feast day of St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist. Before Matthew was an Apostle and Evangelist, in his former life he *sat at the receipt of custom.* He was a publican, or a tax collector. He was seen as a traitor by the Pharisees because he cooperated with the Roman conquerors. Yet we may imagine that such a career would have fostered a certain level of humility in Matthew. Perhaps that is why he heeds the call of Our Lord, when Jesus goes to the receipt of custom and sees in Matthew a different person for whom he has very different plans and an unusual future. Matthew follows Our Lord in humility and throws a great dinner for Jesus. Matthew invites all his friends and co-workers, who happen to be publicans and sinners also. This very same Lord who says to take the lowest seat at the wedding banquet eats with publicans and sinners too. This is a great scandal to the Pharisees, who ask *Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?* (St. Mt. 9:11) But see how Jesus releases Matthew from the bonds of an old way of life into the bonds of true servanthood that leads to freedom. St. Matthew goes on to live a life of true humility and servanthood even after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ. He goes on to serve as an Evangelist to the Hebrews, to the very Pharisees that had so ridiculed him as a publican and follower of Jesus. The call to servanthood eventually leads St. Matthew to his martyrdom for Jesus' sake. And in martyrdom, Matthew will find that his humility has led to true liberation and freedom.

We must take up our crosses and follow Jesus humbly. Only in taking up our crosses will we find true freedom. It is only then that we will find our true integrity, worth, and value. Just as Christ reigned from the Cross, as St. Paul governed the churches of Ephesus and other cities from his prison cell in Rome, and as one who sits down in the lowest room will hear the Host say to him, *Friend, go up higher*; what the world sees as bonds are really a means of spiritual freedom. The Christian who worships the One God is freer than the pagans who worshipped many; and the believer in a Faith once for all given is freer than he who is continually looking for new novelties and forever subjecting himself to the bondage of every worldly speculation.

What does it mean then to be a servant of Christ? Jesus offers to loose us from our bonds of sin, our bad habits, and release us into a new life in Him. We must have a change in heart. You have heard it said that we are to be the *hands and feet of Christ* but we must also have the heart of Christ. What we believe must influence how we live; the Creed must influence conduct. Do not think that this is just about lofty ideals or unreachable goals. Christian life is about a new reality that we can participate in by becoming free-willing members of the Body of Christ. There is *one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all*. We are all members of the Body of Christ, we have been released from the bonds of sin and the world and are now the bond-slaves of Jesus Christ. He binds us all together and when we come to this Altar on Sunday. We shall be bound together with Him in a mystical way, we will be *made one body with Him, that He may dwell in us, and we in Him (BCP 81)*. This morning may we truly offer and present unto the Lord *ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice* unto Him. May we walk worthy of the vocation to which we are called in all lowliness and meekness and ever desire to be better servants of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.