

PROPER 5, Notes for 2026, Year A

- [Note: here are some homily draft notes I prepared in a prior year, and offer them if they might be of interest in relation to the Call of Matthew story in relation to the Caravaggio painting I have featured. The references to Genesis and the Abram story correlate with the Track One readings]
- Our Gospel reading this morning presents us with the call of Matthew, which may include an autobiographical snippet.
- We might imagine what Matthew might have been thinking, in response to Jesus' 'out-of-the-blue' invitation. But actually... he doesn't say a thing, does he? Just like Abram, he simply gets up and does what the Lord asks him to do.
- Caravaggio may help us see the scene rightly → because of our familiarity with Jesus, we assume Matthew may already know who Jesus is, and what his point is, in calling him. It is all too easy to picture the moment with Jesus at the center of the action. But, as Caravaggio depicts it, Jesus is almost peripheral to the scene, rather than at its center. Matthew could not have known exactly who Jesus was, nor to what Jesus was calling him. Instead, Matthew sits at the center of his world, absorbed with himself and his work, and surrounded by his helpers, counting the day's take of money. Like light into darkness, divinity intrudes into the sphere of humanity, virtue into the realm of vice. Already turning to leave himself, Jesus says, "Follow me!" And the wonder of it, is that Matthew does!
- The hardest thing in the world is to do something we aren't already prepared to do - or something we don't want to do - or something we think will be uncomfortable, or awkward. Moving beyond what we know and what we are familiar with can be very hard!
- Toward the end of what he thought were the years given to him to live, God calls Abram to leave home, travel hundreds of miles to a new land and

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begin a new life. And in the midst of a career which put him at the margins of society, Jesus calls Matthew to a new life, and away from collecting taxes for the Romans. Both of them would have had very good reasons for saying, NO! But by their actions, both say, Yes. And that is why we hear about both of them this morning.

- Our church {my former parish} has a wonderful mission statement: "We are called to be a church community where every member lives as a disciple of Christ."
- Each of the disciples was called out of a settled circumstance in life, into something new and different. When Jesus finds them and calls them, he simply says, "Follow me!" We learn from this that - to be a disciple is to follow Jesus.
- The disciples first follow Jesus in terms of what they think and believe: they learn from him. He teaches them; he sets an example for them; he becomes a savior to them. Following Jesus first means learning from him, which changes how they think and believe. The same is true for us.
- The disciples then follow Jesus in terms of what they do, and how they live. After learning from him, they are sent out to practice what they have learned. Following Jesus then means doing what he did, and living in a new way shaped by what they have learned from him. Following Jesus means practicing what Jesus taught. The same will also be true for us.
- God says to Abram, "Go from your country and your kinfolds and your father's house, to a new land that I will show you..." He comes to him just as he came to Matthew, and as he comes to us - in the midst of our lives. Look at how Caravaggio depicts it - a Jesus and Peter in the timeless dress of 1st century Palestine, and Matthew and his fellows in the contemporary clothing of late Renaissance Italy.

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- And Jesus says to the ones whom he calls to follow him, “Come and see!” If we are open to it, God in Jesus promises to show us something new, and he calls us to live into that new reality. For some people, this is a sudden transition. For many of us, it is a slow and gradual process. But either way, it will involve a change. Following Jesus means leaving some things behind as we “come and see” what he has to show us. Following Jesus means learning. And then, following Jesus means practicing the new things we learn from him.
- To be a church community where every member lives as a disciple of Christ means being part of a community of lifelong growth and transformation. Following Jesus means learning and growing. And learning from Jesus, and growing into what we learn, means living in new ways, practicing what we have learned. As Matthew show us, to be a disciple is to follow Jesus. To follow Jesus is to learn from Jesus. To learn from Jesus is to be changed by Jesus. To be changed by Jesus is to live in a new way. → And so, to be a disciple is to live in a new way.



Caravaggio, *The Calling of Saint Matthew*

Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.”

And he got up and followed him. And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard this, he said, “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 come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

While he was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader of the synagogue came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.” Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well. When Jesus came to the leader’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, “Go away; for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. And the report of this spread throughout that district.