



# WISDOM

21ST SEPTEMBER 2025

## ST MATTHEW TEACHES IN THE DIASPORA

Dennis Webster

St Matthew, Apostle and Martyr

A weekly reflection based on the preaching at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion



## Revised Common Lectionary Related

### **St Matthew, Apostle and Martyr**

Proverbs 3.1-6  
Psalm 19.1-6  
Ephesians 4.1-14  
Matthew 9.9-13



**SEASON OF  
CREATION**



**PEACE  
WITH CREATION**  
SEASON OF CREATION 2025

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

O Almighty God,  
who by thy blessed Son  
didst call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an Apostle  
and Evangelist:  
Grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires  
and inordinate love of riches,  
and to follow the same thy Son Jesus Christ:  
who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost,  
one God, world without end.  
Amen.

## INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered what it means to truly leave everything behind and follow Jesus?

This week's feast takes us on a transformative journey through the story of St. Matthew, whose life changed dramatically with Jesus' simple invitation: "Follow me."

Through the lens of Matthew's calling from his tax booth, we discover that vocation isn't just about ordained ministry, but about every believer's unique role in God's grand story.

Drawing from Proverbs 3, Psalm 19, and Ephesians 4, we weave together the themes of divine trust, witness, and community building, showing how these elements form the foundation of our Christian calling.

Whether lay or ordained, each person's contribution is vital to the Body of Christ, as our shared ministry is comparable to synodical governance, where bishops, clergy, and laity work in harmony.

The message resonates particularly with our church's commitment to inclusive ministry and the upcoming welcome of new ordination candidates.

As we face uncertain times, we are challenged to respond to God's call in our everyday lives – at work, home, or in our community – and become "living Gospels" that proclaim Christ's presence to a world in need of hope.

As we walk lightly on sacred ground,  
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,  
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

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Feast of St Matthew

Today, as we recall St Matthew's ministry, we are invited to reflect on our shared vocation within the Church.

In Matthew 9:9, we hear Jesus' simple call: "Follow me." Matthew rises from his tax booth, leaving his old life behind—a simple invitation, yet utterly transformative.

This story prompts us to reflect on vocation—both lay and ordained. Our Diocese (Gippsland) is preparing to welcome new candidates for ordination, but not all are called to that path. What unites us is baptism: all of us are called into Christ's service through the priesthood of believers.

In the Anglican ethos, ministry is never the sole work of clergy. Worship, witness, service, and stewardship belong to all. Lay people proclaim Scripture, lead prayers, teach, serve in governance, and carry Christ's reconciling work into families, workplaces, and communities.

Your presence here is not passive attendance; it is active participation in the Body of Christ. In the Eucharist—the prayers, responses, and shared bread and wine—we see the whole body joined in Christ's priestly work.

Ordination is not a higher status, but a particular calling to serve the Church: to preside at Word and Sacrament, to bless, to absolve, to shepherd.

Clergy and laity are mutually dependent. Synodical governance, with bishops, clergy, and laity together, embodies this balance and shared responsibility.

In our readings today, our journey begins with the wisdom of Proverbs 3:1-6. Here, we are gently urged not only to remember God's teachings but also to trust Him deeply with every part of our lives. It is only by surrendering our ways to Him that our paths become clear, guided by His loving hand.

This humble trust overflows as we move to the psalms, where in Psalm 19:1–6, the heavens themselves proclaim the glory of God. The universe, in all its wonder and beauty, becomes a silent witness to His majesty. Likewise, our lives are called to be such a testimony, radiating God's glory in everything we do.

But how do we live out this calling?

Ephesians 4:1–14 reminds us that each one of us is given unique gifts—not for our own sake, but to build up the body of Christ. In unity and with a spirit of humility, we grow together, strengthening one another as we walk the path to maturity, anchored always in love.

Then, in Matthew 9:9–13, we see Jesus call Matthew—an outsider and a tax collector—inviting him to His table. Here, Jesus reveals the heart of our vocation: to join in God's reconciling love. We are called to embrace those at the margins, to extend welcome and grace, and to participate in the healing and restoration of all God's children.

Taken together, these passages invite us on a journey: to trust, to witness, to build up our community, and to welcome all into the warmth of God's love. May we walk this path together, letting God's Word shape us into a people of grace and reconciliation.

God calls us to faithfulness, to bear witness, and to use our gifts in His service. Our journey is one of trusting God, witnessing His glory, and participating in His work of reconciliation. May we answer this calling in faith, shaping our lives as testimonies of His love.

Tradition speaks of Matthew's journeys to Ethiopia and Persia. Still, his enduring legacy is his Gospel—written for Jewish-Christian communities, proclaiming Jesus as the fulfilment of Law and Prophets, a new Moses, "God-with-us" beyond the Temple. Amidst dislocation after the Temple's destruction, Matthew's Gospel grounded faith and identity, affirming God's presence and calling disciples to mission (Matthew 28:19).

For displaced believers, Matthew's Gospel offered

rootedness and hope. So today, as we consider our own callings, we remember that like Matthew, we may be called amid ordinary life—at work, at home, in our community—to proclaim Christ.

Our witness can be simple: trusting God, encouraging others, opening our homes, and dedicating time to prayer and contemplation. Every gift contributes to building Christ's body. Like Matthew, we're called not only to follow, but also to share the Good News everywhere.

The Feast of St. Matthew reminds us that vocation is God's initiative. Our task is to respond—allowing our lives to become living testimonies, a “gospel lived out loud.” May we, like Matthew, hear Christ's call and help others see that God is truly with us.

Matthew's example teaches us that vocation can be both ordinary and extraordinary. God calls us in daily life—just as Matthew was called at a tax booth, we may be called in everyday places. After the resurrection, his Gospel became a lasting witness for people seeking faith and hope, showing that God is always with us.

The Feast of St. Matthew invites reflection on shared vocation within the Church. Matthew's call to follow Jesus, leaving his old life behind, prompts reflection on both lay and ordained vocations. The readings emphasise trusting God, witnessing His glory, building up the community, and welcoming all into God's love, encouraging active participation in the Body of Christ.

In uncertain times, Christ invites us to rise, follow, and let our lives proclaim His presence. Whether lay or ordained, our vocation is to be living Gospels so that others may know God's presence among us.

## Questions for Small Group Reflection

**In the sermon, we witness Matthew's immediate response to Jesus' call. What does this quick response teach us about faith and following God's calling in our lives?**

- In Matthew 9:9, Jesus simply says 'Follow me,' and Matthew immediately rises from his tax booth, leaving his old life behind.
- What areas of your life might God be calling you to leave behind in order to follow Him more fully?

**How does the sermon explain the relationship between lay people and clergy in the church's ministry?**

- The sermon emphasises that ministry is never the sole work of clergy, and that worship, witness, service, and stewardship belong to all members of the church.
- In what specific ways can you become more actively involved in your church's ministry, whether you're clergy or laity?

**The sermon references Proverbs 3:1-6, which emphasises the importance of trusting God. How does this passage connect to the broader message about vocation and serving in the church?**

- The sermon explains that surrendering our ways to God helps make our paths clear and is connected to how we serve in our various callings.
- What makes it challenging to fully trust God with your life decisions and vocational choices?

**How does Matthew's experience of being called while at his tax booth relate to how God might call people today?**

- The sermon highlights that God calls us in our daily lives—in ordinary places and situations, just as Matthew was called at his workplace.
- Where in your everyday life do you sense God might be calling you to serve or witness?

**What does the sermon suggest about the importance of community in living out our Christian calling?**

- The sermon discusses how Ephesians 4:1-14 teaches that we each have unique gifts to build up the body of Christ, growing together in unity and humility.
- How are you currently using your unique gifts to strengthen and support your church community?



In ancient times, a tribe believed in a sacred fire that represented their connection to the divine. This fire was tended to by a select few, known as the Keepers of the Flame. They believed that only those chosen could approach the fire and offer their prayers. However, as time passed, the tribe began to notice that the fire was dwindling, and the community was growing distant from one another.

One day, a young girl named Lila, who was not a Keeper, approached the fire with a handful of dried leaves. She knelt down and whispered her prayers, offering her humble gift to the flame. To everyone's surprise, the fire blazed brightly, illuminating the night sky. The tribe realised that the sacred fire was not just for the Keepers but for everyone. They began to gather around it, sharing their stories, prayers, and offerings, reigniting their sense of community and connection to the divine.

This legend serves as a powerful reminder that worship is not limited to a select few but is a communal act where everyone has a role to play. Just as Lila's simple offering brought the community together, our everyday involvement in the life of the Church can ignite a vibrant faith that transcends the walls of our buildings.



This five-day devotional will hear a call to one whom others despised into the glorious company of preachers. We'll explore the themes of joining in God's reconciling love and understanding our vocation within the Church, guided by the teachings of St. Matthew.



## Day 1 Scripture: Matthew 9:9

Matthew's call by Jesus is a pivotal moment that serves as a reminder of how a simple invitation can lead to significant transformation. Leaving his tax booth, Matthew exemplifies the courage to abandon the past for a new life in Christ. This moment encourages us to reflect on how we respond to Jesus' call to "Follow me" in our own lives.

As we contemplate this passage, we are reminded that every believer, lay or ordained, is grafted into the Body of Christ. Our diverse gifts and callings unify us under a shared vocation, urging us to actively participate in Christ's mission and to embody His love and grace in our daily interactions.

- How have you experienced Christ calling you away from your previous life?
- What gifts can you bring to the service of the Church and community?
- How can you actively participate in the Body of Christ today?
- Pray for the courage to embrace Christ's call, no matter where it leads you.
- Reflect on ways you can transform daily routines into opportunities for ministry.

## Day 2 Scripture: Proverbs 3:1-6

Proverbs gently urges us to trust in God's guidance and teachings fully. Trusting God with all your heart opens pathways that might seem obscured when relying solely on your understanding. Surrendering to His wisdom fosters a life shaped by His loving hand.

Letting go and trusting God enhances our ability to witness His mighty works and glory. It fosters a spirit of humility that unites us more closely as a community, strengthening the Body of Christ. We are invited to reflect on areas of our lives where trust in God can still grow.

- What areas of your life are you struggling to fully entrust to God?
- How have you experienced God's guidance when you surrendered your plans?
- Who in your life exemplifies a deep trust in God, and what can you learn from them?
- Ask for God's help in surrendering your plans and desires to His will.
- Pray for a heart open to God's wisdom and guidance each day.

### **Day 3 Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-14**

The passage from Ephesians emphasises unity and mutual edification in the Body of Christ. Each gift, deliberately given, is purposed to nurture and strengthen the Church, shaping us into a community that mirrors Christ's love and humility, growing together towards maturity in faith.

This establishes the communal nature of ministry, where all contribute and participate. As disciples of Christ, we must be intentional in the way we build each other up, fostering an environment of love and encouragement where every member can flourish and reflect God's glory.

- What specific gifts has God given you that can be used to build up the Church?
- How can you actively promote unity and mutual support within your community?
- In what ways can you encourage others in their walk with Christ?
- Pray for unity and cooperation within the Body of Christ.
- Ask God to reveal new ways you can use your gifts to serve others.

### **Day 4 Scripture: Psalm 19:1-6**

Psalm 19 declares the heavens as a testimony to God's majesty. Their silent proclamation is a powerful reminder that all of creation reflects His glory and splendour. This invites us to join in this chorus, letting our lives, too, become a testament of God's grandeur and love.

Our acknowledgement of God's creation inspires the way we live, calling us to mirror this divine beauty in our actions

and deeds. As God's witnesses, our existence becomes a channel of His grace, drawing others to experience His eternal light and love.

- How do you perceive God's glory in the world around you?
- In what ways can your life reflect the majesty of God's creation?
- How can you better attune your senses to notice and celebrate God's handiwork?
- Give thanks to God for the beauty of His creation that surrounds you.
- Pray for a heart that is continually aware of God's presence in the world.

### **Day 5 Scripture: Matthew 9:9-13**

In Jesus' call to Matthew, we recognise a profound act of grace and invitation. Matthew, once an outsider, is welcomed to the table, illustrating God's inclusive love that reaches out to those at the margins. This call challenges us to extend such grace wherever we are.

Our vocation, echoing Matthew's, is rooted in God's reconciling mission. It compels us to embrace everyone with love and compassion, offering hospitality and shaping our lives into living testaments of the Good News. Answering Christ's invitation means becoming agents of healing and hope in our communities.

- Who in your life needs to experience the reconciling love of Christ today?
- How can you offer grace and hospitality in your daily interactions?
- How can you participate in God's healing work in your community?
- Seek God's guidance in reaching out to those at the margins.
- Pray for an open heart, ready to embrace and welcome all in Christ's love.

# End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke (St Paul's Press) (Johnson)

Rev Dr Andrew McGowan: Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

David Adams, Glimpses of Glory, Year C

The following authors as featured at The Worship Cloud

[www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com)

N. T. Wright,

Jane Williams,

P James Woodward,

Paula Gooder

Mark Pryce,

David Perry

1: Volf, Miroslav: **Exclusion and embrace : a theological exploration of identity, otherness, and reconciliation** 1996, revised 2019, Nashville : Abingdon Press



## Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on  
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the First Nations people  
everywhere.

Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

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