

SAINT THOMAS CHURCH

Fifth Avenue · New York City

Sunday, September 20, 2026

The Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost

Festal Evensong for the Eve of St. Matthew

4:00 pm

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A Sermon by

The Rev. Prisca Lee-Pae

on

Matthew 6:19-34

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Where Your Treasure Is

In Matthew's Gospel today, Jesus speaks to us about where we place our treasure. He tells us not to store up treasures on earth, where they can be lost or taken away, but to seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness. And then he gives us a simple but profound truth: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

As we gather this evening on the vigil of Saint Matthew, these words speak particularly clearly through the life of the apostle we celebrate.

Matthew was a tax collector. In the time of Jesus, tax collectors were deeply disliked by their own people. They worked within the Roman system and were often associated with dishonesty and exploitation. More than that, they were regarded as people who had separated themselves from the religious and social life of their community.

Matthew's tax booth, therefore, was more than a place where he worked. It represented the life he had chosen—a life with financial security, but also one that placed him at a distance from his own people.

And it was there, at that tax booth, that Jesus found him.

Jesus did not first ask Matthew to prove that he had changed. He did not ask him to make himself worthy. Jesus simply said, "Follow me."

And Matthew got up and followed him.

We do not know exactly what was happening in Matthew's heart at that moment. Perhaps he had already begun to question the life he was living. Perhaps he had a longing that he could not yet name. But when Jesus called him, Matthew recognized something in that call and was willing to leave behind what had defined his life.

This is important because the Gospel does not simply tell us that Matthew gave up his possessions. It tells us that he found a different treasure.

Matthew had security, but Jesus offered him something deeper: belonging, purpose, and a new life. The treasure he had accumulated could secure his life materially, but it could not heal the distance between

himself and God or between himself and his community.

And after Matthew followed Jesus, something beautiful happened. He opened his home, and Jesus sat at table with him and with many other tax collectors and sinners.

This, too, tells us something about the kingdom of God.

Jesus did not call Matthew away from one table simply to exclude everyone who had known him there. Instead, Matthew's home became a place where others could encounter Jesus. The person who had once been separated from his community became someone through whom others were welcomed into fellowship.

When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about eating with such people, Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." And then he said, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."

Matthew knew something about that mercy.

He knew what it meant to be seen by others according to his past, his occupation, and his reputation. But Jesus saw him differently. Jesus saw not simply the person Matthew had been, but the person he could become.

There is also something beautiful about Matthew's name. It is related to a Hebrew name meaning "gift of God." And Matthew's life became, in a very real sense, a gift to the Church.

The tax collector who once recorded earthly debts became the evangelist who recorded the words and teachings of Jesus. Through his Gospel, generations of Christians have received the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, and Jesus' teaching to seek first the kingdom of God.

So on this vigil of Saint Matthew, perhaps the question for us is not simply, "What are we willing to give up?" It is also, "What do we treasure?"

There are many things that give us a sense of security—our possessions, our work, our reputation, our plans for the future. None of these things is necessarily wrong. But Jesus reminds us that they cannot be the foundation of our hearts.

Our true treasure is found in the kingdom of God—in mercy, love, communion, and the life we receive in Christ.

Saint Matthew reminds us that sometimes Christ meets us precisely in the place where we have become most comfortable, even when that place no longer gives life to our hearts.

May we have the courage to hear Christ's call as Matthew did. And may we allow Christ to transform what we treasure, so that our lives, like Matthew's, may become a gift of God for others.
