Made for Mission – Part One

# We Are the Called

# (Matthew 9:9-12)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. We’re actually beginning a brand-new message series this weekend entitled “Made for Mission.” And today, in part one, we’re going to look at the invitation that God extends to each of us; an invitation to join him on a mission. A mission that has the potential to not only transform you, but also your church and your community.

You see, the Bible tells us that we were Made for Mission, that “We Are the Called,” but we all have the choice of how we respond to it. We can ignore it, we can flirt with it, we can even join in halfheartedly without being committed, but the bottom line is that we are the called. And so, our satisfaction with life, our having found meaning and purpose in life, is tied up in our choosing to accept this mission.

We were actually created for this purpose, and so you need to understand that the mission isn’t something that I came up with, but it’s the way that God has chosen to work through us. We’ve been called according to his purpose, he’s invited us to be on mission, to be part of his Church as we see lives changed and people healed as they walk away from bad habits because they’ve experienced the love of Jesus. It’s a mission that my wife and I have given our lives to, recognizing that we’re the called; and so, my question for you this morning is, “Will you follow us?”

You see, the Bible says it this way, and I can’t say it any better than the apostle Paul, but he said,

“I’m not seeking my own good, but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 10:33-11:1).

And so, will you follow, giving your life to the mission, following the example of Christ?

You were Made for Mission and over the next couple weeks we’re going to spend our time figuring out what that looks like. And so, if you have a Bible or Bible app, would you turn to Matthew chapter 9 as we read about Jesus calling of a man named Matthew. Verse nine tells us,

“As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him” (Matthew 9:9).

Now, the very fact that Jesus invited Matthew to follow him says volumes to you and I, because tax collectors were seen as the worst of the worst. They were Jews who had sold out to the Roman government, turning their backs on their own families and their Jewish heritage in order to become wealthy. And so, tax collectors were despised by all the people and so Matthew’s calling is significant because if God could call him, then none of us are unworthy of the calling of God. This is what the apostle Paul recognized, he said,

“Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst, but for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life” (1 Timothy 1:15-16).

You see, the salvation of God is undeserved, it’s unmerited, and that’s why it’s called grace. It’s by grace that we believe in Jesus and receive eternal life; and it’s by grace that each one of us are called to leverage our lives for the spread of the gospel.

And so, the question isn’t whether we’re the called, but only where and how, because the reality is that no matter whether you’re in the business world, the military, a teacher, student, or stay-at-home mom, you’re on the front lines. Jesus has called you to active duty. You’re an integral part of his mission to save the world. In fact, your vocation is a platform to spread the good news about Jesus. And so, you play a significant role in advancing the kingdom of God in your circle of influence. No matter who you are, where you are, or what you’re doing, number one, your mission is “following” Jesus.

## 1. Following

Now, as we look at the context of Jesus calling Matthew in the previous verses of chapter 9, we discover that Matthew had just witnessed the miraculous healing a paralyzed man, but even more significantly he’d seen Jesus forgive this man of his sins. Undoubtably this had a profound effect on his decision-making process when Jesus invited him to follow him, because the thought must’ve been racing through his mind, “Maybe Jesus would forgive me of my sins too?” And so, Matthew had only one thing to do, just like the paralytic he had to “get up,” he had to make a conscious effort to move, to take a simple step of faith, and the moment Matthew took a step he was on mission.

In the same way, today, Jesus is calling you to get up, to get off the sidelines, and get in the game, but it’ll require that you get up and purposefully step out in faith even when it’s uncomfortable. In fact, speaking of being uncomfortable, in the next chapter Jesus makes a challenge that’s actually a little disturbing, he tells Matthew,

“Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:38-39).

Suddenly, Matthew discovered that following Jesus required quite a bit more commitment than just getting up and walking with him. In fact, what Jesus was describing here was a common form of execution in which they would put a cross beam on the back of a condemned criminal, making him walk through the community so that everyone could see him in shameful humiliation as the law said, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

And yet, that’s exactly what Jesus is asking us to do, he said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself” (Mark 8:34). And so, we’re to deny ourselves and take up our cross; taking Jesus into the community, into our workplace, into our homes, on our dates, into the music that we listen to or the movies we watch. And he’s saying, “If you want eternal life, lose your life for me and take me everywhere you go.”

You know what’s really amazing is that we find in the book of Acts, that the very first church, the first disciples said, “We’re in. We’re good with that. We’ll follow you even when it’s uncomfortable and we’ll do whatever you ask us to do.” And so, I want to show you just how powerfully God was moving in these people’s lives in Acts chapter 2. Verse 44 says,

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need” (Acts 2.44-45).

And so, they were living out what Jesus said, they were denying themselves and following him. If anyone had a need or a financial problem, they were selling their stuff on eBay or Craigslist and giving the money to them. They were living out their Christian faith, caring for one another, and loving one another just as Jesus loved them. And they did this every day, because once or twice a week wasn’t enough. They ate together in their homes, they were involved in small groups, Bible studies, and prayer groups. And watch what happened in verse 47,

“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2.47).

In other words, they went beyond partial commitment, beyond their own comfortable lifestyle and God used them to transform their community. They said, “God, we’ll do whatever it takes” and people were coming to faith in Christ every single day. They were repenting of their sins and being baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit.

This is the model of how God could use this church to transform lives and change our community, but we need to recognize that what God is doing in Emmitsburg to expand his kingdom and grow his Church is not something that we can fabricate. It’s not something that we can come up with because it’s a mission that God has crafted in us through the Holy Spirit. It comes from being in his presence and we see this in the story of Matthew’s calling.

Jesus had invited Matthew, saying, “Follow me” and Matthew got up and followed him; but watch what happens in the next verse. Verse 10 tells us,

“While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (Matthew 9:10-12).

In other words, they gathered together in the presence of Jesus, whose intention was to reach the sick, healing them and making them well. And so, Jesus demonstrates for us that the church is like a hospital, you don’t turn away the sick, but everyone is welcome. In fact, we see this in Revelation chapter 22 where it says,

“The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Revelation 22:17).

Now, I know that Jesus has delayed his return for nearly 2000 years, but that’s because he wants to give everyone an opportunity to come, to repent of their sin and be saved. And so, the invitation remains, you’re welcome no matter what you’re going through in life, because number two, Jesus invites you to a place where all are welcome.

## 2. Welcoming

Jesus is welcoming everyone and today we should be as welcoming as Jesus, telling others about the grace of God, because he said,

“Whoever finds me, finds life, and receives favor from the Lord” (Proverbs 8:35, NLT).

And so, we want to be friendly, welcoming, and always inviting non-Christians to meet Jesus, because he’s the one who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Therefore, non-Christians are invited to come because whoever finds Jesus finds life. They’re welcome to come with all of their doubts, questions, fears, poor decisions, pain, hurt, and habits because it’s in the presence of Jesus that we’re healed.

And so, each of us have a role to play because we were made for mission and called to reach out to the people in the community, your friends and family, people that don’t know Jesus, people that don’t have a church home, and people that are hurting. And so, we want to invite them to come and see, we want to welcome them to come experience the love of God, and so you want to bring them next weekend, because so many people are hurting today and they need the hope and change that only Jesus can bring.

In fact, in John’s gospel, in the very first chapter, we find Philip doing that very thing, he’s inviting Nathaniel to come meet Jesus. Verse 45 tells us that Philip told him,

“We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"Nazareth!” Nathaniel exclaimed, “Can anything good come from there?"

"Come and see," said Philip” (John 1:45-46).

A short time later, Jesus was passing through Samaria. Now, this was an area outside of the people of God, outside of the community of believers, and he came to a well in a town called Sychar. There Jesus met a Samaritan woman and being tired from his journey he asked her for a drink. Now, she was shocked that Jesus being a Jew would even talk to her, let alone ask her for a drink, but as she was drawing him some water from the well, Jesus said,

“If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" (John 4:10).

And so, Jesus invites her to take from him water which would become a spring of water welling up to eternal life; and he changes the subject from her physical need to her spiritual need, but she didn’t get it and so she said,

“Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water" (John 4:15).

With the wisdom of God, Jesus sent her back to town, telling her to get her husband and come back. She replied, that she didn’t have a husband, to which Jesus said, “You are right, in fact, you’ve had five husbands and the man that you’re with now isn’t your husband.” The woman thinking that he was a prophet or maybe even the Messiah, left her water jar there at the well and rushed back to town to tell the people,

“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" And so, they came out of the town and made their way toward him” (John 4:29-30).

You see, like this woman and Nathaniel, we want to be a church on mission, inviting people to come and meet Jesus. We want to welcome them into his presence, because as we bring them to Jesus, we’ll see the Spirit of God move, we’ll see him work and he’ll change this community. And so, number three, we want to see the transforming power of Jesus.

## 3. Transforming

You see, I believe that God’s going to use this church to do it because I’ve seen it happening in your lives. Each of us have our own stories and we’ve all come to the church with our own baggage, but the transforming power of Jesus is here. The Bible tells us in Romans chapter 10,

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).

And so, you came to church with your pain, you’re hurt, your habits, and your secrets and Jesus saved you and changed you. In other words, when you came to church, you came as you were, but when you called on the name of the Lord, believing the witness of the word of God, believing that he is who we said he is, that he’s going to do what he said he was going to, you’ll leave this place changed.

For many of us, that’s our story, and you’ve had a fresh start, everything is different, and all things our new. That’s what the Bible tells us in second Corinthians, chapter 5,

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

You see, that was God’s intention, that was his purpose, to change us so that we can continue his mission. He reconciled us to himself, making peace with us through the cross of Jesus Christ, and calling us to the ministry of reconciliation. And so, we were made for mission, we were changed, because when we come into the presence of God we can’t help but be changed. In fact, in first Samuel, the Bible says just that, Samuel told Saul, he said,

“The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, you’ll prophesy with them; and you’ll be changed into a different person” (1 Samuel 10:6).

You’ll be changed today, because the presence of Jesus is here, the Holy Spirit is here, and so, when we connect with God, when we pray and make that commitment, “God, I’m yours, I’ll do whatever you ask, I’ll follow you wherever you go.” When we do that the Spirit of God is going to come upon us and lives are going to be changed. In fact, the Bible tells us in second Corinthians, that as we experience the presence of God,

“The Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image” (2 Cor 3:18, NLT).

And that’s what I’m believing for this church and this entire community, that we’ll be changed and we’ll never be the same again.

It’s exciting to know that we were made for this purpose, that we are the called, and that we were made for mission. God has called us to be a hospital, to bring healing to our community, and therefore his church is a place that welcomes everyone, no matter who they are or what they’ve done. We are the church, everyone is needed, everyone has purpose, everyone will serve, because when we come under the power of God, we can’t help but be changed. And so, as we close in prayer, will you give your life to that mission? Will you follow Jesus wherever he goes?

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August 04, 2019

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*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*