

St Matthew 21st September

Matthew 9

9 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. 10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice. 'For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mark 2

14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. 15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Luke 5

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. 29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 30 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

In 1502 Carpaccio depicted Matthew at his office (the Greek word translated "tax collector's booth"). In a setting typical of Carpaccio's Venice, it is shaded by an awning, but open to the street, and receipts are pinned to the wall.



Coins of the time of Jesus, used to pay taxes

Rabbinic teaching put “tax collectors” (“publicans” in older translations) on a par with prostitutes, thieves – and Gentiles. They were considered ceremonially unclean, and their charitable offerings could be refused. Basically, they were agents of the hated ruling regimes – the Romans, who were adept at supporting the Empire by taxes in their conquered territories, and their local representatives like Herod, who charged their own taxes.

So it is not surprising that both Caravaggio (1599-1600) and Hendrick ter Brugghen (1621) show Matthew, astonished at Jesus’ call, pointing to himself – “Who, me?”, while his assistants clutch at the coins, recalling Jesus’ words on the love of wealth.

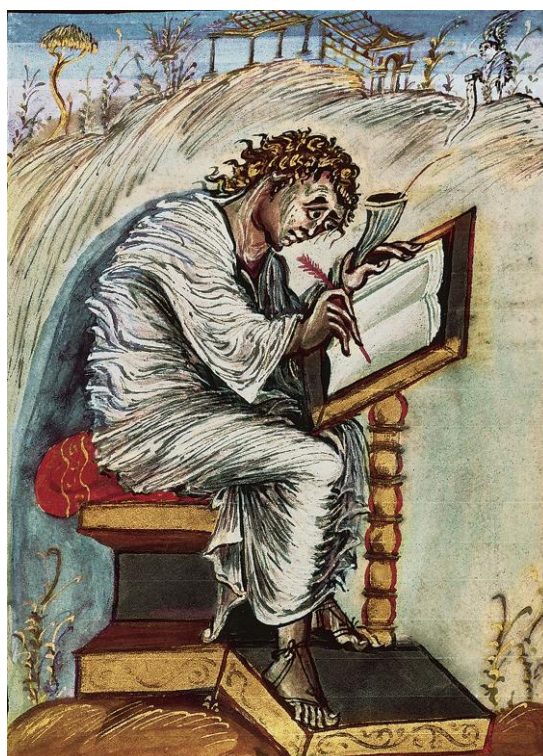


All three Synoptic Gospels then record that Matthew/Levi threw a party, which Jesus attended, to the horror of the Pharisees.

In 1573 Venetian artist Veronese painted a huge (about 6 X 14 metre) canvas for a Dominican friary. Like Leonardo's well known *Last Supper* it was to be placed in the meal room of the monks. Veronese was haled before the inquisition, threatened with a charge of heresy for including luxurious fancy costumes and "buffoons, drunken Germans, dwarfs and other such scurrilities" in the composition. He was given three months to amend the painting. Instead, he amended the title from "*The Last Supper*" to "*The Feast in the House of Levi*", pointing to Biblical warrant for including "tax collectors and sinners".



From the 7th century it was common to include a painting of the writer at the beginning of each Gospel. That of Matthew in the Ebbo Gospels (c 840) is a striking image of the writer, feverishly penning the words, his whole being, and even the landscape, agitated by divine inspiration. An angelic being displaying a scroll can be seen in the upper right corner.



This theme is also the subject of several paintings by Caravaggio, one of which, like the *Calling*, is in the Contarelli chapel in the church of the French congregation San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome. The onrushing angel contrasts with the figure in Rembrandt's 1661 painting (below) gently breathing inspiration to the aging saint.



Bishop Lancelot Andrewes 26th September

A 1660 portrait of Andrewes (1555- 1626) by an unknown artist gives us a rather austere image of an ascetic in the typical black and white clerical robes of the time. The window in St Peters Box Hill, gifted by Rev. and Mrs Senior and installed in 1979, gives a much more dynamic image of a highly influential churchman.



As the book he holds suggests, he was a remarkable scholar, being named a “founding scholar” at Oxford when only 16, yet the description of him as an “avant-garde conformist” suggests the depth and complexity of his views. He was ordained in 1580, and became Dean of Westminster in 1601 and Bishop of Chichester in 1605. The lower part of the window shows him against the background of Winchester Cathedral, where he was Bishop from 1619 until his death in 1626.

He was in favour with James 1, who appointed him to work as an overseer for the Authorized Version (“King James Version”) of the translation of the Bible, with special responsibility for the Books from Genesis to 2 Kings. The private book of prayers which he composed – praying for five hours each morning – also attest, like some of the memorable passages in the King James Bible, to his capacity for literary expression. T S Eliot stated that Andrewes’ writing style makes his sermons “rank with the finest English prose of their time, of any time.”

Eliot’s poem *Journey of the Magi* begins with five lines in quotes. The lines are taken from Bp Andrewes’ Christmas Day sermon in 1622

“A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.”