

Second Sunday after Pentecost
June 7, 2026 • 10:30am
Trinity Episcopal Church • New Orleans, LA

The Rev. John M. Pitzer

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen. You may be seated.

So, it was a week ago yesterday.

I have to think about that. We've had a lot of weddings recently at Trinity. A lot, with some great couples.

Really incredible people that have been a part and will continue to be a part of Trinity's community. But it was a week ago yesterday that I was at a wedding reception. And I was talking to a man that I had never met.

Very complimentary of Trinity. So, he was complimentary of the wedding. He was going on and on about the couple.

And I agree, they deserve every bit of that. And then at one point, he just said to me the question. So, how did you end up here? So, you need to think a lot of answers on that.

So, I thought I knew what he was talking about. So, he said, how did you end up here? And I said, well, Miles and Lily reached out to me about six months ago. And they said, no, no, no, no, I don't mean that.

So, my second answer, if you didn't mean that. I said, well, I've been at Trinity eight years now. And St. James was my first assignment after I was at – no, no, no, no, that's not what I meant.

I wanted – seriously. It was – I hadn't had a long day. And I wanted to kind of get his face and be like, well, what do you mean? But I didn't.

He said, well, I mean, when I say how did you end up here, how did you end up a priest? Well, there are other ways you could have asked that, but that's okay. I didn't say that. Don't worry.

I got the priest on here this morning. So, I said, okay, so that's great. Because – and all of a sudden he asked me the question was, did you feel called to the priesthood? I said, well, yes, I did.

I did feel called to the priesthood. And actually, I also felt called to go from Rome to Canterbury because I used to be a Catholic priest. And now I'm in the Episcopal Church.

We had this sort of conversation. It all ended, and he left. But, well, he was a nice guy.

Sorry I didn't catch that question right off the top. So, the reason I'm telling you this is because we don't always – I don't always look to go to gospel for preaching weeks in advance. Sometimes we're just too busy, whether it's me or Lex or whoever.

So if we don't look at it ahead of time, we always know when it's going to be on Tuesday morning when we have our staff meeting because we read the upcoming gospel on Tuesday. So, if you haven't had a chance yet to think about it, you're really pretty lucky because we do the African Bible study where you read the gospel, and people pick out a word or a sentence, and then we kind of talk about it. And then we read it again, and we talk about how it speaks to us.

And it's very, very helpful. So I did not look at today's gospel until this past Tuesday, three days after that man said, so how did you end up being a priest? Do you think you were called to be a priest? And I hear the gospel. What does this gospel have? The calling of Matthew.

So when they started reading it on Tuesday, I was going, wow. It's so interesting how the Holy Spirit works. You know, and I'm not going to stand here and try to compare myself to one of the apostles.

I mean, good heavens. Matthew was a great apostle, and I am one of thousands of priests in the world. Whether I was called or not, I do believe I was.

So I'm not going to really preach on that. I just found it interesting, so I thought I'd share it with you. But what I am going to, there are two things I want to cover today.

One of them is the call of Matthew. Because if you listen to that whole gospel, whether it's the calling of Matthew or who they ate with, it's a chunk full of things we can talk about and I can preach about. But I am going to talk about the calling of Matthew because it is extremely important, and it's also unusual.

We'll get into that. Then the other thing I'm going to focus on is the fact that most people who listen to this gospel, there's a misinterpretation. Those who hear this gospel don't interpret it correctly.

And I'm going to kind of focus on that. So let's talk just for a second about Matthew. The calling of Matthew.

There are three aspects of this story, really. The invitation, the response, and the celebration. I'm going to repeat those.

The invitation, the response, and the celebration. The invitation is, Jesus sees Matthew, and he walks up to him and says, Now, I've heard people say, do you think Jesus really knew that much about Matthew? Did watching him at his little tax booth when he was doing things in the town square, the village square, had he kind of put out in his mind, you know, I think when I start to put my followers together, I think that's what I want. I think I want Matthew because he is a tax collector.

And by the way, the only tax collector in Jesus' inner circle. Did you hear that? The only tax collector in Jesus' inner circle. Yes, Jesus hung out with tax collectors, but Matthew was the only one they asked.

So all of a sudden, he walks up to Matthew and he just says, follow me. The response. The response is, Matthew says, okay, and goes off and follows him.

Was there not any kind of negotiating going on? I mean, Matthew, he made some money. Matthew was in the lucrative business. Matthew was a tax collector.

Matthew lined his pockets with taxes that he was taking. Yes, Rome got what they needed, but Matthew also got what Matthew needed. Matthew and his family probably were doing very well.

So why in the world would he all of a sudden say, yeah, you know what? I will follow you. Maybe it's because he was tired of being on the outside of the circle. Matthew was hated.

All tax collectors were hated. They weren't honest and truthful people. So maybe he finally, oh, wow, this is my chance.

This is my chance to get out of this business, do something different, something that's very positive. I've been seeing Jesus. I've heard about him.

Now he wants me to follow him, so I'm going to do it. So that's the response. Invitation, response, and then what? Celebration.

Matthew must have been really, really excited to be invited by Jesus because he decides to have a party for himself. And he says to Jesus, Jesus, will you come? Jesus, absolutely I'll be there. He says to his followers, hey, all you that are already following Jesus, will you come? Absolutely we'll be there.

Good, because I'm also inviting all my tax collector buddies. I'm also inviting the prostitutes, and I'm also inviting all the different sinners around the community because those are the only ones I know. Those are the ones that I hang out with.

So I'm inviting everyone. And that's when chaos kind of sort of ensued because people started saying, excuse me, why is your boss, the teacher, the rabbi, inviting and hanging out with all of these individuals? Now that is what I see the calling of men, the invitation, the response, and the celebration. Now let's look at why this gospel is misinterpreted by individuals.

Your average person sitting in the pew thinks this has nothing to do with them. That wouldn't be you, would it? Now I know I'm sort of kind of preaching to the choir, you are here this morning, but the average person thinks that the calling of Matthew is calling Matthew, not you. And if I pressed you a little bit and said, no, no, no, no, it's more than Matthew.

So tell me, if it's more than Matthew, who's it about? Well, then it's about you, Father John, or it's about Father Lex, or it's about Deacon Carol. It's about people that work for the church. I don't work for the church.

No one's getting called here. I beg to differ. You may say to me right now, well, listen, I'm an IT person.

I work in computer. You're also called. Well, I'm a doctor.

You're also called. I'm a lawyer. You're also called.

Well, I work in accounting. You're also called. I work in the home.

You're also called. I'm just a teacher. You're also called.

If you are a person of faith, you are called just like Matthew, just like me, just like Father Lex, and just like Deacon Carol. We are called to go into the world and bring

about the kingdom. There's one line in this gospel that everybody misses, and I think it's the best line there is.

Go and learn what this means. That's what Jesus says after people start questioning him about this little gathering, this party. Go and learn what this means.

Or another way to say it is go and figure out what this means. That's for y'all. You need to figure out what your calling is.

You need to figure out how you're going to go into the world and love unconditionally. You need to figure out how you, let me just stop for a minute, because someone is going to say, I don't feel comfortable sharing my faith with people. Fair enough.

Good Lord, you're an Episcopalian. I get it. I have told you many times, and so has Lex in preaching, one of my favorite phrases from St. Francis, and you're going to be able to finish the line.

Preach the gospel at all times when necessary. Use words. You don't have to do a thing, or say a thing, I should say, except be yourself and do the things that Jesus asks us to do.

You don't feel comfortable sharing your faith? I don't care. You don't have to. But you still got to go into the world to love.

You still got to go into the world and show mercy. You still got to go into the world and show respect. You still got to go into the world and help bring about the kingdom, which means you look at the people on the outside of the circle, and you invite them in.

That's what the Episcopal Church is known for, inviting people into the inner part of the circle. Everybody in the church world knows this. I don't care who you ask, a Roman Catholic, a Lutheran, a Baptist, a Methodist, God bless them all.

I'm not being critical of them, but I'm telling you, the Episcopal Church is known for welcoming people to the inside of the circle. That's what we're called to do. A friend of mine came to me, a prisoner came a few years ago and said to me, you know, I think I need to get involved more.

I'm like, that's great. Get busy. That's what I said to him.

No, I was kidding. Get busy. Get busy.

Figure it out. How else is the kingdom going to come about? So that's the phrase I want to be seared on your heart, to be seared in your soul, to be seared in your mind. Go and figure out what it's all about.

And when you do, I will have two words for you.

Get busy. Amen.