

This Week's Readings

First Reading: Hosea 6: 3-6.

The loyalty of Judah and Israel is fickle and short-lived. The Lord desires their love, not sacrifice.

Second Reading: Romans 4: 18-25.

Having written that we attain righteousness or right relationship with God only through faith, Paul now presents Abraham as an example of a person of faith, as one who believed in God's promise.



Gospel: Matthew 9: 9-13:

Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector, to follow him, eats with "sinners", and proclaims that he has come for them, not for those who fancy themselves to be holy.

Points for Reflection

1. The **prophet Hosea** assured the People of Israel that God would remain steadfast in his love, despite their wavering and superficial response to him. "They were about as stable as clouds moving before the wind; their loyalty to God about as long-lived as the dew before the sun gets to it".
2. In today's **Gospel Reading** Hosea's assurance is reiterated and far more vigorously. Here Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector, to follow him, and is seen completely at home with a group of "sinners", to use Matthew's own word---and he himself is one of those present after Jesus' call to follow him. In the face of criticism of his being found eating with such people, Jesus says specifically: *"I did not come to call the righteous but sinners"*.

He remained firm in his merciful love for them all through his entire life until his death on the Cross, which he accepted for their salvation out of obedience to the Father's will. One with the Father, He knew that it is only those sinners who recognize their sinfulness and his infinite mercy that can respond to him and be saved by him.

It is only sinners who really feel that they need Jesus, because they recognize in him the only healer of their souls. The "pious" are blind, and, therefore, they cannot see their lack and God's healing presence in Jesus.

3. We must acknowledge that we are sinners, too. However, Jesus tells us that he will not forgive us just because we say long prayers or attend Sunday Mass. What he really wants from us is that we open ourselves to his healing love and we share it with our neighbours.

He is not pleased if we only offer him superficial ceremonies and songs. **He wants love, not sacrifice.**

--Fr Carlo Tei

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Kids' Corner

Read the passage below about Matthew the tax collector and answer the questions that follow.

Matthew the Tax Collector

Matthew was a tax-collector, a profession that was despised in Palestine at that time. Rome auctioned off tax territories to various individuals, who then collected taxes from the public. After the tax-collectors gathered the amount they had bid for their territory, they could keep any money that was left over. Many of them collected as much money as they could in any way that they could in order to become rich very quickly. Tax-collectors were considered to be so dishonest that they could not testify in courts of law.

When Jesus called Matthew to follow him, he may have been calling Matthew back to his roots, to a knowledge of a better way of life that became better and better for him as he followed Jesus.

The Pharisees disliked the fact that Jesus would eat with anyone, especially tax collectors. Perhaps the many stories of banquets to which no one came in the book of Matthew reflected the tax collectors' lives. They were wealthy people who could give large, elaborate dinner parties, but anyone who thought he was respected in the community would refuse to come.

But Jesus came, and the tax collectors welcomed him into their hearts and homes.

Questions

1. *What did Jesus say to Matthew?* _____
2. *What did Matthew do when Jesus spoke to him?* _____
3. *Where did Jesus go?* _____

(Answers can be found at <http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/matthew.htm>)