



Benefice of Atworth with Shaw and Whitley

The Disciples of Jesus: Matthew and Thomas

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Matthew 9:9-13 John 20:19-31

In essence:

- Like the fishermen, Matthew immediately responded to Jesus' call. He left his tax booth, his comfortable lifestyle and walked towards a new way of life (Matthew 9:9). Unlike the fishermen, there would be no possibility of going back to his profession.
- As a Jewish tax collector, Matthew would have been considered a social outcast. Tax collectors were seen as collaborators with the Romans. They collected taxes on their behalf and could then add a percentage on top for themselves – thus exploiting their Jewish community.
- Some traditions say that the disciple Matthew is the author of the Gospel bearing his name. Modern scholarship suggests that it is more likely to have been written by a multi-lingual man in the late first century.
- Matthew begins his discipleship by inviting Jesus to a dinner party with other tax collectors and sinners. By offering hospitality, he shares his faith with others who have lost their way (Matthew 9:10)
- Thomas had a twin brother or sister who is never identified. He is listed with the other disciples in Matthew, Mark and Luke (the Synoptic Gospels) but we learn most about him from John's Gospel
- Tradition nicknames him 'doubting Thomas', but he could be referred to as a brave realist. He recognises that to follow Jesus to Jerusalem could lead to certain death but encourages the others to go 'that we may die with him' (John 11:16)
- Thomas shows his vulnerability by asking questions. He is not in the house when Jesus first appears to the disciples. He says, '*Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands...and put my finger in the mark of the nails... and my hand in his side, I will not believe*' (John 20:24-25).
- It is a week later that Jesus invites Thomas to reach out his hand to touch Jesus' wounded hands and side. Thomas truly believes and declares that Jesus is '*My Lord and my God*' (John 20:28).

'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe' (John 20:29)

For Reflection:

1. Have you ever felt like an outsider looking in?
2. When has Jesus challenged you out of your comfort zone?
3. By inviting sinners and tax collectors to the dinner party, Matthew's hospitality was radical. What does radical hospitality look like to you?
4. What do you think is meant by the term 'sinner'?
5. Do you like asking questions? How do you feel when you receive an unexpected answer?
6. Have you thought about joining a group to explore faith with others?
7. Is seeing believing?