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THE CALL OF CHRIST TO SAINT MATTHEW

Today we examine the transformation of Matthew, from a despised public official to evangelist. It is explained to us by an ancient Church Father:

“we have heard in the Gospel reading that Jesus felt compassion for Matthew as he sat at the tax collector’s place, intent upon temporal concerns, and suddenly called him. He made a just man of a publican, a disciple of a tax collector. As he progressively increased in grace, Jesus promoted him from the ordinary group of disciples to the rank of an apostle, and not only committed to him the ministry of preaching, but also that of writing a Gospel. Doubtlessly the reason why heavenly providence arranged for this to happen was so that neither the enormity of one’s wicked deeds nor their great number should dissuade ANYONE from hoping for pardon, since one could look at this man Matthew, who had been freed from such bonds of the world and made heavenly in order to become an evangelist.

He saw him not so much by virtue of corporeal vision as by inner compassion. Jesus saw the man, and felt compassion for him because he was devoted only to human concerns and he was not yet worthy of an angelic name.

But Matthew arose and followed our Lord. We should not marvel that a publican, upon first hearing the Lord’s voice ordering him, left the earthly gains that he cared about. Disregarding his property, he attached himself to the band of followers of one whom he perceived to have no riches. For the Lord Himself, Who outwardly called him by a word, taught him inwardly with an invisible impulse. Thus, Matthew received the incorruptible treasures of Heaven.”