

Called Not to Hold Back, But to Give Generously

Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

Readings: Proverbs 3.13-18; 2 Corinthians 4.1-6; Matthew 9.9-13

21 September 2025

“Following Christ means we give ourselves fully, not holding back, but with generosity, so that the whole community may journey with strength toward God’s Kingdom.” In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we celebrate the Feast of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist. He is remembered in many ways: as one of the twelve chosen by Jesus, as the one associated with the first Gospel in the New Testament, and most strikingly, as a tax collector.

It is this last detail that the Gospel highlights. Jesus saw Matthew at the tax booth and said, “Follow me.” Matthew rose and followed. A man whose profession was linked with greed and suspicion became a disciple and later a Gospel writer.

Proverbs tells us that wisdom is more valuable than silver or gold, more precious than jewels, and a tree of life to those who hold her fast. True wisdom brings life and peace, not mere possessions.

Matthew, before meeting Jesus, was surrounded by money every day. Yet in Christ’s call he discovered something of greater worth. He left his booth, not because he gained more wealth, but because he had found wisdom that gave life. And just as we sometimes describe our church as a boat on a voyage, where provisions and fuel are needed but never the goal, Matthew shows us that money, placed in God’s hands, becomes a servant of the Gospel.

Paul writes that ministry must be carried out in honesty and openness: “We refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God’s word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.” What a contrast to the life of a tax collector! Yet when Matthew followed Jesus, the very skills he once used for worldly profit, his precision with records, his ability to handle accounts, were redeemed for the service of the Kingdom. Stewardship, when done in God’s light, is itself a ministry of truth.

And here we recognize our own call as a church community. A boat cannot sail without provisions, and the mission of the Church cannot move forward without resources. Finances are the fuel for the voyage, not the destination, but the means by which the whole community travels together toward God's Kingdom.

In the Gospel, Jesus not only calls Matthew but also sits at table with tax collectors and sinners. This provokes scandal. The Pharisees ask: "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus replies: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." Here lies the heart of the feast. Matthew's story is about mercy. Jesus saw beyond his reputation and offered him a new beginning. In the same way, the Church is a place of mercy, where all are welcomed, and where even our ordinary skills and resources are turned into instruments of grace.

So what do these readings say to us about our life as a chaplaincy? First, they remind us that money itself is not unspiritual. Too often, conversations about giving to the Church are treated as "just administration." But our use of money reflects our values and our trust in God. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Second, the challenge before us is not misuse of funds but the simple fact that we do not yet have enough. Outside help sustains us now, but to journey with confidence we must grow into a community that can also carry its own weight. Just as every passenger on a voyage shares in providing for the journey, so every member is called to give, according to ability, so that worship, fellowship, and mission may continue.

Matthew's story reminds us that even financial skills, once misused, can become gifts when surrendered to Christ. Likewise, when our giving is joined together, however small or large, it becomes a witness of faith. The budget is not about accumulating wealth but about fueling ministry, supporting worship, serving the vulnerable, and sustaining the life of the community.

Finally, Paul points us to integrity. In a world where corruption is common, the Church must shine differently. Our stewardship is open, honest, and accountable. The truth is simple: our resources are used faithfully, but they

remain scarce. What we need is not holding back, but generosity, so that the boat does not drift but sails with strength.

Friends, the Feast of St. Matthew is not only about honoring a saint of old. It is about recognizing that God can redeem what others dismiss. It is about remembering that our skills, our professions, and yes, our money, can be transformed into instruments of mercy when entrusted to God.

When Matthew left his tax booth, he found wisdom beyond gold, a ministry of integrity, and the mercy that embraced him. May we also live with wisdom, integrity, and mercy, so that our stewardship, our praying, our volunteering, and yes, our giving, becomes a sign of the Gospel at work among us.

And like passengers on a shared voyage, let us not simply sit in the boat but row, provide, encourage, and pray, so that our whole community may sail with confidence toward God's Kingdom.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.