

Our Sabbath Scripture Stories



FAMILIES RECLAIMING SUNDAY

Read aloud: Hosea 6:3-6
Romans 4:18-25

Gospel: Matthew 9:9-13

Mom gathered all the Pauline kids for this morning's Gospel reading. Everyone was seated in the living room, but where was Dad? Dad never missed a Sabbath Scripture reading. Where was he? Or was this part of a plan?

"Dad's missing!" little Hillary exclaimed. "We can't start without him!"

Mom just smiled a "knowing smile" and said, "I'm sure Dad will join us soon. In the meantime, let's get started with our Sabbath passage for today!"

Mom opened her Bible to Matthew, Chapter 9. It was a short Gospel passage for this morning, just five lines.

As she cleared her throat to begin, Mom couldn't help looking at the faces of her children, attentive to hearing the reading, but still with one eye scanning for their dad.

Mom began, *"As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."* (Matthew 9:9-13)

Mom finished the reading and looked at the faces of her children again. They all seemed to have a puzzled look.

"Is there something you don't understand from our reading this morning?" she asked them.

"Yeah," Vincent piped in. "Where is Dad? I really expected him to jump out as a tax collector, or come in as a physician, or something! I thought he'd be part of the story!"

Just then the phone began to ring. "Brr-r-ring! Brr-r-ring! Brr-r-ring!" The phone kept ringing and ringing.



"Shouldn't someone answer the call?" Vincent asked his mom.

"That is a great question, Vincent!" Mom replied. "In fact, we should *all* answer the call!"

"Huh?" they all asked.

Mom smiled broadly and called out, "Okay, Martin, you can come out now!"

There came Dad from the other room, cell phone in hand, and laughing to himself.

"Was that you calling from the other room, Dad?!" Lucy asked him. "How come you were calling us?"

Dad chuckled. "Well, Lucy, Mom and I wanted to link together the Gospel reading from today with the sound of a phone call. What if Jesus was on the other end of that line? Would you answer? Would you let it ring? Or would you just hang up? We want you to think, 'If Jesus called me up today and asked me to leave everything behind, would I do it?'"

"Well, I'm kind of little, Dad, to leave home!" Hillary shyly replied.

"I know you are, Sweetheart!" Dad said as he swept his 4-year-old up in his arms. "What we are talking about is choosing Christ over everything else and choosing to respond to His call as soon as He dials us up!"

"That's right, Martin," Mom added. "Jesus calls each one of us. With our free will, we respond either 'yes' or 'no.' And Jesus calls us throughout our lives to follow Him. Matthew was in the midst of practicing his profession as a tax collector. Peter, Andrew, James, and John

were fishermen; yet they all heard the call of God and responded freely and immediately to whatever Jesus wanted them to do!"

"Jesus must have some kind of phone bill!" Vincent joked.

"And Jesus can call us anytime, Daddy, either day or night?" Lucy asked.

"Sure can!" Dad said. "Jesus can call us at work, at school, on the playground, or even eating breakfast! Here was Matthew, the author of our Gospel, running a tax collecting business. To the Pharisees, he was judged pretty low on the human scale. But Jesus called Matthew to follow. And follow he did!"

"Exactly!" Mom said. "Soon many tax collectors and sinners were following Jesus and listening to Him, which the Pharisees found pretty disturbing!"

"How come?" Mary Clare asked.

"Well, Mary Clare," Dad replied, "the Pharisees were very prone to judge others and classify people. Their attitudes weren't the same as the teachings of Jesus. They couldn't understand why Jesus would even be near sinners."

"That's true!" Mom added. "That is why Jesus tells the Pharisees to learn about sin and God's mercy when He says, '*I desire mercy, not sacrifice.*'" (*Matthew 9:13a*)

"So Jesus is stressing that we should all begin with a heart full of mercy," Dad said. "It was in mercy that Jesus came into the world to call all sinners back to God."

"I get it!" Vincent declared. "Jesus is on the 'heavenly telephone' calling us to turn away from sin, go to Reconciliation, choose right from wrong, and follow Him!"

"Perfect, Vincent!" Dad said. "And since we all sin and fall short of God's glory, it's great that Jesus came to save each one of us!"

"Brr-r-ring! Brr-r-ring! Brr-r-ring!" the phone pealed out from the kitchen.

Without missing a beat, the Pauline family laughed and proclaimed, "Jesus calling!" And there, amidst giggles and hugs, the family embraced the "call" to head to Mass!