

# Tax Collector No Longer

He had no idea that he would be hosting a fine dinner in just a few days for One whom he had just met. He was conducting his lucrative business as usual, when a human voice laced with Divinity called him to leave that career for a specialty business that would have unimaginable results for him and for countless hearts worldwide. The effect of this sacred work would be jettisoned to the world in a Gospel that would be read with excitement until the last moment in time.

Levi would become known as the first of the Evangelists. He would be employed by the Holy Spirit to write a work that would begin with the striking words, "The Book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Abraham." The no-longer-tax-collector-sinner had now been made a fountain from which would come the inspired words of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. No doubt, he would often look back with truckloads of shame at his former life of tax collecting. He robbed his fellow man as he collected swelled taxes, pocketing that which was the illegal overflow.

You and I follow the shadowy steps of this former deceiver as we, also, work to build our own kingdoms with the building blocks of financial security. We are lovers of money at heart, relishing to hear the sound of precious cash flowing through pockets of cloth and doting on bank statements boasting sum totals of life saving assets. We were Levis by birth, until the sound of a rich voice rang into our hearts from the Throne of Grace, calling us to trust in the riches of the One who became poor for us.

Poor indeed! This Mighty God from on high, rich in the splendor of Holy Majesty, has become for you the poorest on the face of this contaminated globe, to make you the rich people of God. His cross that carried the rich-become-poor has provided for you the

forgiveness of your sins and the accompanying gift of eternal riches. Your sin, summoned into the lowly body of Jesus on Calvary, has been crucified, assassinated, destroyed by the life-giving crucifixion of Jesus. In this holy event on Golgotha and the spectacular Easter event of resurrection, your life is redeemed from the lowly lover of money to the rich and bountiful possessor of divine riches. No longer a condemned sinner in love with the world, you are a delivered saint, full of His Divine mercy, bound for the exquisite mansions, built by the rich hand of Jesus. You are part and parcel of the Kingdom of Glory, bound for heaven because the Richest became the Poorest for your sake.

He now delivers this rich kingdom into your hands in such glorious instruments as Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, Holy Absolution and the Holy Gospel of Matthew. Your entire life is brand new now, rich in grace, rich in holiness and rich in holy living. Your new motives and desires are planned and executed by the Rich One, leading you to abandon all pursuits that capture your worldly imagination. Now, rather, you exalt the joys of living in profound assurance that Jesus Christ provides all for you in every need. You no longer seek so much after the riches of the world, for, as with Levi, you are changed people. You are rich in the abiding love of the One who gave His life for you to enrich you with a kingdom of indescribable treasure. Because of the Lord's love for you, He will host a most wondrous supper for you on the other side, in royal light, with all the saints in light, "where praises never end."

Your history is like unto Matthew's - once dead, but now alive in Christ. And it's all because of a rich voice that called you to be poor for Him, bound for the riches of glory everlasting.

Pastor Hamer