

Sermon Title: **“When You Meet Jesus”**

Bible: **Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26**

When: on Sunday, June 11, 2023

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

### **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, thank you so much for guiding us to you and this church. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **1. When You Met Jesus**

Do you remember when and how you met Jesus? Do you remember when and how you came to this church? Were you born into a Christian family? Did your family help you to meet Jesus and come to church? As I was born into a Christian family, my parents took me to the church, and the church has been a significant place for my whole life. Have you been in a desperate situation? Did you happen to find yourself in a situation where you felt lonely or where you were lost? How about a situation where the doctors told you that they had done all they could and that they could not do anything more? Did your friends or neighbors invite you to come to the church? Did you want to feel the hospitality? The open table where all are welcomed? Did you need a social or faith community? Did your inner voice call you to go to church? As we are all different, we have all different reasons and causes to come to church and to meet Jesus. But what we all share is the love, the mercy, and the grace of God. The

beginning of each of our faith journeys will be different. But our Lord Jesus Christ is there in the center and at the end of each of our faith journeys.

## **2. When Matthew Met Jesus**

Today's reading of Matthew shows how people met Jesus. In the case of Matthew, Jesus called Matthew. When Jesus told him, "Follow me," Matthew got up and followed him immediately, even though this calling was sudden. Before this calling, Matthew might have had a lot of thoughts, concerns, or an identity crisis about himself, as he was a tax collector. At that time, tax collectors were social and moral outcasts. They were not welcomed, because they were regarded as collaborators with Roman authorities. They were Jews, but they collected taxes for Rome, and they made a profit by requesting more money than just legal taxes. They were rejected and excluded from their own communities. But Jesus specifically called Matthew. Can you understand and accept Jesus' calling? It was not like the calling of Peter or Andrew, who were fishermen and considered part of the lower class. If you were Matthew, could you follow Jesus? Furthermore, Jesus sat and ate together with many tax collectors and sinners. Can you understand and accept this table fellowship practiced by Jesus? How could Jesus eat with outcasts and sinners? According to their Jewish law, to sit and to eat together with such people meant you were "unclean" or not "holy." That's why the Pharisees complained about Jesus' table fellowship. Jesus knew all the Jewish law. But what was important to Jesus was not the Jewish law, but showing mercy to all people in need. That's why he said, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." The Jewish law might separate the clean

from the unclean, the holy from the unholy. But God's mercy is crossing social and moral boundaries and God's grace is open to all. No one and nothing can separate us from God's love!

That's why I love our church's open communion. Last Sunday, when we celebrated our 170th anniversary, we had an open communion. It represented God's love to all, and there was the joy of open communion and the social hour. To sit and eat together with our friends, our neighbors, and our guests gave us smiles and joy. I believe that we are still thankful and joyful. I pray that our gratitude and our joy will overflow through us more and more.

### **3. When a Daughter of a Leader and a Woman Met Jesus**

In the case of the daughter of a leader in today's reading, I love the request of the leader. Actually, I am surprised at what the leader asked Jesus. According to Jewish law, touching a dead body was not allowed. But the leader whose daughter had passed away asked Jesus to come and lay his hand on her dead body. I wonder how he asked this. Probably, he knew Jesus' healing and power, and Jesus' unlimited mercy and grace beyond the social norms. What he was desperate for was to save his daughter. And he knew Jesus as the way of life.

The case of a woman who had been suffering for twelve years is another example of someone experiencing Jesus' healing beyond the social norms. For men to touch women and for women to touch men could be a problem. Moreover, according to Jewish law, the woman had a health issue that caused a continuous flow of blood. This woman could be regarded as "unclean." No one was allowed to touch this woman. Probably, because of this law, the

woman dared to touch only the cloak of Jesus. But her faith, even in just touching the cloak, made her well. She was desperate, and Jesus' compassion was there for her.

#### **4. When We Meet Jesus**

All of these three encounters with Jesus had barriers and challenges. However, beyond the barriers and the challenges, these people met Jesus. Matthew followed Jesus. Jesus' hands healed the leader's daughter. The long-suffering woman was healed by Jesus' touch. When you want to come to our Lord, do you face any challenges? Do you feel any hesitation?

Matthew, the tax collector who was a social and moral outcast, met Jesus. What we are does not matter. The daughter was restored to life, and the woman was healed, beyond or in spite of their social laws. What people think, what we know, or what we do not know does not matter. What Jesus sees is our hearts and who we are. We are God's loved ones, and God loves us. And our Lord Jesus Christ wants to meet us. God's love and grace is for us, overflowing to us.

#### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, we love you and we want to meet you. Please help us to experience your love and power more and more. In Jesus' name. Amen.