

Father Bernie Lindley

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Church

This is Father Bernie Lindley from St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, for Voices.

Tomorrow is the feast day for Saint Matthew, the author of the first book of the New Testament. Matthew was a tax collector and because no one, not now, not then, likes tax collectors, Matthew was not a popular person in his town. But, because Matthew collected taxes for the Romans, the occupying armies of the enemy to the Jewish people, Matthew was seen as a traitor.

Not only that, Matthew was corrupt. He lined his pockets by charging even more taxes than the Romans asked of him.

It was this man that Jesus and his followers chose to eat dinner with one day. Matthew invited his tax collector buddies to come as well. The Jewish leaders saw Jesus dining with people they held in contempt and they criticized Jesus. They said, "Why does Jesus eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

Jesus replied, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. I didn't come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners."

Matthew did, indeed, become a follower of Jesus and he is recognized as one of the Twelve Apostles. He was a witness to the Resurrection and Ascension. Matthew preached the Gospel to the Jewish community in Judea, before going to other countries. Ancient writers are not agreed as to what these other countries are.

It is most likely that Matthew was put to death for his faith, dying as a Christian martyr just like all of the other Apostles, with the only exception being Saint John who was exiled to the Island of Patmos.

Saint Matthew is the patron saint of bankers, accountants, and all professions that handle money. He serves as a reminder that it is not money that is the root of all evil, but the love of money that causes people to be separated from God.