



## Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover

*By Johnny Caruso on January 7, 2022*

**READING:** Luke 5

When reading Luke 5, the first thing you see is the calling of Jesus' disciples. More specifically, the calling of Peter--Cephas, the Rock--the one on whom Jesus said, "I will build my church." However, in this devotion I will focus on Levi, the tax collector. In passages parallel to Matthew 9:9, both Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27 describe Jesus' calling of the tax collector, Levi, son of Alphaeus. Mark and Luke never explicitly equate this Levi with the Matthew who was named as one of the 12. In spite of this, I think this does refer to the Matthew of the 12 disciples.

Levi (Matthew) was a tax collector. Most tax collectors were educated Greeks, but Levi was a Jew collecting taxes for the Romans. Of course he was extracting extra on the side for himself. He would have been despised for his greed and corruption. Tax collectors were labeled as sinners by the Pharisees and religious leaders who followed their own interpretation of the law and avoided unclean people or behavior.

Levi's calling to discipleship would mean a totally new way of life. And as with all true Christ followers, Levi's life was changed forever. He left everything to follow Christ. Levi ran with a different group of people so when he held a great banquet at his house and invited Jesus to meet some of his friends it disturbed the Pharisees and scribes.

It is very tempting to limit the people we hang with to those who are most like us. But Jesus pointedly tells the religious leaders that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. As a result, people's lives like mine were changed forever.

It is dangerous, and I would go as far as calling it sinful, not to engage the communities where we are planted. While it is part of the holy life to separate ourselves from sin and evil actions, we must never isolate or insulate our lives from the people God has called us to reach with the unsearchable riches of Christ.

**PRAYER:** Lord, help us pay attention to the people around us who do not know You. Help us listen to conversations of others that would give us an opportunity to share Christ. May we always separate ourselves from sin, but never the sinner.

**TOMORROW'S READING:** Weekends are for catch-up and review.

**MONDAY'S READING:** Luke 6

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