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Jessica: Welcome to Lectionary Kickstart,
where we're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan
your sermon or teaching lesson.
I'm your host, Jessica Bordeleau,
here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger.
They're both professors of homiletics here at Concordia
Seminary, St. Louis.
All right, let's get started.

David: David, where are we in the church here?
We are in the second week of Pentecost,
where we are celebrating the work of the Spirit in the lives
of God's people and the church.

Jessica: What's the text for this week, Peter?

Peter: The texts are from Hosea Chapter 5,
Romans Chapter 4, and Matthew Chapter 9
and those can be found on our website.

Jessica: Okay, Peter, it's your turn this week.
Which text would you choose to preach on?

Peter: I think I am going to,
at first glance here,
explore Matthew Chapter 9.
And to get us going, maybe, would you just read that first
verse, Matthew 9, verse 9?

Jessica: As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew,
sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him,
Follow me.
And he rose and followed him.

Peter: All right, very simple.

David: Too simple.

Peter: Too simple.

David: Actually.

Peter: Yeah, why do you say too simple?

David: I just, I mean,
bringing people into discipleship in the church is not that
simple.

There's a lot of questions.

There's a lot of hesitation.

I mean, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just walk out
and say, hey, come to church.

Peter: Okay, so this is kind of interesting, because what I want to
think about in a sermon on
this text is I want to notice that this is Matthew's
description of his own calling.

David: Right, right.

Yeah.

Peter: Okay.

So he's writing this, and he's telling about when Jesus
called him, and he writes it in
a very simple way.
Jesus said, Follow me.

And he's writing in the third person, and he rose and followed him.
Okay, now we know by reading the rest of the book that it wasn't quite so neat?

David:

Right.

Peter:

The disciples constantly had questions.

They were misunderstanding.

But the initial call was direct, and it was simple.

And so what I'm thinking about is we're at the beginning of the season of Pentecost,

and the readings this whole season are from Matthew's Gospel.

And so I'm thinking a sermon here at the beginning of

Pentecost would be helpful to spend a little

bit of time with Matthew the person.

David:

Oh, that's a good idea.

Peter:

Matthew the tax collector, Matthew the Gospel writer, as this guy we don't actually know

much about, except we know what he wrote about.

David:

Yeah.

Peter:

And what he wrote about Jesus.

But him as a person, it's kind of simple.

All we know is that he was sitting there at the tax booth.

Jesus said, Follow me.

And he went and followed him.

And then I want to kind of tease out what a simple

discipleship of Matthew looks like

for us today.

How can we identify with Matthew?

What does Jesus do when he calls us to follow him?

So that's kind of my bigger picture.

David:

Okay.

I like, I really like the idea of, since we're going to be spending time with Matthew for the rest of Pentecost, kind of thinking about who he is, how he writes, why he writes, what he's, you know, what's going on in terms of his understanding of discipleship.

I think that's a great, a great way of preparing us for the rest of the year.

Peter:

To me, I'm thinking in my mind, I'm thinking about what we don't know.

And I don't want to go too far down any path of what we don't know, what we assume.

So that leads me actually back to the text where we go from Jesus calling him and however

it happened, the next verse, Jesus reclined at table in the house, in his house, presumably,

with many others.

And so I'm thinking about, okay, to follow Jesus is to welcome Jesus to your table.

And it's not as if, well, it's intimate, you know, it's having someone in your home and

you eat with them.

And so this discipleship life is not something that's kept at a distance.

David: Yeah, no, it's all in.

Right.

Right.

There's nothing about you that ain't following him.

You're getting it all, Jesus, so here you go.

Peter: Right, you're getting it all and he's in it all.

David: Right, yeah.

Peter: Including in the text, at least, also his fellow tax collectors and sinners.

And this, to me, that just strikes me that he doesn't, I think I, without thinking about

a picture of Matthew getting up and leaving everything behind and going with Jesus now

off in the, you know, kind of on the way.

But here you've got the people that Matthew is working with, hanging out with, the disciples

and Jesus all together in this kind of tag.

David: Yeah, I mean, you know, you think about conversion stories and Augustine's account of his conversion

and the confessions, and he surrounds his conversion with these conversions of all these

other people.

And one of the people, I don't know if it was Simplicianus or Victorinus, he's got like

all these different conversion stories.

But there was one person who wanted to be a Christian privately and didn't want to publicly

make the confession.

And I mean, it kind of, in this moment, Matthew follows Jesus, but that means it's all in.

And, you know, there's this very public nature of being a follower of Jesus, that suddenly

Jesus is at his table.

Peter: Yeah, so it's no private matter.

David: Right.

Peter: So discipleship is not a private.

David: It's not a private matter.

And that's important for today, I think.

Peter: Right.

Yeah.

And it wasn't just interestingly, you know, in the text, it's not just the disciples and

the tax collectors and sinners, but the Pharisees are noticing this too.

So it's public in that sense.

And that's when it leads then to these questions the Pharisees ask.

And would you read verse 12, Jessica?

Jessica: But when he heard it, he said, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

Peter: And I kind of picture Matthew, you know, he's eating with the other guys and Jesus is telling the Pharisees, well, these guys are sick. That's why I'm here.

David: Yeah, you overhear that.
Wow.

Peter: And to think about Matthew recognizing, yeah, that's the case.

David: Well isn't that, I mean, that's like so opposite to how people think of the church today. So many people I know are like, you know, I wouldn't be accepted to the church. I need to get my life together before I go to church, that the church is for people who have it all together. And this is the exact opposite. And so to be following Jesus and then to publicly hear him say, you know, you're the sick ones. It kind of lets us know that forgiveness, that act of conversion and repentance and forgiveness, that that's so central to following Christ. It's not something that's set off in the side.

Peter: Yeah, and you know, you talk about what people view of the church as people who have it all got together. I think about how many times in the ministry in my congregation in Minnesota when people would be going through the worst, roughest times, that's when they would disassociate themselves from the church. And so not only is it kind of view from the outside, from the inside, we don't think of our gatherings at church as a gathering of people who are hurting and sick, as much as we feel like we got to kind of get it all together before we show up.

David: Yeah, I've always heard that comparison of the church to a hospital, right? And you're kind of like, you know, well, you know, you're sick. Well, of course, you're in a hospital. That's why you're here. Right? I mean, so, yeah, that's, I like that idea. I mean, I just like, I like the idea of Matthew overhearing Jesus say that he is sick. Right? That is interesting. Yeah, I mean, there's a lot hidden in the text, right? I mean, so the whole issue of tax gatherers, who tax gatherers were, what the opinion was of tax gatherers at that time, and then the whole picture of who Jesus is as a rabbi and

rabbis calling disciples and rabbis calling this kind of a disciple.

I mean, it just, you know, there's a lot of shock value that is kind of present there.

Peter: And what the rabbi does when he calls them.

He brings healing that transforms.

So I think, you know, like you said a minute ago, David, I do think the idea of having

a thought, some thoughts about Matthew preparing your hearers for a whole season with Matthew.

So I would focus on Matthew preparing the hearers for a season of thinking of preaching

on Matthew's gospel to help them recognize their own life of discipleship, their own

following Jesus and what Jesus has come to heal them from.

Jessica: All right, David, which text would you choose to preach on?

David: Well, I would choose the Hosea text.

Number one, because it's got some absolutely beautiful imagery.

And number two, because it is so disconcerting.

It kind of just pulls the wool from your eyes and shows you a completely different way of looking at things.

So the beautiful imagery that is kind of fun there is if you could read from chapter six,

verse one through three, this is going to be the cry of the people of Israel or of the

prophet speaking to the people of Israel.

We're not really sure whose voice it is, but it is a voice of the people or voice representative

of the people before God.

Jessica: Come let us return to the Lord, for he has torn us that he may heal us.

He has struck us down and he will bind us up.

After two days he will revive us.

On the third day he will raise us up that we may live before him.

Let us press on to know the Lord, his going out as sure as the dawn.

He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.

David: Okay, so the imagery is lovely.

There's this confidence in God's love.

What things in there communicate confidence in God's love?

Jessica: Rain always comes.

David: Right.

Jessica: Showers are consistent.

David: Right.

So like the consistent showers, God's going to be here as much as it always.

We always have spring showers.

That's going to be the love of God.

Peter: The dawn.

David: The dawn, right.

You know, have you ever had a day?
Jessica: I suppose that happens every day.
David: Right, it happens every day.
You can depend on it.
So we are so sure that we can depend on God.
He's like the dawn.
He's like the showers.
And then there's this understanding of the quickness of God.
Right.
You know, he's in two days he's going to revive us.
On the third day he's going to raise us up.
So we've got this cry of the people that sounds so good.
Right.
So you've got people who seem to be faithful and they have
sinned and they're returning
to God because they're sure that God's going to love them.
And then if you read the very first verse, everything gets
screwed up.
So if you could read the first verse.
Jessica: I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their
guilt and seek my face and
in their distress earnestly seek me.
David: Okay.
So this is God saying that he is going to abandon Israel.
And right before this, if you read kind of there's this
imagery of a lion attacking its
prey and ripping its prey apart.
So like when he says he has torn us, but he'll heal us.
Peter: And there's an image.
David: Right.
Yeah.
So there's an image.
So God's like this horrifying image of what your sin has
caused God to do.
And he's just going to rip you apart.
And then he's going to dismember you, strew pieces of your
body around the place and then
go to his den.
And now he says, and I'm going to be basically staying in
that den until what?
Jessica: Until you acknowledge your guilt.
David: Until you acknowledge your guilt.
Now when you think about all that beautiful imagery, they're
saying, oh, we're going to
return to God.
We're going to return to God.
But is there any acknowledgement of their guilt?
What looks like beautiful repentance, which is depending upon
God, who's always going
to be loving, is not what God has been asking for.
Right.
He wants you to acknowledge your guilt.
So it's not what God has been asking for.

And it's not even, in a sense, it's not even faithful when you think about it.
Because where do these images of the, you know, God's going out as sure as the dawn,
His coming to us is like the showers, that imagery, that's really coming out of the cult of Baal.
And so the Israelites are letting their cultural setting shape their understanding of who God is.

It sells well.

Peter: Well it's taken a piece of the truth and acting as if it's the whole truth.

So God is love, right?

God is gracious and merciful.

David: And God is steadfast in His love.

Peter: He is steadfast, He's dependable.

And that's absolutely true.

But if you take that apart from the call to repentance and the recognition of what we need forgiveness from God, then that becomes kind of the God as Santa Claus or whatever it is people want to say about God just as kind and nice.

David: The God of nice.

Right, yeah, the God of nice, right?

And you can tell that God's not happy with their response.

Because Jessica, could you read verse four through six?

So this is God speaking.

Okay, so the whole text starts off with God speaking.

I'm going to return to my place until you acknowledge your guilt and seek me.

And then the people speak and say, oh, come let us go seek the Lord.

He's like the rain, He's like the dawn.

He's like everything wonderful.

Let's go seek Him.

And then God comes back with verse four.

Jessica: What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?

What shall I do with you, O Judah?

Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away.

Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets.

I have slain them by the words of my mouth.

My judgment goes forth as the light.

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

David: Okay, so God is upset with them because their love is fast fleeting.

It's not steadfast.

It's not immovable.

It's not constant.

It's this very fast fleeting love that they'll say one thing and do another and then they'll

come back and say the same thing again.

And even, I mean, I think for me, it's a little bit of humor in Scripture where God uses their own imagery against them.

They're saying He's like the morning dawn and God's saying, well, you're like the morning mist, right?

He's like the spring range.

You're like the dew that's here and gone.

I mean, their love is just so fast fleeting.

And God at the end, the last verse, I desire steadfast love, not this fast fleeting love, not this cheap grace love, I desire steadfast love and the knowledge of God.

So it's one of those things where you think about, you know, kind of the scriptural imaginary.

What are the stories that Israel had that would have told them that God was steadfast in His love?

What are stories that would have reminded them of that from the Old Testament?

Peter: Of course, you've got the rainbow, the promise of that He's steadfast.

Never again will I do this.

David: Never again will I destroy the whole earth.

Jessica: Moses.

David: Moses, right?

You've got the whole Exodus period and wilderness wanderings and the bringing into the promised land a steadfast love there.

You've got Joseph in Egypt, right?

You've got the judges, the cycle of judges, all of the times when the people fell into the enemy's hands and then they cry out and God's faithful to them.

So Israel has got a whole lot of stories of God's work in their history, the knowledge of God, the true workings of God to have confidence that God would love them.

And yet instead of turning to their own scriptures, they're turning outside themselves to what the culture is saying about God.

Peter: Yeah.

David: Right?

Peter: Yeah.

And there's such an obvious, I think, connection to our hearers today because the knowledge of God is what's lacking in our culture.

David: Right.

Kind of a piece of God's dependability has been made the whole thing and knowledge of the effects of sin and God's justice and God's displeasure over sin just kind of gets ignored.

David: Right.

And then it causes us to, well, to not truly know who we're worshipping, right?

And not truly know his love for us.

His love's like a campaign slogan or a commercial slogan that's out in our world and it's not

based on this long history of God's love of his people.

And their ability to acknowledge their guilt when they come before him.

Peter: So how are you going to bring Christ into this sermon on Hosea 5 as we think about preaching Christ, especially it's always a little bit tricky from the Old Testament, you know, kind of there's the hearers there, we're looking forward to the Messiah.

What are you thinking there?

David: Well I'm okay, I would not go with the three days.

So some people could go with that.

The only way, so typology would be, you know, three days they could, you know, he'll rise

again and then in three days Christ rose and so you could say this is the type and the

anti-type and this is a prophecy, but I don't see that being it at all.

It's a contrast rather than a similarity.

And here the contrast is Israel was so misguided and clueless that they thought that God would

heal things in three days and God is so gracious and wonderful that he actually did that.

Peter: So that would be one way to do it.

David: That would be one way to do it, but I wouldn't do that.

It's too confusing.

All right.

Peter: It's too confusing.

David: Okay, well that would be one way, but the other way I would really, I like that steadfast

love and knowledge of God, that God desires steadfast love and the knowledge of God.

And I would look at Christ as the one who through his steadfast love gave us true knowledge

of God.

Peter: So instead of reading verse 6 as what he wants from us, you'd read that as this is what God

and Christ has done.

David: What God and Christ has done for us.

Peter: He has made known God.

David: Right.

Peter: And the knowledge of God and steadfast love comes from Jesus to us.

David: Right.

Right.

So, you know, how does God generate steadfast love and true knowledge?

By showing steadfast love, which gives us true knowledge, right?

So it's kind of a, it's the way in which I would look at the ministry of Christ, even the call of Matthew, I think you could work with here as being a way in which true knowledge of God, who God is, what God does, comes from experiencing the steadfast love of Christ.

Peter: Yeah.

And so then the preacher, instead of calling forth that from your hearers, you're proclaiming the steadfast love, you're making known God. And that's what, in a way, that's what Jesus was doing with Matthew too.

David: Right.

Yeah.

So it's just, it's an interesting text.

It's probably better suited for a Bible class in that sense, because there's a lot of close reading that you need to do.

Peter: Yeah.

I mean, this gets to your hearers, you know, if you've got a congregation that's very well versed in the story of God, the biblical narrative, and would kind of think Hosea, oh yeah, of course, this is, you know, people of God, the prophet, you know.

David: Right.

Peter: Then you can say, okay, let's dig further into that.

If it's a relatively less informed congregation in terms of the biblical narrative, trying to figure out, help them understand who Hosea is and who the minor prophets were and kind of post-exilic, pre-exilic, all that kind of stuff, that might be a little much for us.

David: I mean, I guess a way to start would be to begin the sermon by exploring how beautiful their words sound and, you know, how, you know, this just sounds like the type of relationship with God that we want.

And then read verse four, where God is not happy with it, and then say, well, why not?

You know, like you said, the culture has taken a piece of what we believe out of the story.

So they've taken this piece that God is loving and they've made that everything.

And so it's kind of like we have a God of an attribute, but not an act.

You know, that God is loving, but, and everybody's going to agree with me if I say God is loving, but if I say God loves you by sending a son to die and rise, then we're going to fight.

Because that's an act of God that is His love, and it's not just an attribute.

And yet we run around with just an attribute of God.

Oh, God is loving it.
Everybody thinks, well, that's going to be enough.
And what Hosea is crying out for is a relationship that's
deeper, that's based on a steadfast
love and a true knowledge of God.

Jessica: That's all for today.

You can find more free resources to guide your next step in
planning at ConcordiaTheology.org.

I'm your host, Jessica Bordeleau.

Join us next week here at Lectionary-Kickstart when Dr. David
Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger
spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

Peter: That was fun.

David: Yeah, that was.