

Pleasant Valley
Church of Christ

3317 Amidon
Wichita KS 67204
(316) 838-4195
www.letjesusleadus.org

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Classes 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Evening 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Classes 7:30 pm

The Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is a non-denominational group of believers who are committed to following Jesus in our attitudes, our relationships, and our worship. If you want the same thing in your life, please contact us. We'd like to help.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Wings



*"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)*

June 7, 2009

The tax collector and the zealot

by David King

"Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom he also named apostles" (Lk. 6:12-13).

The twelve men whom Jesus chose to be His apostles make an interesting study, but we want to single out two of them: Matthew the tax collector (Matt. 10:3) and Simon the Zealot (Lk. 6:15).

These two men represented opposite extremes in the political landscape of first-century Judaism. The tax collectors were local Jews who contracted with the Roman government to collect taxes from the local populace. Their collection methods provided ample opportunity for skimming excess profits for themselves. The Jews considered them traitors to their people. The Zealots, on the other hand, were the right-wing extremists of their day. Their hatred of the Romans extended even to the advocacy of open rebellion against Rome (which actually happened in AD 66, leading to the destruction of Jerusalem).

Had Matthew and Simon been left alone in the same room, only one of them would have walked out alive. Yet Jesus chose these two men to work together as fellow apostles under His oversight. Why did Jesus take such an enormous risk? Having these two on His staff had a potential for a disastrous blow-up. But Jesus did not make a mistake. Remember, He spent the whole night in prayer before choosing these two. He knew what He was doing.

In fact, Jesus' gamble paid off. If there was any friction between these two over their political beliefs, we have no record of it. As far as we know, these two men spent the remainder of their lives in harmony, working for a common cause.

How did it happen? The answer is not hard to figure out: Both men had a loyalty to Jesus that exceeded their political biases. They both found in Jesus a purpose in life that was greater than their previous calling.

This same phenomenon was demonstrated repeatedly in the early days of Christianity. The church in Corinth included a former leader of the local Jewish synagogue (Ac. 18:8) — a paragon of virtue — along with former drunks, crooks, homosexuals, idolaters, and other assorted riff-raff from among the pagans (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Can you imagine how awkward their church services must have been, especially at the beginning? But again, the unifying factor here was a commitment to a common Savior. When they came to Jesus, they found the power to overcome their prejudices and suspicions, and forged a new relationship based on a higher calling. To be sure, both parties had to make changes to adapt to this new role, and those changes were not easy to make. But they did it, and it worked.

The story of Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot holds a powerful lesson for us today. It is possible for people from wildly different backgrounds to work together in harmony — but only if they are first willing to submit themselves to the rule of Christ.