

MARK 2:13-14

WHY NOT?

¹³ *Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.* ¹⁴ *As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.*

Was it the way he said it? Was there something about this man? Was it that Levi was flattered that this popular teacher would call him in front of such a crowd? Or was it just a particularly bad tax day? We will never know what was going through Levi's mind, but the consistent interpretation of Scripture is that Jesus exuded a certain authority. After all, he said the same thing to the fishermen, he exorcised demons, he healed the sick, and he healed a leper and a paralytic. That is a pretty impressive resume. He had demonstrated his authority over hard working men, evil spirits, diseases and deformities, and in the process taught and demonstrated that he had the divine power to forgive sin. Even a cynical and rejected tax collector had to sit up and take notice.

So, what's our excuse? We have all that evidence and more. We have all the stories from the gospels. We have the reports of the Acts of the Apostles. We have the interpretations of Sts. Paul, Peter, James and Jude. We have the witness of the martyrs. We have two millennia of lives and a world that have been transformed by Jesus. We know that following him is what we are meant to do and what is best for us. So, why do we resist when we hear him call, "Follow me?" Could it be that we are too familiar with Jesus to truly experience his authority? Perhaps we are too comfortable to feel the urgency of the call. Or is it that we cannot hear Jesus calling over the background noise of the world?

If you want to hear Jesus, you must listen for Jesus. You need to put yourself in a place where you can hear him. That place is in his word. That place is the Bible as it is studied in the community of the faithful. Jesus was teaching, and as he walked along, he called to Levi, "Follow me."

Open my eyes and my ears, Lord, so that I might hear your call and respond with my life. Guide me to that place where I might encounter you as you really are, shed the misconceptions that I have developed, and give myself to you without reservation. Amen.