

Feast of St. Matthew

Proverbs 3:1-6

Psalm 119:33-40

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Matthew 9:9-13

The writer of Proverbs gives some important instruction to parents and teachers. Last week, we discussed the warning James gave to teachers and parents and now we see encouragement for these same people in teaching those in their care. Specifically, the writer is admonishing youth to be diligent in their studies and noting the reward they will receive.

In the reading from Proverbs, we are instructed to let our hearts keep God's commandments. Not only are we to know them by heart - memorize them - but to let God's commandments guide us in life. By holding God's commandments in our hearts, we allow those commandments to be the guiding light of all we do. And, by accomplishing this, we are promised long and peaceful lives.

Too many people rely on their own skills and intellect to guide them through life. They are so sure of their own abilities that they don't need anyone helping them, including God. We see the folly of this all around us as businesses fail, people lose everything because they knew more than their advisers. Scripture tells us this will only lead to ruin. However, if we trust in God totally, God will guide us to success. This is as true in the life of the church as it is in corporate life. When we, as a church, feel we know best how to run the church, we will fail. It is only when we acknowledge our reliance on God that we will thrive.

Paul picks up this same theme in his letter to Timothy. He encourages his protégé to remember what he was taught from his youth. We know from the first chapter of this letter that Timothy was instructed in the faith by his mother and grandmother. These two women must have been great in following the admonition given to parents in raising up their children in the ways of God. Paul acknowledges that this instruction in scripture has led to Timothy's faith in the salvation through Jesus Christ. Because of this great teaching he received from childhood, Timothy is able to be a leader in the church while still young.

In these instructions Paul gives to his young disciple, we see the only place in all of the Bible the purpose of scripture. First, we have the factual statement that all scripture is inspired by God. This does not mean that the writers of the various books we read as scripture were merely machines that wrote what God dictated, but were filled with the Holy Spirit, acted upon by God to record the thoughts and ideas directly from God. Then, Paul instructs us on how to utilize scripture in our lives. Scripture helps us in all aspects of our lives - teaching, correcting, and training ourselves and others to be equipped for God's work.

In these writings which are assigned for this Feast of St. Matthew, we see the importance of living in God's Word. We are instructed in how the Bible helps us in ministry and all of life. These readings remind us of our responsibility to raise up the next generation in the church. As the people of a congregation named for one of the evangelists who recorded the life and ministry

of Jesus, we are encouraged to read Matthew's writings with a view to how they can help us grow in our lives.

Matthew was a member of the most reviled profession in first century Israel. He was considered one of the worst sinners in town. Yet, this is a man that Jesus selected to be a follower and later in life recorded what he heard and saw. As such, he should inspire us to follow Jesus as willingly as he did. Matthew cast off the riches that came with his job to follow an itinerant preacher. May we can cast off what holds us back from fully committing ourselves to God.