

“One who is Humble and Contrite in Spirit and Trembles at My Word!”

I’ve known only one person in my lifetime named Matthias. Yet I never called him by his given name both out of respect and fear, since he was one of my professors at the seminary. This old professor was a kind and godly man who taught me to love the work of evangelists and missionaries as he prepared me for the pastoral office and equipped me to accept a divine call to serve the Lord and His Church as a Lutheran pastor.

However, the Matthias that we recall today in this article is not the one who labored for the Lord at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis but the one found in the Bible and whom the calendar remembers on February 24.

This Matthias was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed the Lord. If you recall from Scripture, he was one of two men nominated to fill the vacant office of apostle when Judas betrayed Christ and left it. St. Peter further adds the man that is selected to fill this office was to have been with the Lord from the beginning, having witnessed both Jesus’ baptism and ascension.

After prayer, Matthias was selected for apostleship by the casting of lots, which allowed the ultimate choice of the selection to be made by the Lord Himself. After this reference in Acts 1:15–26, St. Matthias is not mentioned again in the Bible.

As God’s choice, we assume Matthias took the message of the crucified and risen Christ to the ends of the earth. However, his words, works, and ministry are not mentioned in the Bible. Rather, what is really important for those that benefited from his ministry as an Apostle of the Church is the One to whom Matthias pointed, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

As God’s chosen instrument, Matthias brought life, salvation, and forgiveness of sin to hurting and sinful people, opening the door of heaven to them. As one of the apostles, he was appointed into this office to share the Gospel of Christ and testify to the One who lived, died, rose from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of God. He was sent with a commission by God to speak about the One whom he saw with his own eyes and witnessed firsthand with the other Eleven.

The Old Testament lesson for the Feast and Festival of St. Matthias states: “Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so

all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word’” (Is. 66:1–2).

I like these words of Isaiah because our service to the Lord is simply the works that He already prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (cf. Eph. 2:10). Then, Isaiah concludes by reminding us of God’s grace, stating: “But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.”

My prayer is that these words will always be engraved on the hearts of those who follow Jesus, whether it is the heart of a man holding the divine office of pastor or the hearts of those who serve the Lord as dedicated laypersons. You see, God uses such humble people who live under His grace and stand in awe of His powerful Word by contrition and faith, and are not ashamed of Jesus, for His own holy purposes. Such people are prime instruments of the Lord in bringing hope to a dying world and opening the door of heaven to others as they share the Good News of Jesus Christ with them.

Dr. Martin Luther explains, “For the person who believes and holds Christ’s Word—heaven stands open, hell is shut tight, the devil is captured and sin forgiven. That person is a child of life eternal. This is taught by this book, the Holy Scriptures, and by no other book on earth. Therefore,

let one who would live forever study it diligently.”
(*Werke* (Weimar, 1927), vol. 48, pp. 154-55, no. 201)

One tradition says the apostle Matthias was beheaded for sharing the Gospel of the living Christ and for opening heaven to the barbarians. We will never know for certain if this is true or not until we arrive in heaven. Yet it comforts us to know that God knows the hearts of all His servants. He knows by name all that are humble and contrite in spirit through Christ and tremble at His Word.

Living in the Light of our Epiphany Lord, we are people of contrition and faith and tremble at His word as we study it and share it with the lost, near and far from our homes. We are unworthy servants and don’t deserve the name Christian, but God calls, gathers, and enlightens us by His Word and Spirit for this noble service.

Like St. Matthias, what more can we possibly desire and look forward to in this life under His grace by faith except entering heaven and spending eternity with Jesus! Oh, what eternal joys await us and others in heaven.

– Pastor Adair

