

A lot of the time the Bible leaves us stunningly short on detail. Questions that we naturally want to ask about 'what' and 'why' and 'who' go unanswered. Over the centuries we have tried to fill in those gaps, with scholarly theories, venerated tradition and wild guesses. But we won't know this side of eternity how close any of these come to the 'truth'.

Almost everything about Matthias falls into this category. The reading from Acts is his first and only appearance. We don't know when he joined Jesus' followers and we don't know what he did after being made an apostle.

We don't know who he is, why the apostles decided this was the moment to replace Judas or what they were thinking.

We don't know why he wasn't originally one of the twelve, how Joseph - who was let unchosen - felt. Whether his witness was respected to the same extent as the other apostles.

We don't know how many others faithfully followed Jesus without being numbered amongst the twelve. We know the crowd who joined Jesus' itinerant ministry was more than those twelve named disciples, but we don't know how many. We hear in Luke that Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples to minister across the countryside. We don't know if this was all of his crowd, or simply a part of them. Matthias might have been one of them.

I wonder though, if Matthias felt a bit of imposter syndrome. Despite having been elected from amongst those followers and chosen by the Lord - an act of the Holy Spirit - perhaps he didn't quite feel like a 'proper' apostle.

Or perhaps, he was amongst those who felt frustrated at Jesus' favoritism. Who jealously stood on the edge of the crowd. Who wondered why Judas had been picked, who wasn't really all that surprised at Judas' betrayal. Despite their sainthood, we mustn't forget that every disciple was human, each of them flawed. Matthias wasn't chosen because he was perfect.

Perhaps Matthias felt like something of an afterthought in God's plan.

We can read the lack of details as a flaw in God's plan - in God's communication with us. Negligence on behalf of the author, perhaps a sign that there is something of scripture that has been lost.

Perhaps, this scant information is not about cutting us off from the truth but inviting us into the story. From the Gospels we glimpse moments in people's lives - events like Zacchaeus climbing a tree, Thomas doubting, Peter's courage failing. In those

moments which have been sketched out we are able to see a little of their humanity and perhaps a little of ourselves.

We are invited to take them from the pedestals we place them on, and see them as people caught up in the marvelous work of God. Blessed, certainly, by their relationship with the incarnate Christ, but still human and only human. We may not be able to sit at the table with Jesus, or share fish and bread around a beachside campfire, but we are able to hear the words he spoke to them. Words spoken also to us.

In the verse following our Gospel reading Jesus says “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word”

Matthias may not have been one of the ‘original’ twelve but by taking on the mantle of disciple he needed God’s protection just as much as James or John or Peter.

He might have felt inadequate to the calling, but Jesus’ prayer was for him just as much as Thomas, Matthew or Andrew.

Jesus made his name known to Matthias. The disciples discerned Matthias from amongst all of those who had followed Jesus since the beginning. In the casting of lots the Holy Spirit chose Matthias. Perhaps he felt inadequate to the call - perhaps he was afflicted by that little voice which said ‘you’re not good enough’, ‘you’re only here because Judas was a traitor’, ‘you’re not a proper disciple’.

But the words John reports to us were just as true about Matthias ‘They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one...I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.

I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one...Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth...As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.’

The truth is, that Matthias was called and chosen. Entrusted with a ministry by God, as part of God’s plan. He belongs not to the world, but to Christ. Christ died for him, was sanctified for him.

And we too are chosen and called. We too are entrusted with a ministry by God, as part of God's plan. We do not belong to the world, but to Christ. Christ died for us, was sanctified for us.

We might be plagued by doubts, by moments of despair and inadequacy. We might feel distant from the Christ we hear of in the Bible. But God still speaks to us, still calls us, still empowers us.

As we come into the season of Pentecost we are reminded of the power of the Holy Spirit acting in the world, but it is not consigned to the history books. Jesus didn't choose the disciples because they were special but because they were ordinary.

Jesus chooses us too, because we are ordinary. In this choosing we receive everything Christ gave the disciples, the words he received from God, the truth he revealed on earth, the faith in him. The calling of the Holy Spirit on our lives.

And it is this choosing and calling that makes us special, despite our doubts and our weaknesses. For God took the ordinary and made it extraordinary, in Christ, in the disciples, in Matthias and in us.

-- Rev'd Jo Jennings