

Sunday, January 4, 2026

1 Timothy 4:13, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”

Title: The Greatest Invitation ... Ever!

Series: Opening Devotional of 2026

**Text: Matthew 9:9; 9:27 and 20:34;
10:38 and 16:24; 19:21 – 28; 26:58**

Purpose: I want to MOTIVATE my congregation to decide/reaffirm their commitment to follow Christ Jesus!

Summary:

Jan. 4 – The Greatest Invitation – Ever!

Introduction:

Recall a memorable invitation you once received.

I can recall three:

- ~ 1973 part of an audit team in San Francisco
- ~ 1977 invited to a T.V. debate with Rev. L. O. Pritchard
- ~ 1977 wedding of Donald Low

1. Invitation to the Unworthy:

~ Matthew 9:9, *“As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.”*

~ Matthew was not among the elite of Jewish society or numbered with the religious leaders of the Hebrew faith. He worked for the Roman government. He was an outcast, some would have regarded Matthew as a traitor.

~ Romans 3:9 – 20 (Read)

2. Invitation to Those of Faith:

~ Matthew 9:27 – 31

~ vs. 27 *“two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.””*

They did not just believe; they followed Christ Jesus! As James teaches, faith has action.

~ The caution of vs. 30; compare to the events in John 9

~ Ephesians 1:15 – 21 (Read)

3. Invitation to Take Up Our Own Cross:

~ Matthew 10: 38 – 39, *“And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (39) Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”*

~ Compare with Luke 14:27 – 31 – the cross is an instrument of death; the convicted Roman prisoner was required to carry his cross to the execution. John what in your life needs to be put to death to be a more committed follower of Christ Jesus?

~ Colossians 3:1 – 11 (Read)

4. Invitation to Put Away Idols:

~ Matthew 19:16 – 22

~ vs. 16, *“Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?”*

Attitude of “I can do it.”

~ vs. 21, *“Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect,...”*

~ vs. 22, *“When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”*

In reality, his possessions, HAD HIM!

~ 1 John 5:21, *“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”*

5. Invitation to be Close!

~ Matthew 26:58, *“And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.”*

~ Matthew 11:25 – 30

Conclusion:

Hymn – I Have Decided to Follow Jesus