

“A Call to Discipleship”

September 4, 2022

Matthew 4:12-25

I. Introduction:

Scholars have divided Jesus' 3-year ministry, which followed His baptism and testing in the desert (or wilderness), into 3 parts: a year of inauguration, a year of popularity, and a year of opposition. The majority of what happened during the 1st year of inauguration or introduction is found only in John's Gospel in [John 1:19-4:47](#). Some of the highlights were Jesus' 1st miracle in Cana, His cleansing of the Temple, His meeting with Nicodemus, and Jesus' ministry to the Samaritan woman at Sychar. In today's Scripture Matthew picks up the story towards the end of the first year. Matthew began with Jesus' return to Galilee.

II. Jesus' return to Galilee

When Jesus returned to Galilee after hearing about the arrest of John the Baptist, it wasn't out of fear of Herod. As the Messiah, Jesus feared no man. For that matter, if He had wanted to escape from Herod, He wouldn't have gone to Galilee since that was also under Herod's control. John explained why Jesus returned to Galilee. [Turn to John 4:1-3](#). Jesus wasn't afraid of the Pharisees either, but at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus wanted to avoid having a premature confrontation with them. When the time was right, He would face them, calling them **“Hypocrites, blind guides, whitewashed tombs, snakes”** ([Matt. 23:1-36](#)).

Luke wrote that when Jesus returned from Galilee, He first went to His hometown of Nazareth, where His mother and brothers and sisters were still living. [Luke 4:16-31](#) records some of the details of His time in His former hometown. Jesus attended the synagogue, and, as a returning successful preacher, He was asked to read the Scripture. However, when He revealed that His ministry would include Gentiles, Luke wrote in [Luke 4:29](#), **“They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was build, in order to throw him down the cliff,”** i.e., they tried to kill Him. Matthew covered all this by writing, **“Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum.”**

Leaving the rather hostile Nazareth, Jesus made Capernaum His base of operations and His new hometown for His ministry in the province of Galilee. The Jews who lived in Galilee were less sophisticated

and traditional than those in Judea—especially the “snobs” living in Jerusalem. The historian Josephus wrote that Galileans “*were fond of innovations and by nature disposed to change and they delighted in seditions.*” [Matthew 26:73](#) indicates that they even had a distinct accent. Basically, Galilean Jews were considered “Jewish hillbillies.”

Matthew wrote that Jesus’ arrival in Galilee fulfilled the Old Testament prophesy in [Isaiah 9:1-2](#); part of a Messianic prophesy that all his Jewish readers would know. Zebulun and Naphtali were 2 of the 12 tribes of Israel, they settled in the northernmost region of the Promised Land near the Sea of Galilee. Nazareth was in the territory of Zebulun while Capernaum was in Naphtali. The “[way of the sea](#)” was a trade route that ran through this region to the Mediterranean Sea. Because of this, Jesus’ ministry would reach those traveling through the region including people beyond Jewish Galilee, including Gentiles.

Ever since the Assyrian Wars in 732 BC, Galilee and the surrounding area had experienced Gentile settlements and influence. Because of this, the Jews that remained in Galilee had been greatly weakened in both biblical and traditional Judaism. Here, where the darkness was most dense, an area as much Gentile as Jewish—the “[Galilee of the Gentiles](#)” would be the first to hear the Messiah’s message. That Jesus centered much of His ministry in Samaria and Galilee rather than in Jerusalem and Judea, demonstrated that the gospel of salvation was for the whole world, not just the Jews.

The phrase “[From that time on, Jesus began to preach](#)” marks a turning point in Matthew’s account. All the preparations are complete. Now that John’s public ministry had come to an end, Jesus, the Messiah, began to preach the same message that John preached, “[Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.](#)” ([Matthew 3:1](#))

Just like John, Jesus said that the only way to enter the kingdom of heaven was to repent—to turn from sin; to turn around and go the other way. This is the 1st demand of the gospel; the 1st requirement of salvation is repentance. As Peter preached in [Acts 2:38](#), “[Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.](#)” Jesus’ call was more imperative than John’s. The

King of kings, the Messiah wasn't just coming, He had arrived. Jesus was ushering in the kingdom of heaven.

III. Calling fishers of men

Jesus didn't just proclaim the Good News and teach the people God's truth. He chose a few men whom He would train for the work of the kingdom. "As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.'" This wasn't the first encounter between these four men and Jesus. Turn to John 1:35-42. The other unnamed disciple has been traditionally identified as the apostle John. It was probably Andrew, Peter, John and perhaps James and maybe a couple of other disciples who were the ones who accompanied Jesus to the wedding in Cana where they observed the miracle and believed in Jesus (John 2:1-2, 11). They may have been the disciples who were with Jesus when He stopped to talk to the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-27.

When Jesus found them at the Sea of Galilee, about a year had passed. During those months, from what they had seen and heard, they had plenty of time to ponder who Jesus was. Matthew doesn't write why they had gone back to fishing, but the response of both pairs of men was not an emotional, spur-of-the-moment decision. They must have been waiting for this momentous occasion to join Jesus as He began His mission, so they responded at once when He called them.

These backwoods fishermen had little education, little spiritual perception, and probably little religious training. When Jesus began to teach them, especially when He spoke in parables, they often didn't understand Him. But Jesus chose them and over the next 2-3 years they were trained to be His Apostles. All the disciples may not have been as rough and unpromising as these 1st four, but none were chosen from among the Jewish religious leaders who weren't ready to be taught by this Man from Galilee. The Apostle Paul may have had this in mind when he wrote 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. Turn to 1 Cor. 1:26-29.

IV. Proof of Jesus' Messiahship

After calling these disciples to join Him to be "fishers of men," Jesus set out on an extensive tour throughout Galilee. This was an area of about 30 miles by 60 miles. In Jesus' time, it was filled with over

300,000 people in over 200 villages. Matthew summarized this tour as teaching, preaching, and healing. (In the following 5 chapters Matthew compiled Jesus' words and gave examples of His healings.) Jesus probably didn't visit every village, but the area was small enough that if someone wanted to see Jesus, they could. Although this area was known as **"Galilee of the Gentiles,"** Jesus concentrated on the Jewish synagogues. The synagogue wasn't part of the Mosaic Law. But developed during the Babylonian exile, the synagogue was not only the primary place of worship, but also of study, community fellowship, and legal activity.

In the early part of His ministry Jesus would be welcomed into most synagogues. As a visiting rabbi, He would be asked to read and expound Scripture. Synagogue teaching was basically expository, i.e., a portion of Scripture was read and explained section by section; sometimes verse by verse. When He spoke in the synagogues, Jesus explained the nature of His message from the Old Testament Scriptures, proving that He was the expected Messiah. (Luke 4:16-30) He was teaching—explaining or interpreting truth to those that already knew the Old Testament Scriptures.

But when He was in the countryside, where there were many who were not proficient in the Old Testament Scriptures, Jesus would preach. Preaching is proclaiming or announcing truth. To those that didn't know the Scriptures, Jesus would give a straightforward proclamation of the message—like the Sermon on the Mount. Finally, Jesus not only taught and preached the good news of the kingdom of heaven, He also demonstrated His authority—His Messiahship—by healing every disease and sickness—nothing was beyond His ability. This was conclusive proof that He was divine—the King of kings, the Messiah.

The response to Jesus' teaching, preaching, and healing was astounding. Even Jews and Gentiles outside of the borders of Galilee heard about Jesus and came to be healed and to follow Him. Those coming to Jesus were still primarily Jews, but they came from everywhere. Jesus was generating a tremendous stir in Israel with His message of the coming of the Kingdom which was confirmed by all the healings.

V. Conclusion:

In [John 9:5](#) Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” The people to whom Jesus preached and taught “walked” in the darkness of moral and spiritual depravity—they walked in sin. Jesus came to lead the people from the darkness into the light ([John 1:4-5](#)). Because His time was limited, Jesus chose disciples to continue spreading the light of the Gospel. In [2 Cor. 5:20](#) Paul wrote, “We are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” As His children, as Christians, we need to take the light of Jesus wherever we go in our sinful world; in what we do as well as in what we say. As Jesus said in [Matt. 5:14](#), “You are the light of the world.”

When Jesus called the 4 fishermen, they already knew Him—they had walked with Him. But when Jesus called them to be “fishers of men,” they had to make a decision. Their response to Jesus’ call is a challenge to every Christian to get his or her priorities right. The Great Commission in [Matthew 28:19-20](#) is addressed to every Christian. Not everyone is called become a professional minister or evangelist or missionary. But whatever your occupation, wherever you live and shop, being a Christian means that your priority is to reach out in the power of the Holy Spirit to those around you with the good news that Jesus saves. It is now our task to pass on the Gospel—the Light—that we have received, because without it, the world out there will die eternally—people will spend eternity in hell. All those who have received the light now bear the responsibility as missionaries of Christ to shine as “lights in a dark world” with the light of Jesus Christ ([Philippians 2:15](#)).

Do you want to live a life full of meaning—to feel—to know that you have accomplished something with your life? Then accept Jesus’ call and join Him in advancing the kingdom of heaven. Don’t just be His disciple up here—in your head—be His disciple in all you do as well as what you say.

As Paul sat in a cold, damp dungeon waiting to be executed by the Emperor Nero, he wrote his final words to his son in Christ, Timothy. These words are a challenge to us as well—[turn to 2 Timothy 4:1-8](#). What about you—as a child of God have you accepted your call to discipleship? Are you fulfilling your mission? Can you say with Paul, “I have fought well. I have finished the race and I have been faithful.”?

Communion Devotion – September 2022

Matthew 26:17-20, 26-30

In **Hebrews 9:22** we are reminded that “the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” In **1 Timothy 1:15** Paul wrote that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The only way Jesus could save sinners, including each one of us was to pay the penalty for our sins. Jesus had to die in your place.

If you believe that Jesus died, that He rose from the grave 3 days later, and then ascended into heaven, this is a good thing, but it is not enough. James wrote in **James 2:19**, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.” However, if you believe that Jesus died on the cross **for your sins** and, as **Romans 10:9** says, you have made Him **your Lord and Savior**, then you have done more than the demons—you are a child of God. If you have made this decision, then whether or not you are a member of TBC, we invite you to join us in this celebration, this remembrance of Jesus’ love, mercy, and grace for you and your new life in Him.

But there are expectations for a child of God, just as Jesus called the disciples to be “fishers of men,” we have the same call. But God knows us, He knows that temptations come daily, He experienced them, too, but sometimes we fall and yield to temptation. So, He created the Lord’s Table as a time for each Christian to look at his or her heart to search for sins that may have crept in. Sins that keep you from being all you can be for Christ who gave His all for you.

As you consider the bread and the cup and are reminded of how much Jesus really did for you, shouldn’t you be willing to give your all to Him? Are you the disciple He has called you to be? Can you say with Paul, “I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith”? During the quiet time when the elements are being passed, as well as thanking God for His love and forgiveness; take inventory of your heart and mind; get rid of anything that comes between you and God—confess your sins and as **1 John 1:9** says, “He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”