

Refuge City Church — February 4, 2024
Gospel of Matthew: “Follow Him” (Matthew 4:12-25)

Introduction

- *Last time:* Jesus was led out to the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tested by Satan.
- *Today:* After those 40 days, Jesus begins His ministry, and right from the outset He has immediate purpose

[verses 12-17]

“Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- **Special Note:** According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus’ ministry picks up after John the Baptist was arrested.
 - John called out the sin of Herod for his adulterous affair with his brother’s wife.
 - Yet, the gospel of John records many events prior to this moment, giving us an understanding that Jesus had been ministering for awhile.
 - **John 1:** The calling of some disciples
 - **John 2:** His first recorded miracle at the wedding [water to wine], and cleansing the temple.
 - **John 3:** The John 3:16 discourse with Nicodemus
 - **John 4:** Conversation with the woman at the well, and the healing of an official’s son.
 - So we can surmise that Matthew’s account of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry is more of a summation than a full account. [topical rather than chronological]
- Jesus leaves his hometown of Nazareth where he grew up after returning from Egypt, and goes to Capernaum.
 - Another prophecy fulfilled [Isaiah 9:1-2]
 - Isaiah’s account, the people are walking in darkness.
 - **John 8:12**, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
 - In Matthew’s account, they are dwelling/sitting in darkness.
 - **Isaiah 42:6-7**, “...I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.”
 - Either way, Jesus came to those dwelling in darkness to set them free.
 - Jesus is the light that the people needed. This is why He came.
- **[vs. 17]** “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”... What is this *Kingdom*?
 - We’re going to discuss something mentioned multiple times in the gospels...the term “kingdom” [Kingdom of God/Heaven]
 - What did Matthew prove through the genealogy?
 - Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne. He is the King!

- To start, what is a kingdom?
 - A realm/area, ruled & reigned over with specified laws to govern it's inhabitants.
 - By who? = Royalty [kings and queens]
 - When we speak of the kingdom of God, over what realm does God rule? [everything]
 - **Psalm 103:19**, "The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all."
- In scripture, Jesus is defined as Prince of peace [Isaiah 9:6], Sovereign [1 Timothy 6:15], King of kings and Lord of lords [Revelation 19:16]
- When Jesus began His earthly ministry, He proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."... so what does that mean??
 - Because according to scripture...
 - We're supposed to seek it first. [Matthew 6:33]
 - It's Holy Spirit inspired. [Matthew 12:28]
 - That it belongs to the poor in spirit, and those who are persecuted. [Matthew 5:3, 10]
 - It's to be received like a child. [Mark 10:15]
 - It's to be entered. [Mark 10:25; John 3:5]
 - It's in the midst of you. [Luke 17:21]
 - It's to be proclaimed/shared. [Luke 9:2]
 - It's healing. [Luke 10:9]
 - It's good news. [Luke 8:1]
 - It's coming soon. [Luke 21:29-31]
 - It's on this earth [Matthew 6:10]
 - It's not of this world [John 18:36]
 - It is power. [1 Corinthians 4:20]
 - We have to be worthy in order to enter it. [2 Thessalonians 1:5]
 - It's inherited. [1 Corinthians 15:50]
 - It is righteousness, peace, joy. [Romans 14:17]
- Jesus proclaims, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - "The kingdom of God is at hand" [near, approach]
 - Jesus establishes himself as sovereign ruler over this world, and over hearts.
 - We need to get over this idea that God is distant, far away, can not be touched.
 - **Job 12:10**, "In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind."
 - **Acts 17:26-27**, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us."
 - Are you seeking the Lord in your life and in your circumstances? Right where you are.
 - **Psalms 145:18**, "The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."
- Repent = turn, change the inner man.
- Mark's gospel includes 'Believe in the gospel' [Mark 1:15]= accept, trust, and commit yourself to the good news of Jesus Christ.

{verses 18-22}

“While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.”

- The call of the disciples.
 - The type of call that demands a response. In the disciples case, it was immediate.
 - **QUOTE:** “The call of God through Jesus is sovereign and absolute in its authority; the response of those who are called is to be both immediate and absolute, involving a complete break with old loyalties. The actual shape of this break with the past will undoubtedly vary from individual to individual, but that there must be a fundamental, radical reorientation of a person's priorities is taken for granted.”
[Donald Hagner]
- **QUESTION:** What does God’s call on our life require?
 - A break with old loyalties. A radical reorientation of priorities.
 - **Micah 6:8**, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do *justice*, and to love *kindness*, and to walk *humbly* with your God?”
 - Opposite of justice = unjust, unfair, foul, insulting.
 - Opposite of kindness = obstacle, hindrance, indifference, cruelty, coldness, unconcerned.
 - Opposite of humility = pride, arrogance, ego, superiority, conceit, pompous, vanity.
 - As a disciple/follower/student of Christ, salvation does not equate to perfection in action. There is a learning curve as we grow in our faith.
 - Perpetual followership and fellowship is necessary for proper reorientation of priorities.
 - **Hebrews 12:2**, “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...”
 - This is why we follow Jesus. We find ourselves loyal to Him above all else. He is our preeminent priority.
 - Most of the world says, “I can do that! I’ll stand for justice, when injustice presents itself. I can be kind when I see others not being kind. I’m more humble than that guy over there! I’m good...”
 - Being a disciple/follower of Jesus is not living a reactionary lifestyle. It is emanating the very characteristics of Jesus, by the very presence of His Spirit in us!
 - **Psalm 119:6**, “Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.” [1 John 2:6]

Conclusion {verses 23-25}

“And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread

throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.”

- To close out this section, Matthew gives us a summation account of the work that Jesus does.
- He went around teaching, preaching, and healing.
 - He proves Himself authoritative to proclaim the good news of salvation to all who would hear and receive.
 - He proves Himself worthy to stand in the synagogues and teach with authority.
 - He proves Himself the Son of God with the authority to cast out demons and heal those who are sick.
- He gained a massive following, both Jew and Gentile.
 - Some desired to know more about this ‘kingdom’.
 - Others were fascinated with this miracle worker, and his many signs & wonders.
- **NEXTWEEK:** we begin our study of the greatest sermon ever given! [\[Matthew 5-7\]](#)
 - We can talk theology and doctrine all we want, but Jesus gets down to the nitty-gritty.
 - We get practical in our spiritual formation. What do we *do* with what we’ve been given? How are we supposed to *live* this out?
- In the meantime, consider your calling. Consider the depth of your fellowship and the proximity of your followership of Jesus.
 - Are you following? Are you setting your eyes on Jesus? Are you listening? Are you paying attention?