



Matthew 4:12-25

The Galilean Ministry Begins

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.

13 And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,

14 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

15 "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles:

16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned."

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

21 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. He called them,

22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.

25 Great multitudes followed Him -- from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

I wonder if you have ever considered the importance of having light, I hadn't really until I spent 4 years in Scotland. There were long seasons where you hardly saw the sun, days when it was continuously overcast and always drizzling and then an entire season when the days got very short.

After a while I began to find I was not only growing paler which for me is frightening, I mean after a while I begin to look light blue. But it wasn't just that, I found I was depressed a lot more than normal and I had difficulty sleeping.

It turns out that God actually created us physically to need light, sunlight boosts your body's vitamin D exposure which is necessary for your bones, your nerves, and your immune system, you get rickets without it. With all these kids spending all their time inside playing computer games instead of playing outside as they once did, cases of vitamin D deficiency are actually skyrocketing. You also need the sun in order for your body to produce the right amounts of **melatonin**, which makes you sleep and **serotonin** which makes you happy. So yeah, going to the beach and lying in the sun really does make you happier.

Light is a good thing. God's first recorded words in the bible are **"Let there be light"; and there was light.** But the bible also points out that our greatest need is not for literal light, but for spiritual light. Light is synonymous with goodness and knowledge and truth and righteousness, while darkness is synonymous with evil and ignorance and lies and sin. Ever since the Fall men have naturally been dwellers in spiritual darkness, and the more idolatrous we are, the less knowledge of God we have, the greater the darkness. Hence Romans 1:21 says of us:

Romans 1:21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

But God was not going to leave to perish in that spiritual darkness, He had determined that He would send His Son Jesus, into the world to deliver men from darkness and bring them into the light. This was the prophesy of Isaiah 9:2 written 700 years before the coming of Christ that Matthew quotes in verse 16. Again and again Jesus would hearken back to the idea that He has come to bring us to the light, to give us the truth and the knowledge of God, to call **"you out of darkness into His marvelous light"** to quote Peter, or to quote Christ himself, ***John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."***

Now where did that ministry of calling men out of the darkness and into the light begin? Well it didn't begin in Judea where John had been baptizing and Jesus had been tempted by the devil, it began far to the north in Galilee, which was the region where Jesus grew up. Matthew tells us that after John was arrested Jesus returned there, but not because he was afraid of also being arrested by Herod Antipas, after all, Galilee was also ruled over by Herod. But because he was fulfilling the prophecies that had said the Messiah's work would begin in Galilee.

Now one of the things that we are going to see is that God's ways are not our ways, throughout the gospel. We'd probably begin a Messianic ministry in and around the capital in Judea, and we'd pick the greatest teachers and speakers from the Rabbinical schools, but Jesus doesn't do any of that.

Instead he starts in Galilee of Gentiles, it was called that for two reasons, **first** Galilee which means “ring” was ringed or surrounded by Gentiles, you had Phoenicians to the west, Syrians on the north and east, and Samaritans to the south. **Secondly** it had a mixed population, non-Jews had been forcibly settled there by Antiochus during the Maccabean period and they had been converted to Judaism about a hundred years before the coming of Christ. So the purer Jews living in the South, who could trace their ancestry back to Abraham really looked down on them.

Despite that the region had a lot of advantages, it was fertile and densely populated, Josephus said it had a great number of villages and the smallest had a population of about 15,000. Also while Judea was ringed by mountains and difficult to get to, Galilee had tons of major trade routes passing through it. The ancient saying was: **“Judea is on the way to nowhere; Galilee is on the way to everywhere.”**

But what might surprise us is that Jesus DOESN'T begin his ministry in his hometown of Nazareth, it seems from his preaching in their synagogue, the inhabitants rejected Him and Jesus had said to them, **“Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.”** So he had moved to Capernaum and made that the home base for His travelling ministry. Capernaum was a major fishing village on a pear shaped lake called the Sea of Galilee and most of Jesus' ministry will consist of his travels over and around the lake.

It was in Capernaum then that he began to preach, and what He preached was exactly the same thing that John the Baptist proclaimed, Spurgeon notes, **“Happy is the preacher whose word is such that his Lord can endorse it!”** What did he preach? **“Would you like to ask me to come into your heart?”** or **“I love you?”** Nope, that's not the gospel, and you won't find that being preached ANYWHERE in the bible. Jesus preached a command **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”** What did Jesus call men to do? Repent and Believe in Him as the Messiah, because that was precisely what he was indicating when He told them their long awaited king had come.

But why repentance, the answer is because you cannot be saved without it. As Ryle puts it: **“High or low, rich or poor, all have sinned and are guilty before God; and all must repent and be converted, if they would be saved. And true repentance is no light matter. It is a thorough change of heart about sin, a change showing itself in godly sorrow and humiliation--in heartfelt confession before the throne of grace--in a complete breaking off from sinful habits, and an abiding hatred of all sin. Such repentance is the inseparable companion of saving faith in Christ. Let us prize the doctrine highly. It is of the highest importance. No Christian teaching can be called sound, which does not constantly bring forward "repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21.)”**

And Jesus came calling men to him not only GENERALLY but SPECIFICALLY, we read that he began calling Fishermen to be His disciples. The first whom he called was Simon, whom he called Peter who would become the foremost of His apostles. He didn't call rabbis or Pharisees, he called

fishermen and he told them that He would make them fishers of men. Note that He is the one who makes men into man-fishers and he proves it by calling men whom we would expect to be least successful when it came to preaching.

His call to His Apostles also teaches us about the way we come to Christ, He chooses, He calls, the Call goes forth with effectual power and makes them willing to follow Him, it was effectual calling, they drop what they are doing and they come, not in their own time, not when they were ready, not when they had time to think about the offer. They come. That's the way true conversion works. Jesus Calls us to follow Him through preaching, and we are made willing to come to Him in the day of His power.

Now while preaching was the MAIN thing He came to do. He also did many miracles of healing, and word spread even into the Gentile areas of Syria and the Decapolis – the ten Greek cities of Gerasa, Scythopolis, Hippos, Gadara, Pella, Philadelphia, Capitolias, Canatha, Raphana and Damascus and many came bringing their sick to be healed by Him.

These miracles were a great mercy, but never forget their primary purpose was to show that He was the Son of God, and that He alone has the power to forgive our sins. Jesus will make that explicit in Matthew 9:5 *"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?"*

6 *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" -- then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."*

7 *And he arose and departed to his house.*

8 *Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.*

Application -

Have you come to the Light?

John 3:19 *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

20 *"For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.*

21 *"But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."*

So why hesitate? Jesus did not come to call the rich and the powerful and the learned and the wealthy. Look around you, do you see politicians, leaders of industry, leaders of academia? And it's not just this church, go through all the other bible believing churches in America, not many of the rich and powerful, the proud and boastful are called. As Ryle put it, *"Is a man humble? Does he feel his sins? Is he willing to hear Christ's voice and follow Him? If this be so, he may be the poorest of the poor,*

but he shall be found as high as any in the kingdom of heaven. Intellect and money are worth nothing without grace.”

Oh, my life is too full of darkness or perhaps you enjoy the dark too much. The dark is the place where we get up to all sorts of sin. You know its funny but we tell our kids, “Don’t be afraid of the dark” but in this case I’m going to tell you the opposite. BE AFRAID, BE VERY AFRAID.

Jer. 13:16 Give glory to the LORD your God Before He causes **darkness**, And before your feet stumble On the dark mountains, And while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of **death** And makes *it* dense **darkness**.

“Our Lord courts not those who glory in their light, but those who pine in their darkness: he comes with heavenly life, not to those who boast of their own life and energy, but to those who are under condemnation, and who feel the shades of death shutting them out from light and hope.” – Charles Spurgeon – my own experience a door opening, letting in the light

*Let not conscience make you linger,
Not of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him. - Joseph Hart*