

The King's Call: Radical Discipleship

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Text: Matthew 4:12-25

Series: King of Kings

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Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL

Introduction: I invite you to turn in your Bibles to **Matthew 4:12-25**. We are in a series through the book of Matthew entitled: "King of kings!" Today's we are looking at: "The King's Call to Radical Discipleship".

Two thousand years ago, Jesus approached a handful of men and called them to be imitators of Him. He said: "Follow me." The call of the first disciples is no different than ours. A disciple is a follower – an imitator. We are called to stop following everything else, and follow only one Person – the Lord Jesus Christ. Today's message is a call to *radical discipleship*.

The Greatest Figure in Human History

The passage this morning is a clarion call that transforms the world. It is this call that eventually leads to people declaring these whom Jesus called have "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:5).

Our passage this morning brings us to the beginning of the ministry of the greatest figure in the history of the world. Our Lord has no rival. There is no one who has come across the stage of humanity that has redated the calendars of the world. We don't date anything by anyone but Jesus. Everything is determined by BC and AD, all history is reflected by this one individual who has now come out of obscurity to announce His kingdom and call people to radically follow after Him.

We have recorded here the *beginning of the ministry of Jesus*. In these few verses that we are going to look at this morning, an announcement and a call are made that is going to *forever transform the human race*. The events that follow in the life of Jesus are to change the fate of the world. Whether you are saved or lost here today, you cannot even speak of world history unless you talk about the life of Christ.

And so let us read one of the most compelling texts of Scripture...

Reading of Scripture

Matthew 4:12–25, "Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. 13 And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

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

16 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."

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

18 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. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 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. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

23 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. 24 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, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan."

There are four things that ought to hold our attention in this passage:

- The King's **Plan** (4:12-16) – the light dawns in the heart of those sitting in darkness
- The King's **Proclamation** (4:17) – the call to a life of repentant faith is given
- The King's **People** (4:18-22) – God chooses those who are nothing
- The King's **Power** (4:23-25) – Christ gives us a taste of the world to come

I. The King's Plan (4:12-16).

Matthew 4: 12, "Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee." All hell hates this call to radical discipleship to follow the King. Satan will use people and circumstances in every way he can to discourage this.

Yet, this attack was **part of the divine plan**. God's plan is to call the first disciples **not** from **Judea**, but from the north, from **Galilee** on the edge of Gentile territory.

GOD'S PLAN UNDER ATTACK

In a moment, we are going to see the *unstoppable force of Biblical prophecy* that guarantees that God's plan to call people into radical discipleship is under no threat. We have to say this because as we look at Matthew 4, it's obvious that this plan is under attack. First by Satan and then by Herod Antipas.

Herod Arrests John

Our account in Matthew 4:12 opens with great drama and tragedy. We read in **verse 12**, "Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee." Matthew 14 records these events in more detail and gives us the horrific outcome.

Despicable Behavior

Simply stated, Herod Antipas was confronted by John the Baptist because of his corrupt lifestyle. **Antipas had taken his brother's wife as his own.**

Even in the most immoral kinds of people, that's a despicable, disgraceful and scandalous thing to do. But Herod was no common person. He was a king, a ruler. He put John in prison for speaking so boldly against him.

John was Fearless

John was fearless. He understood the plan of God. He was ushering in the last days of God's Kingdom, this age of grace that God would pour upon the world before He brings final destruction and judgment to the earth.

Enter the king, a **tetrarch** named Herod Antipas.¹ (A tetrarch means "ruler of a fourth". Antipas had to split the kingdom with three other brothers). So John is **fearless** in the presence of Antipas. This was in direct contrast to the current leaders of Israel. They wanted John to be quiet – he was upsetting the status quo, but John wouldn't be quiet! He was so different than the present leaders.

A Burning a Shining Light

Let me say a word about John. He's always made out to be this gruff barbarian of a man, but we must get that image out of our minds. According to Luke he was a man filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. I believe John was firm, courageous, but I also believe John was gracious. As **searing** as his words were to **hypocrites**, his words were **gracious** in the extreme to **sinner**s. When you hear the voice of John in Scripture, you need to hear the voice of compassion and urgency. *To the humble, John's words truly brought rejoicing!* In **John 5:35** we read Jesus' words about John the Baptist, "He was a burning and shining light, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light." John's message brought unspeakable rejoicing to the broken and humble. But his message brought hatred and condemnation from the proud.

Herodias's Pride

Of course the one person mentioned later in Matthew that is the most proud is the woman Herod took in rebellion to God's law – Herodias. **Herod** is wicked like **Ahab**, but **Herodias** is even more wicked like **Jezebel** was in the Old Testament! She wanted revenge for being called out by John.

So she enticed her daughter, **Salome**, to trick Herod into serving the head of John the Baptist on a platter before his guests at a royal dinner (Matthew 14:6–11). The act was so unusually barbaric that even the hardened Herod himself "was distressed" (v. 9, NIV).² He was bewildered. Yet King Herod cares not about his actions. He cares more about his own appetite for men's approval than for God's plan. So he allows it.

Jacob and Esau Alive in Their Descendants

As we consider this, it brings us back to Jacob and Esau in the Bible. John and Jesus were descendants of Jacob, and Herod Antipas was an Idumean, a descendent of Esau. And so we see *the seed of Esau trying to destroy the plan of God.*

- Remember **Genesis 25:23**, where God says to Isaac's wife Rebekah, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." Two nations are at war in your womb!

¹ Antipas is called a king in this passage, but it is being used sarcastically, because Antipas was never a king. Each of Herod the Great's sons would be called a "tetrarch". A tetrarch means "ruler of a fourth". Antipas didn't like that title, and in AD39 he lost his governorship trying to get the title of "king".

² MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (104). Chicago: Moody Press.

In the Old Testament, the older twin Esau threw his own life away for a mess of lentil soup. He would have destroyed the life of his brother Jacob if he could have. And *now* we have Esau's descendent sitting on the throne that he has no birthright to. And he throws away John's life like it's nothing. Herod acts like a true *son of Esau*.

Jesus Withdraws

In light of this Jesus withdraws to Capernaum. We read in **verse 12**, "Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee." The word "withdraw" is often used to convey the thought of escaping danger.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not". Though the Apostle Matthew doesn't record it several things have already happen. We are told about some of these things in John. Before returning to Galilee (which John records in 4:43)...

- Jesus had turned the water to wine at **Cana**
- Drove the money changers from the **temple** (the first time)
- Talked to **Nicodemus**, and
- Had His evangelism encounter with the **woman of Samaria** on his way north (see John 1:19–4:42).³
- He also is almost stoned in His **synagogue of Nazareth** after reading Isaiah 61, and revealing Himself as Messiah, after which He escaped being stoned.

And so Matthew records: **Matthew 4: 12**, "...he [Jesus] withdrew into Galilee." John had been arrested. Jesus had almost been stoned. As I said, the word "withdraw" is often used to convey the thought of escaping danger. And this was true on a human level. But in God's plan, Jesus was about to fulfill prophecy. Galilee was the next place where the **divine plan** scheduled Him to minister.⁴

GOD'S PLAN SECURED BY PROPHECY

God's plan is not hindered! We read in our text (**Matthew 4:13-14**), "And [Jesus] leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled".

Though God's plan is attacked first by **Satan**, and then by **Herod Antipas**, there is no threat, because God has already guaranteed His **unstoppable** plan through prophecy. And so Jesus' withdrawal to Capernaum is a climactic turning point in the history of the world. This is a decisive action of Christ.

Certain Cities Associated Christ

There are certain cities associated with Jesus.

1. **Bethlehem** – birth, where Jesus was born.
2. **Nazareth** – youth, village where Jesus is raised.
3. **Capernaum** – ministry, this is the headquarters from where Jesus ministers.
4. **Jerusalem** – this is the place of Jesus' atonement and death.

³ Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (62). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

⁴ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew*. MacArthur New Testament Commentary (105). Chicago: Moody Press.

These cities encompass a very small geographic region on planet earth. Here in a time where almost all journeys were done by walking, the most important cities Jesus is known for is in an area the size of New Jersey.

Capernaum by the Sea, First Disciples Called Here!

We read in our text (**Matthew 4:13-14**), “And [Jesus] leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea...” Capernaum is really an important city. Capernaum is very different from Nazareth. Nazareth is mainly Jewish with very little Gentile presence. **Capernaum** means “village of Nahum” and was possibly named for the prophet Nahum. So where is Jesus going to call His first disciples? From Galilee of the Nations, specifically from one of her most prominent cities: Capernaum!

- Capernaum had a heavy **Roman presence** there.
- It’s a **port city** and a place of great commerce.
- It was the local **administrative center** for Galilee. It was kind of the Galilean “County Seat” where the local Roman court and custom’s office is.
- In fact, we know who ran the local Roman custom’s post where taxes were collected. It was the one who is the human author of this Gospel, **Matthew** also called **Levi**.
- In Jesus day, it likely had a population of between **10 to 15,000**. This is a sizable city in the ancient world.
- So Jesus moves from a city (Nazareth) of maybe a few hundred people, to one of over 10,000 (Capernaum).
- *Jewish in culture*. Yet though there was a great Roman presence there, it had not adopted the Roman culture – it was a Jewish enclave, thoroughly Jewish in culture. To understand, think Amish country. Being Jewish made you stand out. So though there was a great Gentile presence, it was very much *Jewish in culture*.
- This city becomes Jesus’ ministry **headquarters**.
- It is the **home of Peter, Andrew, James, and John** – all the fisherman Jesus’ calls in this passage to be disciples. Peter is later recognized at Jesus’ trial, by his very diction – Galileans spoke very improperly. They were “unlearned men”.
- It’s also (as I mentioned) the **home of the tax collector, Matthew Levi**, who is the writer of this Gospel.

The Prophecy Given: The Light of the World

Matthew is going to quote Isaiah 9 in declaring that what was taking place was the dawning of the light of prophetic history. Radical discipleship begins with an encounter with Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World! Total, **radical faith** in Him must dawn in our hearts before we can have the power to follow Him.

Matthew 4:13-16, “And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

15 “The land of **Zebulun** [*location of NAZARETH*] and the land of **Naphtali** [*location of CAPERNAUM*],

the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, **Galilee of the Gentiles**—

16 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.” (Isaiah 9:1-2).

Matthew says, in essence: the **Light of the World** has arrived. Jesus withdrew to Capernaum in the divine providence of God to fulfill the Scripture of Isaiah 9, which we will look at in a moment.

Let’s remember that Isaiah is writing about hope for a destroyed people – people who no longer have hope. They are not standing and looking, they are dwelling, yeah, the idea is **SITTING** in darkness. *They’ve lost all hope.* Why? What happened?

The Darkness of Civil War in Israel

After the great kingdoms of David and Solomon, there was a civil war in Israel. Israel was divided into two: north and south. The tribe of Judah and Benjamin were in the South, and the other ten tribes are in the north.

The Darkness of Deviant Worship

Because *Jerusalem, the center of Israel’s worship*, was in the south, the rebel king of the north, Jeroboam feared that eventually the people would settle there and cease to go back. So they set up a rival capital in Dan [*also in Naphtali*] where they set up a temple of deviant worship. Dan and Capernaum are both in Naphtali – about 20 miles apart, *i.e. the distance between our church and O’Hare Airport.*

Jeroboam set up a deviant worship center in Dan and also in Bethel, not far from Jerusalem, just over the border into Northern Israel.

Golden Calf Worship

This system of false worship was an abomination to the LORD. In fact they even had the gall to symbolize the worship of YHWH with the golden calf, which God had already judged under Moses. And Jeroboam used the language of rebellious children of Israel, “These are the gods who brought you out of Egypt”.

Northern Israel Judged

God was incensed at the blatant idolatry of the northern kingdom, and so he eventually judged them. How did God judge them? Well, in 722, He brought in the Assyrians, who were like the Nazi storm troopers of their day. Part of the policy of the Assyrians was to import their own people into the region. So northern Israel was heavily populated by the descendents of the Assyrians. And over the course of time they intermarried. So this place became known for spiritual darkness. It is as if God is taking special note of the extraordinary darkness this land has chosen.

What Kind of People Does God Call to Be His Disciples?

Is there hope for these people? I mean what kind of people does Christ call to be His disciples? I submit to you that He calls those that are in the greatest darkness! Jesus says in **Luke 5:3**, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Turn over to Isaiah 9 and see what great hope Christ has for those in the deepest and thickest darkness.

Jesus in the Land of Naphtali in Capernaum

So when Jesus sets up His ministry headquarters in the land of Naphtali in Capernaum, Matthew reminds us that this is redemptive history unfolding before our very eyes! This is exciting. The people in deepest darkness are shown mercy and given them hope. Let's read Isaiah 9.

Isaiah 9:1-7, "But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. 3 You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. 4 For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5 For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

So there's going to be a great victory for those in Galilee! It's going to be like the joy of harvest, like the year of Jubilee! A great defeat for the enemies of the Lord! Well who's going to bring this victory? Who is this Light of the World? Read Isaiah 9:6:

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore...."

When God visits His people He comes where the darkness is greatest, where the peoples sit in the shadow of death! He brings them light! He calls us OUT of the kingdom of DARKNESS, and into HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT.

The Agent and Object of Regeneration

This call results in the transformed, redeemed, regenerated life. If the Holy Spirit is the Agent of regeneration, then Christ is the Object of regeneration. We become transformed by looking upon Him in FAITH.

Grace to the Galilee of the Nations

Notice grace is coming to a place where the highest Gentile presence is in Israel – it's literally called "Galilee of the Nations". Galilee of the Nations probably refers to the circuit of twenty Gentile cities given to King Solomon by Hiram, king of Tyre (see 1 Kings 9:11).⁵ These are cities with a great Roman presence and a history of Gentiles living in and around them.

So God's plan for discipleship is orchestrated not just for Israel, but for the nations.

God's Heart for the Nations

From this point until the transfiguration in Matthew 17, we are going to see Jesus ministering not in Jerusalem, but in Galilee of the Nations. Matthew's emphasis in Jesus'

⁵ Boice, 63.

ministry is discipleship as we are going to see. And it is not just to the Jews, but to the **nations** as well.

Transition

So we've seen the King's **plan**. It is a plan outlined in the prophets. God will call His people to radical discipleship from the most unusual places! Now let's look at the King's message, His **proclamation**.

II. The King's Proclamation (4:17).

Matthew 4: 17, "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This is the message of radical discipleship.

In the parallel passage in **Mark 1:15** we hear Jesus saying: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

How to Become a Disciple

Here is the message, that if it is obeyed, you become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Repent, and believe the Gospel.

The message of this radical discipleship is to readjust your thinking and your entire life around God's rule and reign in your heart and life. The idea is: reject your old life, and focus every waking moment on the good news of peace with the King!

The Divine Announcement: Preached – Not Up for Debate!

Now notice how Jesus expressed this message. He **preached**. Jesus' message wasn't up for debate! The word **kerusso**, which means to announce something as a herald. He wasn't dialoging. He was stating the terms of a King. He wasn't asking people's opinion. He announcing an irrevocable fact that demanded a response: "the kingdom is at hand: Repent!"

The Kingdom is Near

The kingdom of heaven had come near because **Jesus had come near**.⁶ The people didn't know how close the Kingdom was to them. The very King of kings was standing in their presence essentially announcing the end of the age. From the time Jesus appears on the scene to the end of the world, we could say this is the "Last Days" – this is the time where God pours out His grace on the world before the great Judgment Day comes. The kingdom was near because the King was in their very presence.

Making Peace with the King

Since the King was now here, a response was demanded. "In **Matthew 4:17**, Jesus said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Listen to this command and put yourself in the place of Jesus' hearers. If a great king were coming to judge you – you would do whatever it took to make peace with him! That's **repentance**. It's a total reversal of position!

⁶ Boice., 63-64.

Repent: Change Directions

The word *repent* means “to turn”, literally to “change your mind”. It means to have an entire transformation of your very heart and soul! It has the idea of changing directions and heading the opposite way. It involves action.

Jesus was telling people to **prepare themselves**—to change whatever needed to be changed—because God’s kingdom was approaching.”⁷ Repentance is a transformation of heart and mind that leads to a total surrender of *everything* to the king.

Believe the Good News / Jubilee

So, repent! Stop living in darkness! Let the light dawn upon you. And if you want to use the imagery of Isaiah 9 – it’s like the year of Jubilee. Every 50th year in Israel the slaves were set free. If you had a debt you couldn’t pay, it was forgiven. If you lost your land, you were given your land back. You are no longer in darkness and despair and gloom. “Believe the good news of the kingdom”. As **Isaiah 60:1** says, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.”

If the kingdom has come – then you need to totally reorient yourself to the king. Nothing can compete!

Radical Call to Refocus our Life around Christ

You and I are called to repentance and to call our friends and neighbors to repentance. The King is near. He is beckoning all of us to follow Him. Will you follow Him? Will you completely refocus your life around Him as your Center?

III. The King’s People (4:18-22).

Matthew 4: 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.”

The First Call to Discipleship

The call to radical discipleship comes first fisherman. Andrew and John had already heard multitudes of hours of preaching about the coming Messiah, because they were first followers of John the Baptist. It would be obvious that after Jesus’ baptism that they would tell their brothers – Andrew to Peter, and James to John – that Jesus is the Christ, the Promised Savior, YHWH come in the flesh!

Ordinary People

God doesn’t call the special people. He calls ordinary people. “Imagine being one of those original disciples. They were ordinary people like you and me. They had jobs, families, hobbies, and social lives. As they went about their business on the day Jesus called them, none of them would have expected his life to change so quickly and completely.”⁸

God’s grace is always a shocker. It’s unexpected. You’re kind of looking around the corner wondering if the Lord has the right person. Paul speaks of the high and holy calling to insignificant, ordinary people.

⁷ From “Multiply Movement”, Session 1.

⁸ Multiply, *ibid*.

1 Corinthians 1:26–29, “For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

History of God Calling Weak People

If you think about it God has a history of calling very weak people. God’s servants historically have struggled with their own adequacy. It starts at the very beginning of the Bible.

- Witness **MOSES** who called on the back side of the desert in Midian. He was called to bring the greatest empire of his day to its knees, with no army, and not even any weapons. What does he say to God: “I am of uncircumcised lips”. I stutter! You got the wrong guy! Don’t we all feel that way? God’s calling is overwhelming. And God says to Moses, “Who is it that makes the stuttering tongue?” “I made you weak so I can get glory from you!” It wasn’t just Moses.
- **DAVID** struggled because he was least among his brothers. He was so little thought of that when the great prophet Samuel came to anoint a king from Jesse’s household he didn’t even send for David! It couldn’t be David! “God looks not on outward things as man does, but God looks on the heart”. David was nothing special – he was weak, but he was a man after God’s heart. When he came to defeat Goliath, his brothers mocked him and accused him of turning the war into a place of entertainment. David was a small, weak man with a great God!
- What about **JEREMIAH**? Jeremiah struggled because he was so young when called to be a prophet. God says, “say not I am a child”. You will say all I sent you to say. “Be not afraid of their faces because I’m going to be with you.”
- Even mighty **SAUL OF TARSUS** had to be brought very low in order to follow Christ. He came to the place where he threw out all human confidence for the sake of knowing Christ. And what did he call himself? “The chief – the foremost – of all sinners on the earth”.
- So it is that God calls these unlearned **FISHERMAN**. Peter & Andrew, James & John. They all felt inadequate.

Grace to the Humble

Perhaps you feel unworthy, overwhelmed and inadequate for God’s great calling. If you feel that way, you are in good company. That’s the only kind of people God uses. “He resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5). Only the humble can become a disciple.

What Is a Disciple?

That brings us to an important question. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? As you will discover, the answer is fairly simple, but it changes your life completely.

Follow Me!

Christ says, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (vs. 19).

A Disciple Commits His Whole Life to Imitate Christ.

And what is the response? Matthew 4:20, “Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 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. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.” Peter and Andrew left their occupation. James and John left their occupation and their family! They left all and centered their life around Christ. They are living out Jesus’ message of repentant faith – grasping the eternal in place of the temporary!

Definition of Word Disciple

The word *disciple* refers to a student or apprentice. He is one who imitates His master. Disciples in Jesus’ day would follow their Rabbi (which means teacher) wherever he went, learning from the rabbi’s teaching and being trained to do as the rabbi did. Basically, a disciple is a follower, but only if we take the term *follower* literally. Becoming a disciple of Jesus is as simple as obeying His call to follow.

When Jesus called His first disciples, they may not have understood where Jesus would take them or the impact it would have on their lives, but they knew what it meant to follow. **They took Jesus’ call literally and began going everywhere He went and doing everything He did.**

Those Fully Trained to be Like Teacher

It’s impossible to be a disciple or a follower of someone and not end up like that person. Jesus said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). That’s the whole point of being a disciple of Jesus: we imitate Him, carry on His ministry, and become like Him in the process.

A Christian (Disciple of Christ) Without Being Like Christ?

Yet somehow many have come to believe that a person can be a “Christian” without being like Christ. A “follower” who doesn’t follow. How does that make any sense? Many people in the church have decided to take on the *name* of Christ and nothing else. This would be like Jesus walking up to those first disciples and saying, “Hey, would you guys mind identifying yourselves with Me in some way? Don’t worry, I don’t actually care if you do anything I do or change your lifestyle at all. I’m just looking for people who are willing to say they believe in Me and call themselves Christians.” Seriously? The concept of being a disciple isn’t difficult to understand, but it affects everything.⁹

The Call of God’s Electing Love and Grace

This call of discipleship shows God’s call of electing love and grace. He could have passed us by. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were not looking for Him. Had John not instructed them and Jesus not called them, they never would have come.

Normally a young Jewish man, at the age of 15, if he wants to become a Rabbi, he would go out and choose the Rabbi. But in John 15, in that beautiful chapter on Abiding in the Vine, Jesus says: Just like a branch is worthless if it’s cut off from the vine, so are you without Me! Without me you can do NOTHING!

⁹ Multiply, *ibid.*

Then he says in **John 15:16**, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

We have this beautiful picture of God’s love. We had no power in us to choose Him. We grew out of His electing love. “We love Him, because He first loved us”.

The Call is Not an “Halfway Invitation”

This call is all or nothing. Remember Jesus’ Call to Peter and Andrew, **vs. 19-20**, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

They were fisherman. Whatever Christ wants, we follow. It’s not halfway. We have to be willing to drop everything and immediately obey Him.

The point is, DISCIPLESHIP is not an ADD ON. It is the essence and center of our life to grow and change to become more like Jesus. Christ is either Lord over all or He is not Lord at all. He asks for everything!

General in Army – Imagine a general in an army. The soldier is commanded to have perfect loyalty and obedience. Now he may fail and falter from time to time but his loyalty must never be questioned. Every soldier must participate in the training. Every soldier must learn to fight the enemy.

Mom in the Home – Imagine a Mom in the home with a newborn who only wanted to live there half the time. The idea of discipleship is that kind of 24/7 commitment to Christ. It is...

- Reading His Word Day and Night
- Praying for one another “without ceasing”
- Always encouraging, exhorting, instructing and correcting in God’s family
- It’s radical!

A Disciple is a Disciple Maker

Christ says, “Follow me, and I will make you **fishers of men**” (vs. 19). A disciple of Christ is not just one who follows Christ, but is a disciple maker! Discipleship is a radical call to community. For us this means we need to strive to live in community where there is:

- **Love:** “by this shall all men know you are my disciples... love for one another”.
- **Accountability:** Studying the Bible and applying it to life
- **Community:** We need to have God’s HESED among us – His loyal love. The book of 1 John presents this one trait as that without which we are not true disciples.
- **Concern for Others:** Are you a lone ranger Christian? God makes all His children fishers of men. This calls for: a consistent, exemplary life, humility, courage to reach out to others. It doesn’t have to be pastoral. It could mean a meal at your home. It could mean a card. It definitely means regular communication and living life together in various levels of community.

Circles of Discipleship

Think of it this way.

- You need your **Paul** in your life – someone stronger to encourage you.
- You need your **Barnabas** – someone at the same place to encourage you.
- You need your **Timothy** – someone younger in the faith you can encourage.

Paul said this in **2 Timothy 2:2**. I'll paraphrase it: "You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others."

Do you have that three-tier community of encouragement around you?

IV. The King's Power (4:23-25).

Matthew 4: 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. 24 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, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan."

Teaching in Their Synagogues

Christ's ministry, first and foremost is a teaching ministry. This is the life of radical discipleship. It is a day and night looking into the Word of God and applying it to our lives until we are fully conformed to our Teacher. Indeed, the Gospel of Matthew has been compared with the five books of Moses because it contains five main sections of teaching: chapters 5–7, 10, 13, 18, 23–25.¹⁰

A Look to the Future: No Diseases or Pain!

Jesus came, vs. 23, "proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people." We come to the demonstration of the King's power. It's a look at what the final Kingdom will look like when He comes to earth to rule and reign. Christ's ministry is a picture of what radical discipleship leads to. We do not live for this world. We live for a time when this world will be rid of disease and demons and pain.

Sin and Sickness

There is a connection between sin and sickness. There would be no sickness but for sin. The miracles were proof of God's saving power and a picture of His saving work. He has power over everything that oppresses men. Physical, psychological, and spiritual. '*Every affliction.*' **Isa. 35:1-7** spoke of this great day.

Isaiah's Images: Darkness to Light, Dryness to Blossoming

Remember Isaiah's first image was a people in darkness, forgotten, getting the light shined upon them. Now in Isaiah 35, the people are compared to a dry and deserted land blossoming!

Isaiah 35:1-7, "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; 2 it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. 3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. 4 Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters

¹⁰ Boice, 67.

break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; 7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.”

When we enter a life of radical discipleship with Christ, our life changes! Sin no longer has dominion over us! Our dry desert blossoms! Our darkness becomes light!

Conclusion:

Radical Discipleship calls for a radical abandonment of self and selfish ambition for Christ. Paul said it this way in **Galatians 2:20**, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Jesus said it this way in Mark 10:21, “come, take up the cross, and follow me.” Are you ready to deny yourself and your ambition and have only one holy ambition, to see Christ’s glory high and lifted up by imitating Him in all of life and encouraging the entire community of Christ followers. Will you be a “fisher of men”? By God’s grace we will!