

## Discipleship in the Lectionary – 01/22/2023



A look at the week's lectionary through the lens of discipleship and disciple-making.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Revised Common Lectionary Year A

Sunday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>

Matthew 4:12-23

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### A message of promise

In this week's Gospel lectionary text, Jesus begins His ministry. Jesus preaches the same message as John the Baptist: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. Where John's message carried with it the threat of judgment and the need for repentance, with Jesus there is coming of the Kingdom and thus a message of promise. The text also provides insight into Jesus' call of His disciples and His ministry - all of which are key to understanding our role as disciples today.

### Matthew 4:12-23 Commentary

The text follows Jesus' baptism (3:13-17) and His temptation in the wilderness (4:1-11). These two events are both important in the preparation of Jesus for His ministry. Immediately following the text are three chapters comprising of the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7).

*<sup>12</sup> Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. <sup>13</sup> And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, <sup>14</sup> so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: <sup>15</sup> "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— <sup>16</sup> 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."*

A precipitating event appears to be the arrest of John the Baptist (v.12). This caused Jesus to withdraw into Galilee. This move represents the third time we know of in Jesus' life that He was forced to find a new hometown. Each time this happens Matthew points to a prophecy being fulfilled. Jesus' birth in Bethlehem fulfilled prophecy (2:5-6). The family must flee to Egypt and thus Jesus' life has parallels with Moses. Returning from Egypt on the death of Herod the Great the family must settle in Nazareth to avoid his equally evil successor. According to Matthew, another prophecy has been fulfilled (2:23). The move to Capernaum fulfils a third prophecy detailed here (4:14-16). This is the fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1-3. [-0

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

Jesus proclaims the same message as John the Baptist (3:2) and later He will send out His disciples to do the same (10:7).

*<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will*

*make you fishers of men."*<sup>20</sup> *Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*<sup>21</sup> *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.*<sup>22</sup> *Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

The text also reveals insight into the call of Jesus' disciples. The emphasis brought out in Matthew is threefold. First, that Jesus called His disciples as they were. In other words, fishermen at work. Second, the disciples were called for a specific purpose - "*I will make you fishers of men*" (v.20). Third, Jesus' call required a response. Matthew details how "*immediately they left their nets and followed him*" (vv.20;22).

*<sup>23</sup> 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.*

This one verse gives much insight into Jesus' ministry. First, Jesus did the going - "*He went throughout all Galilee.*" Second, His ministry comprised of teaching. Third, His ministry comprised of preaching (proclaiming the Gospel). Fourth, His ministry comprised of healing.

### Reflections

There is much insight in this week's Gospel lection for modern disciples of Jesus. God's providence is clearly on display as Jesus was moved three times to avoid worldly threats. When we submit our lives to Christ, we are assured that God's will for us will be accomplished. It may not be the plan we had for our lives, but it is the only way to experience abundant life on this earth and life eternal.

Jesus' ministry is much different than John's ministry. John preached and baptized in the wilderness. People came to him. Jesus, on the other hand, went to the people. Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee. He went throughout Galilee. Jesus seeks us out. In our post-Christendom world, people no longer seek out church membership simply because a church is open. The era of the church as an institution is over. As disciples, we must seek others, not expect them to come to us.

In this call narrative, Matthew describes how two sets of brothers were called. Jesus' group of disciples must have been an intimate community in relationship with both Jesus and with each other. This contrasts with the sometimes-transactional relationships between church members who see each other for an hour or so every week or so. As disciples we are called into a deeper community.

Just like the disciples in this narrative, God calls us from where we are embedded in the world. With our call comes our purpose. This call is not forced upon us. It requires a decision and a commitment to action. Our comfortable (or perhaps not so comfortable) worldly life is transformed to an abundant life in Christ that take us to places we dared not imagine. However, when we are called, we are also equipped.

Finally, Jesus' ministry is the blueprint for our own. It involves all, not just some, of the following: preaching, teaching, and healing. Just like Christ, this ministry must not be restricted to being conducted behind closed doors or away from the world. We are called to go out into the world and heal our communities by preaching, teaching and being the Gospel. We are Christ's ambassadors called to a ministry of reconciliation. We are called to be the promise of the Kingdom as Christ accomplishes His continued work on earth through His Church - the Body, not necessarily the building.

### Application

- What aspects of your worldly life are you still holding onto? What must you let go of to fulfill your calling?