

Public Ministry

Matthew 4:12-25

Intro

As we continue our verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of Matthew this morning, we will move into the *public ministry* of the Lord Jesus...

- And this subject has tremendous application for us as believers because we live in an age that is increasingly hostile to *faith that is lived out publicly*...

The prevailing secular culture around us desires that we keep our faith private — but that will never do...

- Because the Lord Jesus conducted His ministry publicly and as His disciples we are to do the same...

Shortly before His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus had this interaction with the unbelieving religious leaders in...

John 18:19-21 (NKJV)

19 The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.

20 Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing.

21 Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said."

What a wonderful testimony the Lord Jesus had!

- He essentially said, “If you want to know what I taught, go and ask people, I said everything in public.”...

[ex. If following Christ was a crime, would there be enough evidence for a conviction?...]

With this in mind let's move into our first section...

1) Heading North (vs 12-17)

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

The Lord Jesus received word that John the Baptist has been arrested and imprisoned, so the Lord departed from *the southern region of Judea* and headed *north to the region of Galilee*...

EXHORTATION — Please learn the basics of Bible geography — it will make Bible reading much more enjoyable — it is also a reminder that the Bible records history...[expand]

Now, the northern region of Galilee was where the Lord Jesus grew up and it would be the place where the majority of His public ministry would take place...

LESSON — God sometimes uses difficulty to move us to where He wants us to be — sometimes leaving a difficult situation is the right move...[qualifications apply!...]

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

But it is interesting to note that the early church mainly stayed in Jerusalem until...

Acts 8:1 (NKJV)

Now Saul was consenting to [Stephen’s] death.

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

In this circumstance, God allowed the persecution of the church in Jerusalem as a lever to move believers out of their comfort zone so that they might share the gospel...[expand]

With this in mind, let’s move on in Matthew 4 to vs...

13 And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum,

The Lord Jesus grew up in **Nazareth**, a city which is west of the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee...

- But now He moves His base of operations to **Capernaum** which is on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee...

And as we move on in vs 13-16, Matthew lets us know that this was a fulfillment of prophecy...

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."**

Here Matthew points us to **Isaiah 9:1-2** and highlights the fact that the Lord Jesus fulfilled this prophecy...

And there are two things that we should take note of here...

1) The Lord Jesus came to save Gentiles as well as Jews...

This is a very important point — one that we too easily take for granted...

- But since we are Gentiles — we should rejoice that the way of salvation is open to us...

And the salvation of Gentiles was God's plan all along...

Genesis 12:3 (NKJV) [God speaking to Abraham]

"I will bless those who bless you,

**And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**

- [expand — the blessing to all families came through Jesus Christ — the Savior of the world...]

It is interesting to note that the early church in the book of Acts was confused about whether or not God wanted to save Gentiles...

But we don't have to be confused about this issue — it is clear that the Lord desires to save both Jews and Gentiles...

To remind ourselves of this truth, would you please turn to...

1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

As we turn back to Matthew 4, the second thing I want you to see in vs 13-16 is...

2) The salvation that the Lord Jesus brings transfers people from darkness to light...

Notice again the words of vs 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.**

Now, the difficult truth is that we all come into this world in spiritual darkness — and that is why we spent our years as unbelievers running into things...[expand]

- You see, nearly all the problems that we encounter in this world are caused by people making decisions while they remain in spiritual darkness...

Dallas Willard

“In today’s world, famine, war, and epidemic are almost totally the outcome of human choices, which are expressions of the human spirit.”

Now, this makes sense when we think about people who do not know Christ...

- But, unfortunately, as believers we too make decisions based how we feel and not on what the scriptures say...

This is the spiritual equivalent of living our lives with all the lights off — we may be ok in the daytime but when night falls we are going to be in trouble...[expand]

FB Meyer’s Three Lights

1) The Holy Spirit

2) The Word of God

3) Circumstances (includes counsel of fellow believers)

These three lights are available to every believer — but we must be willing to *walk in the light* — it is our choice to make...

Continuing on in Matthew 4 to vs...

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

It is interesting to note that this was the exact message that John the Baptist brought...

- The primary difference between John and Jesus was not the *message* but the *messenger*...

John the Baptist was *the forerunner of the Messiah* and the Lord Jesus is *the Messiah Himself*...

- John the Baptist was a *herald of the Kingdom* and the Lord Jesus is the *King of the Kingdom*...

Now, like John, the Lord Jesus also preached a message of repentance...

repent — *to change one's mind or purpose; indicates a complete change of attitude, spiritual and moral, towards God...*

Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action...

Dallas Willard

“As we first turned away from God in our thoughts, so it is in our thoughts that the first movements toward the renovation of the heart occur. Thoughts are the place where we can and must begin to change.”

- [ex. change your thinking — change your life...]

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- [expand — our commitment to teaching the Bible — because the Bible will transform our thinking if we allow it to...]

Now, like John, the Lord Jesus is exhorting people to **repent** because **the kingdom of heaven is at hand...**

But what does it mean that the kingdom of heaven is at hand?...

I believe this means that the kingdom of heaven was now **present and available in a way that it never had been before...**

- And that people were to **repent** — they were to step away from the **kingdoms of their own making** and step into **the kingdom of heaven...**

And this new interaction with the kingdom of heaven was made available through the Lord Jesus Christ...

Colossians 1:13 (NKJV)

[God the Father] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love...

So, the kingdom of heaven is at hand — it is present — it has come near — through the agency of the Lord Jesus Christ...

And the invitation is open — anyone can enter into the kingdom of heaven — right here and right now — through relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ...[expand]

- So, it is vital that we understand that the Lord Jesus — *the King of the Kingdom of Heaven* — brought His kingdom near — and all who trust in Him enter into His kingdom...

If you are a believer *then you have entered the kingdom of heaven — you are a kingdom citizen* with all the rights and privileges that affords you...

But as citizens of the kingdom, we get to choose how we will live in the kingdom...

Will we submit to the true King and live our lives for His glory, empowered by the resources that He provides?...

- ***Or will we seek to establish our own kingdoms and use what the true King provides for our own glory...***

I believe that these are the fundamental questions that explain the weak state of professing Christianity...

Somewhere along the way, Christians have lost sight of the fundamental realities of the kingdom of heaven — so here are five such realities that I hope you and I will take to heart...

1) The kingdom of heaven is available — right here and right now to anyone who will submit to Christ as King...

2) Christ is the undisputed King of this kingdom — it is rebellion to seek any other kingdom...

3) The Triune God has provided all the resources needed for us to live as faithful kingdom citizens right here and right now...

4) Though the kingdom of heaven is present here and now — the kingdom has not come in its fulness — we await the return of Christ the King for the fulness of the kingdom...

5) We are to live as kingdom citizens in the midst of the evil kingdoms of this world — realizing that our stay here is short — and that we will receive an eternal reward for our faithful service...

Let's move now to the second section of our study...

2) Calling Disciples (vs 18-22)

18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee,

What an amazing thing to consider — the God-Man, Jesus Christ — walking by the Sea of Galilee...

- [expand — how exciting it would be to see a famous person that you respect — but this is infinitely greater — it is the God-Man...]

Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee reminds me of a couple of verses...

Genesis 3:8 (NKJV)

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day...

John 1:14 (NKJV)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

As wonderful as those verses are, we must remind ourselves that the Lord Jesus is still walking though this world — He lives in us — He walks with us — this is something to meditate on — something to rejoice in...

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV)

19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Continuing on in Matthew 4:18 we read...

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.

The Lord Jesus **walked** and the Lord Jesus **saw**...

- And the Lord Jesus is still walking and He is still seeing...

[ex. "I felt seen." — *acknowledged, known, understood* — the Lord Jesus does see us — He understands us even if no one else does...]

- Now, as we read the gospels we understand that what we read in vs 18 is not Peter and Andrew's first interaction with the Lord...
[expand]

And if you are a believer then you probably understand that the moment you came to faith in Christ was not your first interaction with the Lord...

- Because the Lord created you and He had been at work throughout your life to bring you to a place of faith in Him — so that you might walk with Him as a disciple...

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

The Lord Jesus called Peter and Andrew to **follow** Him...

This is clearly a call to discipleship — a call to submit to the Lord Jesus as Master...

- Peter and Andrew were to follow the Lord Jesus and in the process become **fishers of men**...

[expand — I've always enjoyed going fishing — I love to catch fish but I've never cleaned a fish — and that makes me an incomplete fisherman...]

But when it comes to being a fisher of men, all we are called to do is catch people — it is up to Jesus to clean them...[expand]

20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

Peter and Andrew make the decision to follow the Lord Jesus as disciples — as apprentices — as fishers of men...

- And to follow the Lord Jesus, they had to *leave their nets behind*...

This is a reminder that if we follow Jesus as disciples then we will have to leave some things behind — you cannot follow Jesus and keep doing everything that you were doing before...

“Every choice is a thousand renunciations”...

QUESTION — Are we willing to leave our nets behind so that we might follow Jesus?...[expand]

Continuing on in Matthew 4 to vs 21-22...

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.

This is a similar situation — two fishermen leaving their nets to follow Jesus and become fishers of men...

- But there is one distinction — this time the two fishermen leave **their father** as well as their nets...

And this is how it must be — the Lord Jesus must be first — no family member must stand in the way of us following Jesus...

Matthew 10:37 (NKJV)

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

- [expand — it is wonderful when physical family members follow Jesus as well — but we must never choose family members over Jesus...]

Let's move now to our final section...

3) Teaching, Preaching & Healing (vs 23-25)

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.

The Lord Jesus conducted His ministry throughout the area around the Sea of Galilee (pop. of up to 3 million) and focused on **teaching, preaching and healing...**

teaching — *telling someone what to do; instructing...*

- [expand — the Lord Jesus's teachings are not merely to be listened to — they are to be applied — (not jug to mug)...]

preaching the gospel of the kingdom — *making an official announcement regarding the good news that the kingdom was available...*

- The preaching of the gospel is the message that through the Person of Jesus Christ we can be forgiven of all our sins and receive eternal life...

And this eternal sort of life is to be enjoyed both ***now and in the life to come***...[expand]

*Now, in addition to **teaching** and **preaching**, the Lord conducted a ministry of...*

healing — *the restoration of health to the physically sick or injured...*

- [expand — shows the Lord Jesus' **power** and His **compassion** — but physical healing needed to be accompanied by faith if it was to be of lasting value...]

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.

The Lord Jesus graciously healed those who were sick and delivered those who were demon possessed...[expand]

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

People from all over the region began to follow after the Lord Jesus and His popularity continued to increase...

Conclusion

We will stop here for today and Lord-willing pick-up in Matthew 5 next week as we begin our study of the Sermon on the Mount...

And as we close, I want to encourage you and me to follow the Lord Jesus publicly — to leave behind whatever we need to leave behind so that we too might be faithful fishers of men...