

Series: From Israel to Everyone: Disciples who Demonstrate God’s Presence (a study of Matthew).

Sermon Text: Matthew 4:12-25

(App to get lesson/slides, ask questions. Color Pg)

We are continuing our series in Matthew. I want to draw your attention to the word Disciples. If you claim to be a Christian, a “*follower of Christ,*” then you are a disciple AND if so, you are called to use your life to demonstrate God’s presence here on earth. The passage we look at today is going to show us how to do that. Matthew was a Jew and his purpose in writing his gospel was to present to his fellow countrymen that Jesus was the promised Messiah and King. What we’ve seen so far:

- The genealogy of the King, verifying Jesus’s right to claim the throne.
- The birth of the King.
- The adoration of the King (by the Magi from the East).
- The flight of the King to Egypt as a child and His return to the Promised Land.
- The baptism of the King by John.
- The temptation of the King by Satan in the wilderness.

Today we will see the beginning of this King’s public ministry. And what He does and how he does it will be very instructive on HOW we can demonstrate God’s presence here on earth. As Brandon pointed out three weeks ago, faith is not just a ticket to heaven. If we put our faith in Jesus Christ, our calling, we have the privilege and responsibility to become God’s empowered partner here on earth. What we will see in the text today tells us this...

BIG IDEA: Jesus calls his followers to shine, to fish, and to minister to those in need.

If it’s a bit overwhelming seeing three significant “*calls to action*” here, it may help to realize that these are NOT separate, isolated, distinct calls to action, but they overlap...a lot, they complement each other, they build on each other as we will see. Let’s look at the setting in **verses 12-13, 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...From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at*

hand.” John the Baptizer has been taken into custody by Herod. This is not Herod the Great, who ruled when Jesus was born, it was his son, Herod Antipas. John had been speaking out publicly against Herod Antipas, publicly condemning Herod’s adulterous marriage to his brother’s wife. So, Herod put John in prison (You can read the details of this in Matthew 14). John's imprisonment marked a pivotal transition from the preparatory ministry of John to the public ministry of Jesus because it indicated that John had completed his divine mission to prepare the way for the Lord.

When Jesus heard of John’s imprisonment, He left Nazareth, His home, and went to Galilee to begin His public ministry. Galilee was the region west of the Sea of Galilee about 100 miles north of Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, Galilee is called "***Galilee of the Gentiles***" because it was home to a diverse population of both Jews and Gentiles, making it an **ideal** location for Jesus to show that His message was intended for all humanity - not just for the Jews or their religious leaders. What message did Jesus give to kick off his public ministry? "***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.***" Well, that sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Where have we heard that before? That’s the exact message John the Baptist had been proclaiming back in ***chapter 3***. Jesus immediately links Himself to John’s ministry and his message. Brandon taught on this ***chapter 3*** passage three weeks ago, explaining what this statement means. So, I won’t get into it here, but if you missed it, I really encourage you to go back and listen to it. It’s well worth your time. It’s interesting to note how much Jesus talked about the kingdom of heaven. He talked about it from the very beginning (here). He talks about it throughout His ministry. It’s part of His model prayer he gives to us... "*Thy **kingdom** come.*" All the way to the end of His earthly ministry where, during the forty days from His resurrection until His Ascension (Acts 1) He spent those days speaking to the Apostles of what? "***Of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.***"

Now, let’s read about how WE ARE CALLED TO SHINE in ***verses 15-16: The people dwelling in darkness have seen a GREAT LIGHT....on them a light dawned.*** The first thing we are called to do as disciples is to shine. I just love analogy of the nature Jesus Christ and His character is light. It is used throughout Scripture

(Old and New Testament). In the beginning of the Gospel of John, that great passage about the majesty and eternality of Christ repeatedly refers to Jesus at the light. John 1:5 tells us: *“The light shines in the darkness and darkness has not overcome it.”* Later, during His ministry Jesus says, *“I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness”* (John 12:46).

Speaking of darkness, that is the description given to the fallen world we live in. It's darkness because it is currently under the domain of Satan (In the New Testament, Satan is referred to as the ruler of this world, the god of this world). Because of that, our instructions to shine for Jesus comes with not so much a warning label, but more of a *“be aware of”* label. Mankind, in its fallen nature and living in darkness, has an aversion to light, and won't necessarily appreciate the light you shine in their eyes. John 3:19 says, *“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.”* Jesus then adds *“For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”*

But praise be to God that Christ can penetrate the darkest darkness. *“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’”* (John 8:12). Here is the key for us - CHRIST NOW CALLS US TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. He took us out of that darkness so that we could become light that same dark world. *“Christ has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”* (Colossians 1:13). In Acts 28:18, Paul writes that God sent him to the Gentiles *“to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.”* (Acts 28:18). In fact, we see in the very **next chapter in Matthew (5:14, 16)**, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says this, *“YOU are the light of the world... Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”* Note here that our shining here is directly compared to doing good works, which would include ministering to those in need. That's a two-fer! Every time we minister to those in need (which is a *“good work”*), we are shining in a dark world. Paul refers to this in Philippians 2:15 that we should be *“blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst*

of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

Here is a question to discuss with your peeps: *“What are some ways you can shine for Jesus in your daily life? List some doable, practical actions to increase your wattage.”*

Now, let’s read about how WE ARE CALLED TO FISH. The next thing we are called to do as Disciples is to fish. Jesus begins His public ministry by showing that He never planned to do it alone. In *verses 18-22*, He calls four men to join Him in his ministry. There was Simon who became Peter, his brother Andrew, and brothers James and John, sons of Zebedee (Jesus will eventually have 12 core disciples, including Matthew, who is writing this gospel. Eleven of these will become Apostles, with Matthias added to replace Judas, ending up with the twelve Apostles). Let’s make some observations here:

- Notice that Jesus didn’t choose scholars and academics who know the Torah forward and backwards. He chose common everyday working people. Here he chose fishermen. John MacArthur has pointed out that fishermen had three qualities that would serve them well as they started fishing for men instead of fish. 1) They had patience, 2) they had perseverance, and 3) they had courage because they’re not standing on the shore with a rod and reel. They’re taking those little boats out on the Sea of Galilee where sudden storms could catch them away from shore, putting their lives in peril. Their work was not for the faint-hearted.
- He not only called them to be fishers of men, but He also called them to do that exclusively. Meaning this was not a part-time gig or a side hustle. It was a *“drop everything”* and come with me. Leave your boats, your nets, your family, your homes and do what? *“Follow me”* (i.e., walk with me, talk with me, eat with me, travel with me, minister with me, share life with me). Jesus asked them to GO ALL IN!
- Note their response. They didn’t respond with *“This is big commitment, can I think about it?”*, or *“Let me hire my replacement first”* which arguably would be the responsible thing to do. Instead, what does the text say? They **IMMEDIATELY** left and followed Him. Complete obedience without delay.

Let me ask you this: “Is that a good example for us to follow when God call is calling us to do something?” Absolutely!

- Jesus was going to show teach them to fish for men **by showing** them how. For the next three years, Jesus was going fish, and they were going to be with him as He did. *“Watch me and learn how I fish, because when I leave, that’s what you are going to do.”*

In John 15:26-27 in the upper room, the night before his crucifixion, Jesus tells them. *“You will bear witness of Me because you have been with me from the beginning.”* In Matthew 28:18-20 (known as the Great Commission) He tells them *“Go everywhere and make disciples, teaching them to observe all what Jesus taught them.”* And just before He ascended into heaven in Acts 1:8 Jesus tells them, *“You shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth.”* Part of committing to follow Christ, is committing to continue that mission. We are now His witnesses to a lost world. The scriptures make that clear. Paul made that clear. He calls himself an ambassador for Christ (Ephesians 6:20), and in 2 Corinthians 5:20 he tells us we are ALL ambassadors for Christ, and we should be doing everything in our power to implore unbelievers to be reconciled to God. Peter also made that clear. He tells us (cf. 1 Peter 2:9) that we, the body of Christ, are a royal priesthood. A priest was a mediator, a go-between. As a mediator, a priest brings two parties together. In this case the parties we bring together are God and the lost.

Obviously, if you want to fish, you have to go where the fish are. But fortunately, you don’t have to go to another nation to fulfill the Great Commission. You live among the fish. You work with the fish, you are neighbors with the fish, you probably have fish in your family. You interact with the fish just about every day. In fact, if our church had more money than we knew what to do with, I would suggest using some of it put up a sign over the exit of the parking lot that read, *“You are now entering the mission field. Start casting your nets.”* Question to discuss with your peeps: When Jesus said *“Follow Me”* there was a literal fulfillment possible. They

left and literally followed Him. That option is not available to us. So, “What does it mean for us today to answer the call of Jesus to follow me?”

Next, let’s see how WE ARE CALLED TO MINISTER by looking at how Jesus used words and works to verify His claim to be King in 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. Verse 23 says He WENT throughout all Galilee:*** here the form of the verb here means continuous action. He “*continually went*” ***through Galilee.*** The territory was only about 40 by 70 miles, which might not seem that big by modern standards, but when you’re on foot, that’s a pretty big area. ***Verse 23*** also reveals Jesus’s game plan in carrying out His public ministry, Jesus was going use **His words and His works** to establish His Kingship, to prove that He was the Messiah, to prove that He was God in flesh. He would let the works He did back up the things He said. Note these 2 verses: To the Pharisees in John 10:38 He said, “*If you don’t believe in me because of what I say, believe because of the works I do.*” To his disciples in John 14:11 He said, “*Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me—or at least believe on account of the works themselves.*”

He taught in the synagogues. The synagogue was the most important institution in the life of any Jew. The whole of Jewish life centered around the synagogue. Also, unlike the Temple in Jerusalem, there was no prohibition against Gentiles being in the synagogues. So, some of His audience would be Gentiles, but most of his audience were Jewish. He also proclaimed in public to both Jew and Gentile, “*the gospel of the kingdom,*” meaning the good news of the kingdom. Sometimes we mistakenly think the message of “*The Gospel*” is only about how we can be saved and made right with God through faith in Christ. But the Gospel is not just about us getting saved. The Gospel is bigger than that. Jesus is saying, “*There is good news,*

and this is it. I am the King, and I have a kingdom. And YOU are invited to be a part of it.” Us being made right with God through faith in Christ is how we get into THAT kingdom. The text tells us that Jesus was **healing every disease and every affliction among the people**. These healings did four things.

1. They showed that His message had divine backing. His message had God’s stamp of approval. No human being could do these kinds of things in their power alone. Before we move on, let’s think about something. It’s easy to just assume that “*Well of course Jesus could heal, He was God.*” But He was also fully man. And the scriptures seem to indicate Jesus voluntarily limited some of His divine abilities during his incarnation (e.g. Philippians 2:8). **WHAT IF** the healings Jesus did were done just by his fully human nature having the faith that His heavenly Father would work through Him to make them happen. If it really were the case that the healings were God working through the human nature of Jesus, would that change the way we think about how God might empower us if we allowed Him to? Remember what Jesus told disciples about having faith? If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you could...what? You could say to a mountain, “*Cast yourself into the sea*” and it would! Question: “*If you had that kind of faith and you looked at person with a physical ailment and said, “Be healed,” do you think God would answer that prayer?*” I would think He would. Just something to ponder and to discuss with your peeps.
2. They showed He was the prophesied Messiah, because the Old Testament had predicted the Messiah would have miraculous healing power.
3. It demonstrated that the kingdom was at hand. When talking about the Kingdom of God, sometimes theologians refer to the concept of “*already but not yet.*” The Kingdom has been inaugurated, but it is yet to be fully consummated. This means that believers are actively taking part in the kingdom of God, although the kingdom will not reach its full expression until Christ returns. We are “*already*” in the kingdom, but we do “*not yet*” see it in its glory. The healings were a foretaste of that full kingdom. When the kingdom arrives in full, there will be no sickness, no disease, no physical defects. Some he healed were demon possessed, Jesus cast out the demons. In the full kingdom, there will be no evil, no Satanic or demonic presence at all.
4. The fourth thing comes into view when realize Jesus could have done other signs and miracles to verify his message. He could have performed other types of miracles...turned more water into wine, walked on the water while he was preaching, started storms and stopped them. But He chose to heal people as His sign. What does this tell us?

It shows us that **God is interested in ministering to people’s current physical needs, not just their spiritual needs.** As Christians, we want to minister to the whole person, with the goal of saving their souls, if they are unbelievers. But sometimes that process starts with addressing a very real, genuine, physical need.

But what if we can't heal like Jesus healed (either because we're not divine, or we don't have the faith) what is our takeaway? What is the application to us? If we don't duplicate the FORM of what Christ did (heal), we can duplicate the SUBSTANCE of what Christ did (i.e., meet the physical needs of others whenever and wherever possible). Remember Ephesians 3:10? *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before and, that we should walk in them.”* Remember, doing good works does not gain our salvation, but they demonstrate that our salvation is genuine. If you think about it, many or most of the ministries, the good works, we can take part in involve meeting the needs of others. And hats off to Krista for featuring a local ministry every month where we can channel our obligation as followers of Christ to minister to those in need.

James 1:27 tells us that one of the signs of a pure and undefiled religion is taking care of widows and the fatherless in their time of need. Galatians 6:10 tells us that we should do good to all people, but ESPECIALLY to those who are in the household of faith. That is, we have an extra duty to make sure the needs of those in our church family are met. In Jesus's teaching about separating the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, where he told the sheep the things you did for the least of these you did it unto Me, most of those things he mentioned were meeting simple physical needs. *“I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty, and I gave you something to drink, I was naked, and you clothed me...”*

Hopefully we can see in the text here, that if we profess to be followers of Christ, each of us should be about the business of shining, fishing, and ministering to those in need. We are to be Jesus to others. Above all, please remember, wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ, you don't need to not work through anything alone. Reach out and let us help!

Sunday to Monday Connection: From John's message, we see ways followers of Jesus live out their faith. Jesus is the light who came into a dark world. When we trust Him, we reflect His light too. Jesus told His disciples He would make them *“fishers of people.”* This means helping others come to know Him. Jesus didn't just preach. He cared for people's real needs. So, this week, remember: following Jesus isn't just about what we believe on Sunday. It's about how we live each day of the week shining His light, pointing people to Him, and caring for others along the way.

- **Question:** Where might God be giving you an opportunity to shine, fish, or minister to someone around you?
- **Next Step:** Glean ideas from the lesson above.
- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to explore what all this might mean for you, please speak with someone you know here or one of our church leaders.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

- Bible Project - Gospel of the Kingdom [Videos](#) and [Podcast episodes](#).
- Bible Project - Heaven and Earth [Videos](#) and [Podcast episodes](#).
- Bible Project - Temple [Videos](#).
- Bible Project – Day of the Lord [Podcast episodes](#).

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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