

**1/25/26**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**  
**For Group Meetings from January 18<sup>th</sup> – January 24<sup>th</sup>**

**OUR MISSION:** As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

**Prayer of the Day:** Lord God, your lovingkindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER**

**Share:** How did last week's scripture (John 1:29-42) work in your life this week?

**Mission:**

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

**Hear:** Matthew 4:12-23

**Explore Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What triggers Jesus' move from Nazareth to Capernaum?
2. What is the first thing Jesus proclaims publicly in Matthew's Gospel?
3. Why did Simon Peter and Andrew decide to follow Jesus?

**Connect Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Where do you see "darkness" in the world that needs the light of Christ?
2. What daily rhythms help you stay attentive to Jesus' voice?
3. Who has played a key role in your own journey of following Jesus?

**Memorize this verse:** "From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'" (Matthew 4:17) Where have you witnessed the kingdom of God come near in your life?

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:**

**Obey:** During this week follow through on your intentions.

**Meditate:** Meditate on Psalm 27:1, 4-9. How does this speak into your life?

**Reflect:** What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

## Notes for ChristCare leaders:

What struck me as I read this passage is the sense of calling that permeates throughout. The call to John the Baptist, even though it leads to imprisonment. Jesus' withdrawal, which in Matthew is not about retreating but rather an intentional time to listen and respond to God's call. Then Jesus' own call to the crowds to perceive and become a part of God's kingdom, followed by his call to a few specific fishermen, those he has called as his disciples to catch up all kinds of people in the net of God's grace. There are different kinds of callings, but each is from God. And I think all of us need to hear that.

I wonder how many of us have a sense of call. That is, do we believe that what we do with most of our time matters to God and makes a particular difference in the world? Lately I have been wondering if our call is less about what we do than who we are. Think about it for a moment: God's call isn't simply to do something, but rather to be something, a child of God. Maybe being comes before doing. Maybe being even makes doing possible. Is that what made it possible for John to proclaim the coming Messiah and challenge the powers that be, even when it meant his imprisonment? That he knew God had called him to be the forerunner? Is that what summoned such an immediate response from Peter and Andrew, James and John, that they felt called to be more than they had imagined? They probably have no idea what being "fishers of people" even means at this point in the story, but they do know that Jesus sees something in them, something of value and worth. They have no idea where they will go, or what they will do, but they do know that Jesus is calling them to be his disciples, and they trust that the rest will become clear in time.

So hear this clearly. Each one of us are called to be children of God. Even if we don't quite know what being a child of God exactly means, we know that God values and honors and loves us. And that if we are open to being God's children, we will learn over time what it means and find all kinds of things to do in response to God's call. Maybe the "doing" will come through our work. Or maybe through our volunteering. My guess is that most of our "doing" will come through our relationships. But however it is that God uses us, it's important to remember that before God calls us to do anything God first calls us to be something: God's own beloved children. And knowing this, we can trust that the rest will follow.

And it doesn't stop there. Because this calling isn't only for us as individuals, it's also for our entire faith community and the communities in which we live and work. But before figuring out what we are called to do in community, we can remind each other what we are called to be. Because God is calling our congregation to be the gathering of God's beloved children. God is calling our congregation to be a place of welcome and acceptance. God is calling our congregation to be a place where God's word is taught, the good news of the kingdom is proclaimed, and all find healing. We live in a time where needs run deep. And so, I understand if we want to get going and do something. But if we can first focus on being God's beloved children, and let that grace-filled identify seep into the deepest parts of ourselves, I have little doubt that those things we are called to do will become clear in time.

## Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd ([tbook@desertcross.org](mailto:tbook@desertcross.org))

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### *Traditional version:*

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us  
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

### *Contemporary version:*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the  
power, and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen