

Follow Me

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 4. And if you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to give you a copy you can have and you can use while you're here.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Sean. I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church. And I say every week when I come up here that it is my joy and privilege to preach God's word to you.

And I mean that every single week. I think if I were in God's place, I would not let me near anywhere near the precious word of God or anywhere near the precious people that God has saved by the blood of his only son.

But it is God's kindness and grace to use imperfect sinners that he has sanctified, consecrated for himself. So we are in Matthew chapter 4.

We've been in Matthew for since the beginning of Advent. And we're in verses 12 to 25 today.

[1 : 06] Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, please magnify your son Jesus Christ this morning so that we see his true worth, so that we see his glory, so that we see his gracious invitation.

And we gladly forsake this world and leave everything behind to follow him.

make true cross-carrying disciples of every single man and woman and child here in this room.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. If you're able, please stand to honor God's word as we read Matthew chapter 4, verses 12 to 25.

Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.

[2 : 44] And leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled.

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

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. And he said to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 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. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. 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.

[4 : 11] 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.

And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

in the Gospel of Matthew. Joseph and Mary, the angel who announces his coming, the wise men, Herod and John the Baptist in the preceding chapter. But here in chapter 4, verse 17, all of that changes. It says, from that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That phrase, from that time, occurs at two critical junctures in the Gospel of Matthew, here to mark the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, and then in chapter 16, verse 21, to mark the beginning of Jesus' journey to the cross, to his suffering and death.

He says, there, from that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. So today's passage marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. And as Jesus begins to preach, saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, one of the first things he does is to gather a group of followers. The proclamation of the kingdom produces the people of the kingdom.

[6 : 15] And in every generation since, for the last 2,000 years, over 2,000 years, the proclamation of the kingdom has always produced the people of the kingdom. And we, here in this auditorium, are a part of that.

Jesus' calls to his disciples in this passage applies to us as well for that reason. We are all called, and this is the main point of this passage, to follow Jesus, to follow Christ who brings the kingdom of heaven. But what does following Jesus entail? What must we do to follow Jesus? And who gets to follow Jesus?

And we're going to explore all of those questions in turn by first looking at the citizens of the kingdom, and secondly, the call of the kingdom, and third, the gospel of the kingdom. It says in verses 12 and 13, 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. John was arrested by Herod Antipas, King Herod that we saw in the earlier chapters of Matthew's son. And this Herod also, like his father, feared John the Baptist's popularity. And because he was so popular and he was stirring up religious fervor, they were afraid that he would perhaps lead an uprising, a political uprising.

And for this reason, if Jesus, whose ministry is in line with John the Baptist, it continues John the Baptist's ministry and it fulfills John the Baptist's ministry, stays exactly where John was based and where he was arrested, it would pose unnecessary risk and danger for Jesus and attract too much attention. And so he withdraws into Galilee. It's not that Jesus is afraid of death.

As I mentioned, starting in Matthew 16, 21, Jesus very deliberately heads toward his death on the cross. But it's because Jesus' time for death is not yet. His time has not yet fully come, as it says in John 7, verse 8. And so he withdraws into Galilee, to Capernaum by the sea, to territory of Zebulun and Naphtali.

[8 : 37] But even this withdrawal fulfills the scriptures. We see another one of Matthew's characteristic fulfillment formulas in verses 14, 16. He's already used half a dozen of them to show us that Jesus is the one who fulfills all of the Old Testament prophecies. And then he quotes Isaiah 9, 1 to 2, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, 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. This prophecy is notable because Galilee was decidedly not where the first century Jews were expecting the Messiah to come from. We saw in Matthew chapter 2, verses 5 and 6, that the Jewish scholars, based on the prophecy of Micah 5, verse 2, expected the Messiah to come from Bethlehem, from the village where David was. And they were right about that, because Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

But because his ministry was based in Galilee, we see in John 7, 52, that many people spoke derisively of Jesus and criticized Jesus, saying, search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.

Galilee was not where you would expect a prophet of the Lord or the Messianic king to be based. Not only that, after the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria in 722 BC, the Assyrians deported many of the Israelites who lived in Galilee and replaced them with pagans from Gentile nations. And so the population in Galilee was mixed. It was not a pure ethnically or religiously region. And in fact, it got so bad that during the Maccabean period, some of the Jews mobilized an army to go and rescue Jews from Galilee from their pagan oppression and influence.

And so that's what Isaiah 9, 1-2 is referring to when it says that Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would come to Galilee of the Gentiles. And this quotation foreshadows what the direction, the trajectory of Jesus' ministry. Because even though during his earthly ministry and most of Matthew, Jesus makes it very clear that his mission is to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to the Jews, to God's chosen people from the old covenant, though there are several notable exceptions to that.

However, after his death and resurrection, Jesus commissions his disciples to go to make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit. That's where Jesus' mission is ultimately headed. Not only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but also to the lost sheep all nations. And God has already made that intention known in that prophecy hundreds of years ago in Isaiah 9. The Messiah has come to Galilee of the Gentiles. And this broadening of the reach of the gospel and the ministry of Jesus is hinted at also in verse 25, where it says that people came from all over the place, including the Decapolis, which is a primarily Gentile region. This inclusion of the Gentiles is once again, a demonstration of God's amazing grace that Jesus calls even undeserving, pagan, sinful nations. And look also at the kind of people that Jesus is calling. Jesus calls to be his disciples a few verses down, Peter, Andrew, James, and John, all, not to be rude, hillbilly,

[12 : 34] Jewish fishermen in Galilee. They will be his first. They will be the first of his 12 apostles.

They are his lieutenants. James, Peter, and John will make up Jesus's inner circle. And I think all of us can agree that they don't exactly look like a world-changing task force.

And it's just like our God to do that. Paul writes in 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. 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. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are. Why?

So that no human being might boast in the presence of God. God intentionally, and this is very characteristic of God all throughout his scriptures, God intentionally saves those who are lowly.

[13 : 53] The foolish, the weak, the despised, so that no human might boast in the presence of God. This is why in the second century, a Roman philosopher and a polemist named Calcis mocked Christianity and mocked Christians in this way. He said, Christians show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonorable, and stupid, only slaves, women, and little children. That was his criticism of Christianity.

Christianity showing that Christianity from the earliest ages rapidly spread among the marginalized, among people who had no power in their society. And this is God's doing. He humbles the pride of man and makes it so that no man can boast before him. This pattern continues to this day.

Some people criticize Christianity as a white man's religion. Some people say that Christianity is a colonialist and imperialistic and sexist religion, a religion that people with power use to suppress and control people who do not have power. But Christianity is not growing fastest today in North America or Europe. It is growing the fastest in Africa, where the number of Christians has grown from less than 10 million 734 million in a little over a century. The most representative demographic of Christianity today is an African woman.

The most representative demographic of Christianity today in the U.S. is a black woman. Christianity is growing the fastest today in Iran, where millions have come to faith over the last two decades.

And I bet you also that a large percentage of them are women, as it has been the case wherever Christianity has grown throughout history. These are the citizens of the kingdom.

[15 : 50] The Galilee of the Gentiles. We live today, it's a little awkward for me to talk about this, because we live in a city that's full of smart and strong and accomplished and high and mighty and admired people.

And many of you are like that. But that is not what defines us in this room, in this auditorium, in this church.

Because by definition, to be a Christian is to be someone who has been humbled by the grace of God. God did not save any of us because we are smart or successful.

God has saved all of us because we have acknowledged our own sinfulness before God and our own neediness before Him. That's the only reason why He has saved us.

And because we have repented of our sins and we have trusted in Jesus as our Savior. God always gives grace to the humble and He exalts the lowly.

[16 : 52] He is the God who comes to the Galilee of the Gentiles. And the contrast between our needy and sinful state and Christ's glorious grace is so great that Matthew uses the analogy of light and darkness.

Because Jesus makes a night and day difference in the lives of people that He saves. Jesus has come, it says, to the people dwelling in darkness.

The great light of Jesus has dawned on Galilee of the Gentiles for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death. I want to share an illustration here because I think most of us don't really fear darkness and never really have to deal with darkness very much.

With all these artificial lights, we can create light at the touch of the button on the phone and everywhere we go there's light. But when there was a solar eclipse, there was a total solar eclipse last year.

I think I've shared some of this story with you guys already. In 2024, April 8th, my family traveled to Maidstone, Vermont to see the total eclipse. And you've probably never heard of Maidstone, Vermont.

[18 : 00] Sydney, have you heard of Maidstone, Vermont? No, and she's from Vermont. Yeah, so because it's in the middle of nowhere, right? And we passed like half a dozen dilapidated abandoned houses near the campsite as we were going to our campsite.

Because of the eclipse, all the hotels and the Airbnbs and campsites were booked months ahead of time and years ahead of time. And so all I could find for my precious family was this off-grid campsite which had zero reviews on hipcamp.com.

And we had to use the latitude and longitude coordinates in order to drive there because it was not on the map. And it had no address. And campsite is too generous of a term because that place had no bathroom, no water, no garbage can, no electricity, and not even a fire pit.

I had to gather my own rocks to create my own fire pit. And getting to the campsite required a 10-minute off-roading over tree branches and rocks and snow and mud.

And it was literally a wilderness. And we were utterly alone. In the afternoon, the weather was nice. It was a balmy 63 degrees. And seeing the total eclipse was amazing.

[19 : 21] It was an experience to cherish. And then the sun set. And then everything changed. The temperature dropped precipitously, 42 degrees.

It became 21 degrees. It felt colder. We were freezing. The solar eclipse is also, you might know, only occurred during the new moon, which means there is no visible moon in the sky.

So it's really, really dark. And it's like pitch black out. And there's no artificial light anywhere in sight, in the horizon, as far as I can see. And it's cold, right?

As I mentioned. So we put the kids to bed. And Hannah and I are trying to stay cuddle close to keep warm. And as we're trying to sleep, we hear this noise, this animal noise, right outside of our tent.

Thump, thump. And at that point, Hannah was so scared. She's just grabbing and holding onto me. And we try to stay silent because maybe the animal will just leave us alone.

[20 : 28] And then we hear it again, thump, thump. And at that point, Hannah is in full panic mode. And she's shaking me and saying, we are going to die today, aren't we? We are going to die today.

That is literally what she said. And she tells me to say that that's the most, that's the second most scared she's ever been in her whole life. And the first time was when she almost passed out while giving birth and she thought she was dying.

So that was a pretty scary experience for her. And, you know, eventually, I mean, we try to get the car to beep and then we hear the thump, thump again.

And so eventually, I work up the courage to go outside with my little pocket knife. To engage in a fight to the death with this monstrous bear.

Because that's what we're imagining. Because the place we're on is called Bear Hill. But when I go outside, there is no animal to be seen.

[21 : 25] It is already gone. Hannah wanted to leave the campsite immediately. And then I thought about that dangerous off-roading that I just came through and I knew we wouldn't make it at night.

And so we're stuck there. And we're cold. And between the cold and the fear, we didn't sleep one wink. And around 6 a.m., the sun started to rise.

And let me tell you, I have never been so glad and grateful to see the sun come up in my entire life. Because it changes everything.

And it gave way to life.

And isn't that what Jesus has done for us? Apart from God, we were a people dwelling in darkness. Groping about in the dark and unable to make any progress for ourselves.

[22 : 43] But the despair and the darkness and death of our sinful world have given way to the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. We who once were blind now can see.

We who once lived with this cold and hardened and frozen hearts have been melted by the warmth of the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We who once lived under the shadow of death now live with the light of life from Jesus shining.

That's the amazing thing that this Isaiah 9 is prophesying about. We are the citizens of the kingdom. But unless we first admit that we are living in sin and darkness, we cannot see the light of Christ.

That's why Matthew summarizes Jesus' core message this way in verse 17. From that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent.

We've seen this before. This is the exact same message that John the Baptist proclaimed in Matthew 3, verse 2. So we know that Jesus is continuing John the Baptist's ministry and bringing it to its intended fulfillment.

[23 : 50] Mark 1, 15 also similarly summarizes Jesus' message this way. The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel. Repentance is not a peripheral aspect of Jesus' message.

It is the central aspect of Jesus' message, his proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. And to repent means to turn. It means to turn around, to do a U-turn, because we are all going and living in the wrong direction.

And that's an offensive message. Because as prideful humans, we don't want to be told that we are doing something wrong. But we must all stop living in sin and rebellion against God and turn toward him in humble submission.

And the window of opportunity for repentance and to follow King Jesus is now. The word translated at hand is in the perfect tense, meaning the kingdom of heaven has drawn near.

It has already come. Jesus the Christ, the Messianic King, has already begun to usher in the kingdom of heaven. And he beckons us to pledge our allegiance to him as king.

[24 : 58] The first people that Jesus calls are Peter and Andrew. He says in verse 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.

Simon was one of the most common names in first century Israel. We'll meet four more Simons in this gospel alone. And one of them is another one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. So Matthew kindly tells us that he had a nickname, Peter, which means rock.

From this verse alone, we might get the impression that this was the first time that these brothers, Peter and Andrew, met Jesus. And that they are just decided to follow this perfect stranger into the great unknown.

But most likely, that's not what is happening. We know from John chapter 1, verse 35-42, that Andrew already knew of Jesus and his ministry because he was a disciple of John the Baptist.

And when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus saying, Behold the Lamb of God, Andrew actually started following Jesus. And then Jesus said, Hey, what are you doing? Why are you following me? And eventually he became a disciple of Jesus when Jesus called him to follow him.

[26 : 07] And Andrew, we know from John 1 also, that went to his brother Peter and told him, Hey, we have found the Messiah. And so they have some, there's some background, there's some relational connection already.

And so they know who Jesus is, they know him. But this does seem to be the first time that Jesus calls them officially to become his disciples. And he says to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Here's another way to describe the call of the kingdom. We are to repent, turn away. That's one way to describe it. Another way to say to stop following your own way and start following Jesus.

Jesus' command, translated literally, is come after me. Come behind me. That's the language of discipleship in the New Testament. Jesus' Jewish disciples were expected to follow their teacher or rabbi literally from behind them.

They were meant to walk physically behind them and watch everything that they do and follow them and learn from them. 1 Peter 2:21 describes Christian discipleship this way.

[27 : 19] To follow Jesus is to follow the pattern that Jesus has set for us.

And that pattern that Jesus has set for us is death and resurrection through death. Jesus will unpack the meaning of this later in Matthew 16, 24 to 26.

To follow Jesus is to forsake the world in order to gain our souls.

To follow Jesus is to lose our lives and our own desires and dreams. To make Jesus our greatest treasure. To make Jesus our dream and our desire.

It means we stop following our own way and we start following Jesus' way. The word follow is repeated three times in this passage. Verse 20 says, Matthew is teaching us that that is what we all ought to do.

[28 : 54] Follow Jesus. Follow the Christ who brings the kingdom of heaven. But the way Jesus calls his disciples is quite unusual. The proper etiquette in first century Jewish rabbinical culture is that the students seek out the rabbi.

The students choose for themselves a teacher that they want to apprentice under and learn from. But here, Jesus, the teacher, takes the initiative. And then he's the one who calls his students to follow him.

And it's not really a request. It's a command. Follow me. Come after me. And that's because Jesus is much more than a Jewish rabbi.

This is the summons of the king. People don't just volunteer to enter into the service of the king. They have to be selected.

They have to be chosen. They have to be appointed. People don't just volunteer to become the secretary of state or to become an ambassador.

[30 : 02] Josh is nodding his head. You have to be chosen. You have to be appointed. Likewise, no one chooses Jesus first.

The initiative and prerogative always lie with Jesus. That's why Jesus says to his disciples in John 15, verse 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.

That, again, reveals God's gracious character. It says in 1 John 4, In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

We love because he first loved us. God loved us first. While we were still his enemies.

God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, it says in Ephesians 1, 4. Before we were born and had done nothing, either good or bad, it says, Romans 9, 11.

[31 : 17] God set his eyes on us and put his favor upon his people. My Christian brothers and sisters, isn't that what we were just singing earlier with that song, All I Have is Christ? And if you had not loved me first, I would refuse you still.

That is exactly what we would have done. To rebel against him and spurn him and mock him, reject him.

We are saved only because God loved us first. Because God chose us first. We love God because he loved us first. The Christ, the King of Kings, has summoned every single one of his people to follow him.

So the way Jesus called his disciples is highly unusual. But what he calls them to do is also highly unusual. In verse 19, Jesus says, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

Their vocation will no longer be about catching fish, but it will be about catching men. And this is the call of every single Christian, man and woman.

[32 : 29] We're often tempted to make our jobs our calling. But that is not where we are supposed to find our ultimate meaning and purpose and fulfillment in life.

That's why our jobs become disappointing and dissatisfying when we try to get it to be that ultimate thing for us. Our job is the context in which we live out our Christian calling.

That's why 1 Corinthians 7.24 says, So brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God. Our jobs and everything else we do that we might identify with that count as our identity or vocation.

They are merely the condition we are in as we live out our Christian call. The call of the kingdom is to follow Christ as fishers of men.

Pastor and Bible commentator R. Kent Hughes puts it this way, quote, It's proclaiming Jesus a priority in your life.

[34 : 14] Sometimes it can be tempting for us as Christians to think that we can follow Jesus and also follow our own way. But that cannot be because Jesus says, Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Christian discipleship requires self-denial. Look at the response of Peter and Andrew and James and John. We can see in their response the urgency of the call of the kingdom and the priority of the call of the kingdom.

First, we see the urgency. It says in verse 20, Immediately they left their nets and followed him. Again, in verse 22, Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Matthew is not like Mark. Matthew is not like Mark. Mark is the gospel writer who uses the word immediately, like very liberally, over 30 times. Matthew is not like that. So when he says immediately, he means immediately.

Like this really happened immediately. No hesitation or delay. No excuses. I'm too young.

[35 : 20] Still in the prime of my life. After I've enjoyed my life and when I'm a little older, and then I will really be a full disciple of Jesus. After I'm done with my schooling, then I will really follow Christ in earnest.

When I'm less busy in my life, my career is just at a very, very stressful juncture, and when I'm more established, then I will follow Christ. Once I'm married and have bought a home, and then I'll really feel like I can seriously give to him and submit to him and follow him in every area of my life.

The disciples of Jesus make no such excuse. Immediately, they respond, because what they're gaining, entry into the kingdom of heaven and being enlisted into the service of Christ the king is priceless.

Their response also demonstrates the priority of the call of the kingdom. They were all in the middle of fishing, mending their nets or throwing out their nets to catch fish, but they leave their nets to go and follow Jesus.

That is an economically crazy thing to do for these first century disciples. Galilee had a thriving commerce in selling dry fish, and these men were leaving behind a stable and possibly even lucrative career to go and follow an itinerant preacher who doesn't even have a place to lay his own head by his own confession in Matthew 8.20.

[37 : 05] Do you expect following Jesus to not affect how you spend your money? Do you expect following Jesus to not make a dent on all that you want to do with the money you have earned?

Following Jesus is also socially and culturally crazy thing to do. Later in Matthew 8.21-22, a would-be disciple says to Jesus that he wants to follow Jesus, but that he wants to first go and bury his father.

But Jesus tells him, follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead. Shocking statement. Again and again, Jesus will teach that following him takes precedence over even one's own family, and that's why here, James and John, it says, leave their both and their father, and they immediately go and follow Jesus.

Jesus says in Matthew 10.37, whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. In Matthew 12.46-50, Jesus says that it's not his biological mother and brothers who are his true spiritual family, but that whoever does the will of my father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus is, I want to be clear that Jesus is not anti-family. Far from it. As he's dying on the cross, Jesus will command his beloved disciple, John, to take care of his mother that he leaves behind.

[38 : 45] In John 19.26-27. In Matthew 15.3-6, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and the scribes for paying lip service to God's word, and instead of honoring their, and instead just honoring their man-made traditions, and refusing to honor their father and mother, and refusing to provide for them.

In 1 Timothy 5.8, we're told that if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Jesus is not anti-family, and the Bible is not anti-family, but then why does Jesus say these kinds of shocking things? because he's trying to emphasize for us and to drive home the point that following him should take radical priority over everything and every commitment and every relationship we have in life.

To teach us that we must seek his kingdom first. When you become a follower of Christ, the center of your life is no longer you, no longer your boyfriend or girlfriend, no longer your spouse, no longer your son or daughter, no longer your brother or sister, no longer your boss, no longer your parent, no longer your professor or advisor.

The center of your life is Jesus. Your purposes and priorities revolve around Jesus. Your decisions are made to serve Jesus.

[40 : 19] Your life belongs to Jesus. And that makes all of us better fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters and sons and daughters.

That's the meaning of Christian discipleship. That's why we can't compartmentalize our lives and say, well, this much is God's. The rest is mine. Two hours on Sunday morning is God's.

The rest of the week is mine. Ten percent of my income is God's. The rest of it is mine. These relationships I have in church belong to God.

These are the relationships. They're mine. They're mine. They're mine. They're mine. They're mine. They're mine. They're mine. They're mine. There's no such thing as my time or my money or my relationship.

When you pledge allegiance to Jesus and submit to him and come under his lordship, every single one of those things belongs to him. This is why in Matthew 19, 27, Peter confesses to Jesus, see, we have left everything and followed you.

[41 : 42] and Jesus commends them for it. Have you left everything to follow Jesus? What is that one thing or what is that one person?

What is that one aspect of your life that you are just not willing to leave behind to follow Jesus? Then in verses 23, 25, we see Jesus modeling for his disciples what it means to be fishers of men.

He says 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. Matthew uses words like all and every many times in these few verses. Jesus went throughout all Galilee.

His fame spread throughout all Syria. They brought him all the sick and he healed every disease and every affliction. It leads me to think that Matthew is generalizing here and not probably being literal.

[43 : 01] with that said, Jesus still nonetheless performed real miracles and that fact is not really even historically disputed. The earliest skeptics and challengers to Christianity like the one I mentioned earlier, Celsus, the second century Roman philosopher, they took for granted that Jesus performed miracles.

Instead of conceding that Jesus performed those miracles by the power of God, they tried to argue, Celsus, for example, says, well, no, he was able to do those things because he learned magic when he was in Egypt as he was growing up.

But the fact that Jesus did miracles is not disputed historically by the earliest documents. Consistently, Jesus is shown healing the sick and casting out demons.

And these miracles are a sign of the inbreaking of the kingdom of heaven. Wherever Jesus goes and wherever Christ the king reigns, divine order is restored and new creation that Jesus brings about begins to peek through.

20th century German theologian Jürgen Moltmann writes this way, when Jesus expels demons and heals the sick, he is driving out of creation the powers of destruction and is healing and restoring created beings who are hurt and sick.

[44 : 25] The lordship of God to which the healings witness restores creation to health. Jesus' healings are not supernatural miracles in a natural world.

They are the only truly natural thing in a world that is unnatural, demonized and wounded. But Jesus' healing, as important as it is, is not the most important thing he does in his ministry.

The first thing that Jesus is set to be doing in verse 23 is this, he was teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. The proclamation of the gospel is the most important thing about Jesus' ministry and it's the most important thing about our church's ministry.

Because all of the miracles and all of the healings, they function as signs. Signs that point to who Jesus is. Signs that point to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

It says in John 20, 30 to 31 that the many signs that Jesus did that were recorded in the gospel of John were recorded there so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

[45 : 39] That's the point of the healings. That's the point, the reason for the miracles. There are signs that point to Jesus. And if we make those signs and the good works that we do as God's people more central to our ministry than the message, the proclamation of the gospel, then we're missing the point.

It's kind of like going to Acadia National Park and then being more excited about the sign that says Acadia National Park. then the coastal scenery and the beautiful lighthouses and Cadillac Mountain and it makes no sense.

That's why Jesus says in Luke 10, 20, do not rejoice in this that the spirits are subject to you but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. to this day, God uses his people to cast out demons and he uses his people to heal diseases as he pleases but the good works that we do are not the main thing.

The good news that we proclaim is our good works are meant to adorn the gospel. It says in Titus 2, 10. We must not mistake the ornaments for the tree.

The gospel that we are to be most excited about, this gospel that is part and parcel of our Christian calling, this gospel that is part of our very vocation as fishers of men is simply the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the king who lays down his life for us on the cross.

[47 : 25] And I want to close with this. I want you to just think about that image of fishers of men for a minute. Imagine the sea and you guys are swimming your fish and and then here comes a net and it's gathering you in.

What are you feeling? What did you say? Panic. That's what you're supposed to feel. That's what you're supposed to feel when fish is getting caught by the net.

So this is kind of actually a shocking image that Jesus is using because throughout the Old Testament, look at places like Jeremiah 16, 16 and places in Ezekiel, the image of fishing and fishing for men is used to refer to God's judgment.

Imagine a net, a drag net just coming around you and you're swinging frantically trying to get away and there's no way you can go because the wrath of God, the net is closing in closer and closer and closer until you're going to be swallowed up by it.

That's what you should think of when you hear fishers of men. So why in the world is this good news? It's because Jesus bore that wrath that every little fish deserved to be caught and consumed by the fire of the wrath of God.

[49 : 00] Instead, Jesus bears that wrath and he goes to the cross and he dies for the sins of his people so that instead of catch and kill, now we fishers of men, we catch alive and release from the waters of judgment to the waters of baptism from the waters of judgment to the waters of freedom, the waters of the spirit of God, the living water of life.

That's why it's good news that Jesus comes to fish and he commissions us to go as fishers of men. So, brother and sister, we have a great call.

let's go fishing. Let's pray.