

Logan Smith
Bread of Life Baptist Church
January 17th, 2021

Matthew 4:12-25

The Coming and Call of the King

Intro

One of my favorite fiction books of all time is the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. If you've never read it, one of the themes in the story is about a kingdom that has been without its king for a very long time. A dark enemy army, full of evil orcs and monsters, has just launched an attack on the borders, and the people are filled with terror and despair. And yet, they remember that the prophecies of old promise that the *true King, the heir to the throne, would one day return and save them*. Sure enough, Aragorn, the promised King that has lived in hiding until this point, finally *returns*; he proves in battle that he is a mighty warrior and has come to help fight off the armies of evil. But there's another, more *surprising*, way the people recognize who he is. As he comes into the city for the first time, right after a large battle, he decides to finally make his presence officially known. And he heads *straight to the healing tents, and heals wounds that no one else could*. The people take notice and excitedly whisper to each other another of the prophecies of old: "*The hands of the King are the hands of a healer.*"¹

It's a beautiful picture, isn't it? The long-awaited King has come, at long last, to bring victory and salvation, restore the Kingdom, and vanquish their enemies - and yet, this is not some tyrant, some bully seeking to serve himself; no, he is driven by love, compassion, and care for his people. He himself sets about healing and caring for his people, personally.

If you're familiar with the picture of Jesus in the gospel accounts, it is impossible to read this section of *Lord of the Rings* and not be reminded of Christ.

Matt. 4:12-25 shows us the official beginning of Jesus's public ministry. And as he launches his work and begins proclaiming his message, Matthew makes it *very clear* that we are to see this as the *dawning of a King who is bringing about His Kingdom*. We are reminded that Jesus is the promised King, fulfilling the prophecies of old. He proclaims the message "of the Kingdom," and the work he does *portrays the power of the Kingdom He is ushering in - the "Kingdom of Heaven."* And he demonstrates that power *through compassionate acts of healing*

¹ Tolkein, J.R.R., *The Lord of the Rings, part III: The Return of the King* (Quality Paperback Book Club, New York: 1983), pp. 139, 142.

miracles. He healed “every disease and affliction among the people” and drove out demons (vv.23-24).

Like in the Lord of the Rings, where the promised King announced the arrival of his kingdom through “the hands of a healer,” so Jesus, the *true promised King*, displayed the power of his Kingdom *through miracles of healing and deliverance*. King Jesus is *loving and compassionate*; he has come to *heal, deliver, save, and redeem a people for himself* - that is how the Great King begins the ministry of His Great Kingdom!

Seeing the great mercy and compassion of Christ, displayed through power, is indeed a great comfort to us. We need to hear that message today. But we also need to be reminded *that He comes as King*. We often love to talk and think about the mercy and compassion of Christ; but perhaps American Christians have forgotten that Jesus comes *as King*; He ushered in *a Kingdom*, and as King, he makes demands on our lives; he claims *all of who we are - he calls us to follow Him*.

So let us look at the beginning of Christ’s ministry and the implications it has for us today.

I. The Mission of the King - Jesus is the Light to the Nations (Matt. 4:12-16)

The public ministry of Jesus officially begins after the arrest of John the Baptist. This signals for Jesus that it is time to move to Capernaum in Galilee - “Galilee of the Gentiles.” And we are told this happened in order to *fulfill the scripture* of **Isa. 9:1-2**, as is quoted in **vv. 15-16** - “*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.*”

I think the significance Matthew quoting this particular passage is twofold:

First, he is the *dawning light* in the *land of darkness* because his ministry signals the *coming of the promised kingdom*, beginning where the *pains of the exile and judgment of God were first felt in force*.

About a month ago, I preached on **Isa. 9:1-7**. We saw that this area, originally the tribal territories of “Zebulun and Naphtali,” now the region of “Galilee,” was in the northern section of Israel, on its borders; when Israel fell to the northern enemy of Assyria, *the population of the area changed dramatically*. Many Jews who lived there were *displaced, being taken into*

captivity and exile. The prophecy of **Isa. 9:1-7**, then, was a *message of hope and light to the living in the darkness of hopelessness.* Isaiah promised that a *child* would be born who would be the *promised Messiah - the promised savior and King*, who would *restore the Kingdom and save God's people.* Yet this was no normal child to come; the Son of David is called "**Wonderful Counselor, Everlasting Father, Mighty God, Prince of Peace!**" And Matthew makes clear here that *Jesus fulfills that promise*; as he begins his ministry in Galilee, the "**light is dawning**" because the ***mighty God-King is beginning the work of bringing about His Kingdom!*** The ushering in of the Kingdom is the fulfillment of Israel's hopes, dreams, and prayers: *God's Kingdom is finally coming! His Savior-King has arrived! His promises are being fulfilled!*

But there is also another significance to this quotation: Jesus came to be a light not just to Israel, but to ***all nations in all the world!*** Just as we saw in **Isa. 9:1-7** several weeks, *the promise is that his Kingdom will not just be over Israel, but over all the world, over all of Creation!* "Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore." That is the passage being referenced here at the beginning of Jesus's ministry. The Kingdom he brings will know no bounds; its borders will continue to expand without ceasing, just as the Kingdom itself will never end!

How fitting it is, then, that Jesus begins his ministry, not in **Jerusalem**, but in "*Galilee of the Gentiles.*" Because this area was ravaged by foreign enemies, it became heavily populated with *non-Jewish Gentiles* by the time of Christ. When the Assyrians dragged many Jewish residents away into exile, they also brought in many *foreign Gentiles - "non-Jews," - who were often from enemy people groups*, to come live there instead. By the time of Christ, many Jews had returned; but it was also heavily populated by "Gentiles" - non-Jewish pagans, seen as foreigners, outside of God's covenant people, and impure enemies.

And **this** is where the light of Christ's Kingdom dawns! Jesus came to the "lost sheep of Israel," first, yes; but he also came to **be a light to all the nations!** Jesus came to *save sinners, from every tribe, nation, and tongue!* Jesus comes to bring hope to the hopeless; mercy to the oppressed; light to those in the darkness; *salvation* to sinners. The hope Christ brings is a *light that pierces the darkness of our hearts and lives.* No matter what our background is: no matter what nation or ethnicity we come from; no matter whether we grew up in a "Christian" or "religious home," or not; no matter how "pagan," scandalous, *or outright sinful* our past lives

have been, whether 10 years ago or 10 hours ago, *the light of Christ can pierce the darkness of your life, and the lives of anyone you know, no matter how dark and lost that life may be.* Jesus Christ came to bring *light in the darkness, hope to the hopeless, and salvation to sinners.*

II. The Ministry of the King - Jesus Demonstrated the Power of the Kingdom (4:23-25)

We've just seen that the ministry of Jesus's ministry heralds the dawning of His Kingdom. As his ministry officially begins, we see Jesus *proclaim a message and perform works.* The *message* of his ministry begins in verse 17, but let's pass over that for a second and come back to it. For now, let's skip down to the *last part of this passage.* In **verses 23-24**, we see the first *works of Jesus's public ministry.* And these visibly demonstrate what Matthew just heralded: they are a demonstration of the coming of Christ's Kingdom by showing the *power and authority of His Kingdom.*

Jesus signals to those in darkness that the *light of the Kingdom, and the salvation it brings,* is dawning; and does so *by healing the sick and delivering the demon-possessed.* He heals every kind of disease, affliction, and pain, even long-term cases, such as *seizures and paralysis.* Furthermore, *he drives out demons!*

I began this sermon by sharing the illustration of *Aragorn*, the promised King in "Lord of the Rings," who was revealed to the people as both a *mighty warrior* who could save them from their enemies, but also a *compassionate healer* who personally tended to his wounded people. We see *both of those* qualities on display here in these early miracles of King Jesus.

They show Jesus's heart of compassion, love, and tender mercy for his people; he genuinely cares for the sick, hurting, afflicted, and oppressed; he heals, cures, and delivers them from *physical, emotional, and spiritual afflictions.* Our King genuinely cares for each of us, on a personal level! And he cares for us *holistically,* caring for every single one of our afflictions, sufferings, and woes!

But this also shows **Jesus's power and authority to deal with our true enemies: Sin, Satan and Death.** The Kingdom of God is of light, and it drives back the darkness. Every "*disease, affliction, and physical pain*" is a *symptom* of living in a fallen world broken by sin. Not only that, but it this is *a very spiritual world; we need freedom and deliverance not only from our sin and its consequences, but from the spiritual oppression, attacks, and blindness of the Kingdom of Satan.* When Christ begins his ministry with miracles of healing and driving out

demons, he is visibly showing that he has come to *drive back and overturn the Kingdom of Darkness; he came to crush the power and consequences of Sin and Satan.*

This is a *glimpse* of what awaits us when the Kingdom has come in full: Jesus's Kingdom will usher in the New Heavens and New Earth, where King Jesus reigns. There will be no more sin, no pain or sickness or disease - a Kingdom where there is no stain of Sin or its consequences, no power of Satan left to oppress and ravage, no more afflictions of the fallen world, such as disease, physical suffering, or even death. *That* is the wonderful Kingdom Jesus came to usher in and bring His people into. And *that* is what his earthly ministry anticipates.

However, *the Kingdom has not yet come in its fullness.* We live in the **“already but not yet” reality of the Kingdom.** We have not yet entered into the fullness of the Kingdom; that is still our *future* hope. And yet, the Kingdom has *already dawned and broken into this fallen world* in the life and ministry of Jesus. Just as we see here powerfully demonstrated through the work of Christ, so we experience the effects of the Kingdom in our lives, here and now, in Christ. No, we are not promised that we will not get sick, or that every disease or affliction we pray for will be healed. God certainly can and does do this at times, but He doesn't always, and doesn't promise to. But he *has* promised to deal with our sin, the root problem behind all of these various afflictions and issues. That means he *deals with and treats our sin* here and now. When we come to Christ, this same power is at work through His Word and Spirit in us, *applying the gospel to our hearts* - giving us faith, changing our minds, hearts, desires, and wills. As we come to God, aware of our need for His mercy and redemption, we experience the power of the Kingdom as we experience *forgiveness from sins, deliverance from sins, and growth in righteousness and the fruit of the Spirit.* This is because our King, Jesus Christ, has both *merciful compassion on us* and *powerful authority to deliver from our afflictions enemies - even from ourselves and our own sin.*

And all the while, this is a reminder to us of what awaits us, when we enter into the full glory of the Kingdom Christ reigns over: the very Kingdom he brings us into by grace through faith in Him.

[Transition] But Jesus didn't just perform works to launch his ministry; from the very beginning, he *declared a message.*

III. The Message of the King - Jesus Calls Us to Repent and Follow Him as Disciples (Matt. 4:17-22)

As his work begins in verse 23, Jesus not only performs miracles, but also goes about “teaching” and “proclaiming” a message: the “gospel” -the “good news” - “of the kingdom” (4:23). The coming of the **King** and His **Kingdom** is *good news*, ushering in salvation and deliverance - *but only if you are in the Kingdom. If you’re part of the Kingdom of Darkness, considered an enemy of the King, then news of His coming is bad news.* But there’s *more good news*, even for those of us who have sinned against the Lord and lived as slaves to Sin - *all who surrender and bow down before King Jesus will be saved and redeemed, brought into the Kingdom, and get to enjoy being part of the winning side!* This is the *good news* of the Kingdom! After all, hear what Jesus proclaims in **verse 17**: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” This is the message of the King; this is a summary of the *gospel of the Kingdom*. And it is the exact same thing that *John the Baptist* was preaching as well.

Just as we saw last week, John “prepared the way” for the King by preaching the need for us to *repent*; we must turn away from the Kingdom of Darkness and turn to the King of the Kingdom of God. Every single one of us is a sinner, who deserves God’s wrath. We must turn to Christ in faith, trusting in His *life, death, and resurrection*, believing His grace is sufficient to forgive, save, and redeem us!

We must **surrender**; we must bow the knee of our hearts to King Jesus *in faith*. And he promises *grace and mercy to all who come to Him!*

But we must *truly come and follow Him completely*. This is what it means to *repent*. Jesus places a *call, a demand*, on each of our lives; the gospel demands a *response*. The call to *repent and believe* in the good news of Christ’s grace is not something we just do once in our lives, or even a few times. This call demands *surrendering all that we are to Jesus as King over our lives*; we are committing to *being his disciples*; *this is a lifelong, life-changing commitment* This is a call to *live our entire lives as followers of Christ!*

This call is demonstrated for us in **vv. 18-22**: “While walking by the Sea of Galilee,” Jesus “saw two brothers,” Simon, (whom we know **Peter**), and “Andrew his brother.” They were fishermen, in the middle of their work. And Jesus simply calls to them, “**Follow me.**” He then says the same thing to two more fishermen brothers, “*James... and John.*” In Luke, we see more of the story here, telling us how they knew who Jesus was and why they followed him. But

Matthew doesn't give those details. And the reason why, I think, is to *emphasize the immediacy* with which they *turn and follow him!* Hear the way they respond: v. 20, “*Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*” Then, in v. 22: “*Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*” This was not normal, typical behavior for people; people would sometimes choose to follow a *teacher*, or *rabbi*, becoming his *disciples* and following them everywhere, which is clearly the relationship these men have with Jesus; and yet, that was always at the initiation of the *disciples*. Here, the *rabbi* walks up and *calls the disciples to himself*: “**Follow me.**”

It is a call to **discipleship**. And it is also a picture for us of just what the *call to repent, in response to the gospel, entails for each of us*. We are each called to be *repent* by *turning away from sin, turning to Christ in faith, and then committing to following him as his disciples, for all of our lives*. With the same immediacy and urgency of these first disciples, who dropped everything and left their old lives behind, *so we all must turn to Christ and follow Him with all that we are!* This is what it means to be a Christian! To truly repent and believe is to *follow Jesus Christ, becoming his disciples*. We must each be committed to a *lifelong, life-changing relationship* to Christ. And in this relationship, we *trust him, believe in him, learn from him, listen to him, and submissively obey him*. We must **truly follow Christ!**

This is why it is of necessary importance that each of us continue to read the Bible, pray, come to church, be a part of the body of Christ, and continue to grow in the Lord, both turning away from our sin and *striving to follow and obey Christ* in all that we do! If you are a Christian, then you are committed to *being a disciple, a follower, believer, and imitator, of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

[**Transition**] And this call doesn't just shape our own lives, but also changes our relationship to other people.

IV. The Commission of the King - Jesus Calls Each of Us to be Disciple-Makers (Matt. 4:19)

I left out a part of Jesus's *call* to these early disciples. Let's look at v. 19 again: “*And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.'*” This is a brilliant play on words, and a very well-known verse to many of us. These fishermen are being called to follow Jesus as his disciples; and part of *their own discipleship* will be to become *disciple-makers themselves!*

Jesus will equip them, and the rest of his disciples, to **proclaim the same message of the Kingdom and call other people to repent, believe, and follow Christ as his disciples**. And I believe we are meant to take this part of the call, as well, as an example of what each of us are called to as Christians. As we will see throughout Matthew, the *Twelve Disciples* are being taught what it means to be and live as Christians, and often function as *examples for us*. Therefore, right at the beginning of his ministry, as Jesus proclaims his *message* and demonstrates his *powerful authority*, he *calls his disciples to also become disciple-makers*. And at the very end of this book, after Jesus's earthly ministry is complete and he is ascending to Heaven, Jesus will make this **Commission** explicit *for all of his disciples* - "*And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.'*" (**Matt. 28:18-19**).

Each one of us is called to be a **disciple**, a *follower of Christ*. And part of our following him includes **being disciple-makers**. This is not something that we just leave to the "professionals" or only to be expected of "super-Christians" or those who are particularly gifted. Each and every one of us is *called by the Lord* to participate in *making disciples*. This means we should all strive to participate in **evangelism and discipleship**.

A. Culture of Evangelism

A healthy local church strives to have a *rich culture of discipleship*, in which each member, each believer, takes up the task of sharing the gospel of Christ with our friends, family members, coworkers, neighbors, and others in the community. Whether or not there are formal programs, ministries, or methods involved, *the foundational core of our evangelist ministry must be a strong culture of evangelism*, in which we each make sharing the gospel an organic part of our everyday lives.

We are probably used to this verse being applied to evangelism, but it entails not just sharing the gospel, but also **calling people to become disciples, followers of Christ**.

B. Culture of Discipleship

Each of us is called to become *disciple-makers*, to take part in the discipleship of others. As we call people to *repent and believe*, we are calling them to *live a life of discipleship, to follow Christ alongside us*. And as **Matt. 28 made clear**, this means *teaching all that Christ commanded, helping each believer to grow in the Lord and obey Christ in all things*. Yes, we all

have different giftings; not all should be formal teachers, as the book of James warns us. But *each Christian* has a role to play in building up fellow believers in Christ - especially as fellow church members. We should strive to constantly build a *church culture of discipleship*, in which we each organically help one another *follow Christ*. This can happen in **formal ways**, but even more often, it should happen in **informal ways**.

Discipleship takes place in *formal church settings*, such as what we're doing right now: listening to sermons, attending Sunday school, or having bible studies together. In these times, each of us commits to growing in our own discipleship, and they offer opportunities to help one another do the same.

But discipleship is often **informal and organic**, as well. We take part in *making disciples of one another*, helping each other to *understand, trust, follow, and obey Christ* in many *different ways*: this can be talking with each other or your kids about what we've just learned in a sermon or bible study; it can be praying for each other in groups or one-on-one; a phone call; a visit in time of need; conversations in which we remind each other of the gospel and encourage one another to continue to trust in Christ in specific ways.

I am always *overjoyed* to witness and hear about examples of these very things going on here, in Bread of Life! So be encouraged in the ways we're already doing this, and let us strive to always increase in *exhorting and helping each other to follow Christ in all things!*

And let us never forget that being "fishers of men," in both our *evangelism* and *making disciples*, means *proclaiming and teaching the gospel*. The gospel is the call to repent, believe, and follow Christ; *discipleship* never graduates from the gospel, but is simply the ongoing process of letting the gospel and its implications take root in every square inch of our lives. *That* is what it means to follow Christ: to *repent* and turn away from sin; to *trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ for our salvation*; and to *trust, love, worship, and obey the Lord with our whole lives*.

If you are not a follower of Christ today, then the *call of the King* for you is to *repent, believe, and follow Jesus*. If you have any questions about that, or if you do believe and have questions about *baptism* or *joining the church*, I would be more than happy to speak with you.