

Called

King of Glory Lutheran Church
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry
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Year A: Matthew 4:12-23

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

As he walked 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 fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Today is a new reality at King of Glory. God is here. We are here. The members and friends watching on-line are here. There are those of us waiting to return and those people whom God is bringing and will bring to us! We are called to act in the reality the Kingdom of Heaven is now....is here. We are all called. We are called to bring light in the darkness in the face of death.

Beloved of God, yes, hear me say it, to you whom God loves very much, grace and peace to you...today!

I’m guessing almost all of us have at one time been excited to attend in person or watch on TV a concert of your favorite musician or a sports event. You’ve purchased the ticket, you’ve put it on your calendar with a huge circle around it. The day comes and you drive to the venue excitedly anticipating the next hours. What songs will she sing? Will my team win? The number of people in the arena all cheering gives you goosebumps. You feel the thrill of the moment. It’s absolutely grand.

Jesus was this type of a figure. His very presence was charismatic. To watch him preach, to hear his voice, to see lame men actually get up and walk gave people goosebumps. Jesus was no ordinary man. He made people feel something they had never felt before.

Thus when he began proclaiming, “The kingdom of heaven has come near,” people listened. Their ears perked up. They knew what that meant. It meant revolution.

A little context. Since John has been arrested, Jesus knows that now is the time to start. To start a new ministry, a new mission, a new reality for His people. Jesus had grown up in the around many kingdom movements because Rome had conquered his homeland some sixty years prior to his birth.

Many of Jesus’ contemporaries had tried to rise up against the occupier, with military forces, hoping for a take-over. Jesus revolt would be different. It would be with light and life. With forgiveness and love. The kind of things humans can only dream would work, but with God...everything is possible.

The first century Jews had waited and longed for Messiah to come. For if they were God’s people and this was God’s land, then certainly there would come a day when God would serve Rome it’s ‘pink slip’ and they would be gone.

For Matthew ‘kingdom of heaven’ means the same thing as ‘kingdom of God’ in other Gospels. Good Jewish folks avoided saying ‘God’ out of absolute respect for the Holy name of God. They said, ‘kingdom of heaven’ instead. It means, the reign of God is here. It’s a new reality. God is present and things will be changing.

Therefore, Jesus says, ‘Wrap your head around this! Consider that God is here and a new reality is about to unfold. The kingdom of heaven has come near.’

Jesus was that kingdom of heaven. He was the Son of God starting to usher in a new time. So he walked along the beach of the Sea of Galilee. He listened to the birds and felt the sand under his feet. There were fishermen out that day. Jesus called to Simon and to Andrew, also to James and John.

“Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

Perhaps it was his charismatic presence. Maybe it was the deepness of his voice. But these small business owners, working the waters and likely under a contract

with Rome to provide a certain amount of fish each day...these men left it all. They walked away.

Have you had a time when God urged you to walk away? Walk away from something to something else, new? From a single life into marriage. From one vocation to another vocation. Or from this unhealthy mindset into new clarity and health.

We all are called. God has called us all! Martin Luther King, Jr was called by God to bring justice to black people. Tim Tebow was called not only to be a football player, but also to work with people who are living with disabilities. Dolly Parton had a calling to make music and bring joy.

Those are more famous folks, yet each of us is called. You received a calling to be a parent when you first saw that precious child wrapped in the hospital blanket. Did God call you to be a teacher? Engineer? IT guy? Nurse?

Jesus said, "Look, change your way of thinking, because God's kingdom is here. We all have a part to usher in light and life and joy and peace."

So they, threw down their nets. Thank the good Lord, that God reveals the journey to us only in small doses. Or as Abraham Lincoln said, "The best thing about the future is that it only comes one day at a time." When you're standing at the altar, you don't know how hard the fights will be. When you get your teaching certificate, you don't know you'll shed tears over the challenging students. Simon, Andrew, James and John didn't know that this new calling would result in long days on dusty roads, heart wrenching personal growth and three of them being killed...only because they threw down their nets and said, 'yes.'

Church, today, we are Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John. Our names are different, yet the calling is the same. As a church we've come through some rough waters these last several years. We've watched our dear friends die of covid and other natural causes. We've been asked to carry water and give a little bit more financially to get us through. We've lost a dear pastor whom we loved and who did excellent ministry among us.

And...today you and I are called to enter into the revolution Jesus began. Our calling is to continue to bring God's kingdom reign into view. It will look different. It has to look different. Yet there is a new reality at King of Glory. We have vaccines so we don't need to lock-down. We're discerning God's will for

worship times. New leaders have stepped up to answer the call in our Leadership Team. We are here! The people watching on-line are with us. Those waiting to return to church are part of us. And those God whom God will call will join us.

Oh, these are new kingdom days! Our calling is the same as it was when Jesus walked the beach on the Galilean Sea. Bring light. Bring love. Bring forgiveness. Because death and darkness don't work. God is asking us to change our thinking. To act in new ways. We get to fish for people.

Now I'm asking you to not simply hear these words and say, "well that was an interesting sermon." No. Jesus is calling us to fish for people. We've lost some. Hence, we re-build. God is here. There are folks beyond these walls who need to experience God's presence. *Who will we all call this week to say, "would you like to go to church with me?" Finding new people, is not only my job. It is your job too. Can you think of one person? Two?*

Maybe that person is just waiting to be called from something old to something new. We are all called. Just throw down the net and pick up the phone. Amen!