



## **“Sitting in Darkness and Finding Light”**

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January 26, 2020

### **Scripture (CEB):**

#### **Matthew 4:12-25**

<sup>12</sup> Now when Jesus heard that John was arrested, he went to Galilee. <sup>13</sup> He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum, which lies alongside the sea in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. <sup>14</sup> This fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet said:

<sup>15</sup> *Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,*

*alongside the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,*

<sup>16</sup> *the people who sat in the darkness have seen a great light,*

*and a light has come upon those who lived in the region and shadow of death.*<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>17</sup> From that time Jesus began to announce, “Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!”

<sup>18</sup> As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> “Come, follow me,” he said, “and I’ll show you how to fish for people.” <sup>20</sup> Right away, they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup> Continuing on, he saw another set of brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father repairing their nets. Jesus called them and <sup>22</sup> immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues. He announced the good news of the kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people.

### **Sermon:**

Right now, we are officially in “ordinary time” in the church calendar. It’s not Christmas time any more, and until Ash Wednesday on February 26, we aren’t in Lent moving toward

Easter, either.

We are in “ordinary time”.

I rather imagine that is where the fishermen disciples thought they were. In the ordinary time of their lives, doing the most ordinary of things: time for work, time with family, time eating, time resting, time in synagogue praying, then repeat.

I think we spend most of our time in what feels pretty ordinary. We have patterns to our days, rhythms of work, eat, sleep, repeat.

But if you are sick, if you are sad, if you are dislocated, distressed or disturbed in your life...there is no ordinary time. It is dark, it is fearful, it is extraordinarily hard. You can be a refugee, you can be someone carrying the burden of addiction, you can be sick, you can be facing the death of someone dear to you...and for you, there is no ordinary time.

Upon the sudden death of my mother, I felt such darkness of grief and loss. There was no light that got past my grief, not for long days and nights.

When Matthew writes that Jesus moved to Capernaum, a bustling lake town, and there began his ministry...to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death...my entire being resonates!

I have sat in darkness enough times to know that it is a gift when the light begins to break in, to shine through.

We have beloved members of the church who sit in darkness even now. We have friends, or family, even whole sectors of our society that sit in darkness and in sorrow.

Officiating at the memorial for John Weekes yesterday, brought to mind so many faces of those we have lost...such a good man, and then, so, so, so many others!

Oh, in faith, I can say, and believe, that he is with the other “saints”, the others who now live with God, in the heart of God; but still, there is so much grief to bear when they are no longer with us.

Can Jesus walk into that sort of grief, and bring light?

I believe he can, because, he already has. In my life, he has. In others’ lives, he has.

He comes with the message of God’s kingdom, the text tells us.

Turn, he says, and see, the reign of God is *near*. Perhaps it may have felt distant, but now, he says, it is near. Near enough to touch, to step into, to be a part of.

The call of the disciples is so quick, so complete, they simply leave the ordinary and become part of the amazing.

Jesus says to them, “it is right here, this reign of God, so near you can touch it”!  
And it is so compelling that it changes everything for them!  
What on earth are they hearing, that has changed their lives so?

Jesus, the text tells us, immediately begins his ministry with HEALING.

I imagine that most of us think immediately of his healing miracles; people with leprosy, people with blindness, paralysis, seizures.

And people without a home. People without a hope. People without enough to eat, people without a decent wage, people who do not receive respect, people who are living without a family of love and acceptance.

Jesus, he heals every sickness the text says.  
He brings light to darkness, every single time.

And in restoring people...to health, to their right mind, to their families and communities...in his work of restoring lives, he shows the Kingdom of God is near them, not distant from them. God’s desire for their healing is here, with them. God’s love is near and powerful to do good for them.  
God’s face, shines out of the face of Jesus.

Friends, that changes everything; makes everything full of light, in all the dark places. I believe Jesus showed the design of God, “the kingdom of heaven” in all his work, his words, his walking.

In my own life, as I came to accept that I was loved, not condemned...I found hope, and courage, and joy.

How radically can the world be changed, how wonderfully can we, and the world, be changed, when we know the love that will heal us? Giving us hope and courage and joy?

This text says the disciples immediately joined Jesus.

Because it is worth being close to that message, that life, that activity of healing and bringing joy that is the coming of the Kingdom.

- I find it here with you, in this town, in the diverse forms of my ministry.

- You might find it in work for saving the planet; it's animals, and beauties.
- You might find it in the work to help homeless, or refugees, or the sick and the suffering in body and spirit.
- You might see the coming of the Kingdom in a kindergarten class!

Choose to be one of the disciples of Jesus who finds love and light and healing, and shares love and light and healing. Share hope and courage and joy. Move beyond ordinary time, to extraordinary time!

Change the dark places and the lands that sit in the shadow of death.  
Wherever you find those lands of darkness, may you bring light!

Halleluia!