

The Disruptive Call. Matthew 4:12-25

Who does he think he is? 4:18-22

*Matthew 4:*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.*¹⁹ *And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."*²⁰ *Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*²¹ *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.*²² *Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

I cannot read that, picture Zebedee sitting in the boat as he watches his sons James and John depart with this travelling preacher, and with them his hopes for them and his family,

Or Think of the disruption to the lives of the family of Peter, whom we know was married

Or Think of what the men themselves will be exposed to over the coming years

I cannot read of Jesus' disruptive call without wondering

'Who does Jesus think He is?'

Follow Me, come after me, is a command and a Startling demand –

Startling because it is unusual

The Rabbis generally let disciples choose their own teacher, but here Jesus chooses His followers

Startling because it is a call for total commitment

This was a literal following. Jesus was there in front of them, and He was calling them to leave their current occupation, their current life, to fall in behind Him. To go where He went, to stop when He stopped, to eat when He ate, to sleep where He slept.

If He took the right hand turn, they took the right hand turn

They were to give up their lives to living out His agenda – this is total commitment He calls for

It is startling because He makes it at the beginning of His public ministry. There is no self-doubt, no evolution of His understanding of His own importance

And it is Startling because it is effective.

They leave and follow.

They leave their livelihood – their nets

They leave their family

They leave their economic security – for they were people with assets

They leave their good reputation, for what would people think of men who abandoned their father and the family business to follow a wandering preacher.

Despite the cost – they follow

Who does Jesus think He is that He can ask of people such total and costly commitment?

And why do they think making such a commitment is worth it?

It is a shocking disruption to their own lives and the lives of those close to them

Who does Jesus think He is?

Why do they think following Him is worth it?

Need to be clear in our answers

For Jesus still calls men and women through His gospel – He calls us

Further as his followers we may well call others through sharing the gospel

And the disruption Jesus makes to the lives of those who heed His call is still shocking

Many of us know that from experience, our own or of other believers

Muslim background brothers and sisters – who have lost family

Same sex attracted brothers and sisters who have made a commitment to a chaste life

To heed Jesus' costly call

Jesus keeps calling us – a call renewed every day –

So Who does HE think He is that He can make this disruptive call on their lives, and our lives?

And why did they respond as they did – leaving all to follow Him?

Why should we?

Jesus revealed in the pre-launch preparation

In a sense the whole gospel is given to answer that question

And the gospel raises that question over and over again as Jesus meets rejection and opposition

As people challenge Jesus' understanding of who He is

But this call on the lives of these men Jesus makes at the very beginning of His ministry tells us Jesus commences His ministry knowing who He is, what He has come to do, and for whom He will do it,

This is evident in our passage, shown in what we are told of Jesus in the build up to the commencement of his ministry

Shown in the Jesus' relation to the gospel He preaches

And shown in the call itself, in what the call reveals about Jesus' ministry plans

So – what are we told about Jesus in the build up to the launch of his ministry, in the pre-launch preparation

Matthew has recorded the preparation for Jesus' public ministry from Matthew 3

There we see John the Baptist preparing the people for the coming of Jesus, the one mightier than John – the Lord coming to His people in judgment and salvation

Then at the end of the chapter we heard God Himself declare Jesus to be His Son and Servant,
An identity confirmed by Jesus' victory in testing in the wilderness

In His interaction with John, in hearing the voice from heaven, in being the faithful Son in testing, Jesus shows He knows Himself to be the Son and servant, the One who will rule as God's King, and save God's people.

And this preparation for His public ministry comes to its conclusion and climax in vv, 12-16 with Jesus' move to Capernaum, the move that took place to fulfil the Scriptures v. 13

*Matthew 4:*¹² *Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee.*¹³ *And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,*¹⁴ *so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:*

¹⁵ *"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
¹⁶the 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."*

Jesus moves from Nazareth to Capernaum, that larger town on the shore of the sea of Galilee to fulfil Isaiah 9, the word God spoke through Isaiah hundreds of years before.

He knows the significance of His ministry

He is the one who in Himself – in His words and actions - brings light to those in darkness

Think of the good of that for a moment

The people of Isaiah's day who dwelt in Galilee, the region assigned to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali by Moses and Joshua, were the first to be conquered by the Assyrians and deported. [2 Kings 15:29]

That is, they knew the darkness of war, conquest, famine, deportation and death, the darkness of loss and grief, of being without hope, the darkness of being separated from God

And the region had then come to be associated with Gentiles, non-Jews settled there by the Assyrians, and the darkness of their idolatry and ignorance of the true God.

The prophecy speaks of a people in deep darkness

But it is not just Galileans who dwell in that darkness and know its misery and hopelessness

We today claim to be enlightened but think of our darkness

We know the darkness of idolatry, for us mainly the worship of self, where for the sake of our desires we call good evil and evil good

We know the darkness of enslavement to addictions

The darkness that comes into the lives of so many from betrayal and abandonment

The darkness of living without hope with a chronic disease

The darkness of grief, loss, and death

We live amongst a people in darkness

But to those in darkness God had promised one who would bring light to their darkness, one who would [Is. 9:6-7] defeat their oppressors and establish an eternal reign of peace – and by moving to Capernaum Matthew is saying that what was promised Jesus is now fulfilling

This pre-launch preparation reveals Jesus knows Himself to be the Son who brings light to those in darkness, hope to those dwelling in the darkness of death

And Light is so good – it is worth everything to know it, to live in it

to be freed from the darkness, to have hope in the despair, hope of life and a future

freed from oppressors

Freed from judgement on our sin

Freed from fear of lack and loss

Freed to know the true God whose word is sure and true

How will Jesus be the light He knows Himself to be?

Watch, follow the progress of Jesus through the gospel, the progress that climaxes in His death, the progress of the light that shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome

For now – know Jesus comes and makes this call as one who knows He is that one, the one who brings light in the darkness, light to those dwelling in the shadow of death.

His is a call from darkness to light, and light is good

Secondly, who Jesus is and his authority to make this call is revealed in His preaching of the gospel

Jesus revealed in the preaching of the gospel

¹⁷ *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

Jesus starts His ministry with a clear message, calling for repentance because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand

Repentance is changing your mind and so changing your direction in life – changing your mind about who is in control – not you, but God, and start living directed by His word

Jesus' call to repentance is like that big sign on the free way that you see when you are about to enter an exit – the one that says "Wrong Way" Go Back

Saying the course you are on will end in disaster – so change direction, do a U-turn to save your life

Repentance is saying the course you are on where you live to please yourself, putting yourself first, will end in disaster.

Go back to honouring God by believing what He says and doing what He commands

And why a call for this radical change of mind and direction?

It's not whether or not you feel bad

It's not whether or not things are working out for you at the moment

Jesus calls us to Repent, to make that U turn, because The Kingdom of heaven is at hand, very near.

When Matthew speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven Matthew is respecting Jewish sensibilities – they did not like using the name of God and so He substitutes heaven for God, an accepted and known substitution

But he is talking about exactly the same thing as the other gospels call the Kingdom of God

But the word Kingdom needs some explaining for us

When we hear 'Kingdom' we can think of a place, a realm, like the United Kingdom

But what is meant by the word Kingdom is more dynamic – it is a reign, God's Kingdom is God's reign or rule

Jesus is saying we should repent because The reign of God – is at hand, is near

The first Jewish hearers understood the reign of God to be a Time promised in the Old Testament, when God Himself would come and rescue His people from pagan rulers and establish His own rule through His chosen and sent King [Daniel 2:44-45, Isaiah 9]

So it was a time when God's justice and righteousness would be established on the earth, when God's judgements on sin, and especially idolatry, would be enacted

A time when no one would oppress God's people

For God's people it would be a time of peace – God Himself would establish them in right relationship with Himself, would forgive their sins and move them to follow His decrees, a time of security and prosperity – where they would never have to fear His judgement again

The reign of God was and is something you want to be ready for – both to avoid God's judgment on those who want to keep on defying God – and there will be no place in it for people who want to continue to rebel against God - , and to share in its goodness

To know its peace, to be able to live in God's presence

That reign, said Jesus, is very close – so His hearers should get ready by turning back to God

But you say, this is the same gospel John the Baptist preached, the same gospel Jesus calls on His followers to preach [Matt. 3:2, 10:7]

True.

So how does His preaching of this gospel tell us who Jesus thinks He is?

The same message did not give John the authority to make that call on people's lives

What is different with Jesus' preaching?

Two things are different with Jesus' preaching

Firstly, His relation to the message He preaches

Jesus doesn't just warn of the coming of the reign of God

He embodies the reign of God for He is God's Son, God's chosen King

He brings it near in Himself

Later in the gospel, Matthew 12:28, he will say to His critics

Matthew 12: ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

He was challenging them to recognise in His mighty works the presence of God's King, of God's reign, amongst them

He knows HE is the one who both executes the judgment of God, prophesied by John the Baptist, and brings the peace, the wholeness of God's reign

And He demonstrates that in His healings recorded in summary in vv. 23-24, looked at in more detail in chapters 8 and 9

Matthew 4: ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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.

Jesus didn't come to create the world health organization or run a public health campaign

Yet he did a lot of healing of all kinds of diseases, freed people from their oppression

His ministry is characterised v. 23 as Teaching, preaching and healing

Those healings support His proclamation of the Kingdom and reveal its character, what the reign of God's King is like. They show Jesus has the power of God to make whole and give life

They tell His hearers they should respond immediately to His message for they are in the presence of the King, the King who is even as now exercising His judgment in His preaching

Jesus' relation to the message He preaches shows He is the King

And this means the second difference between Jesus' and John's preaching is that repentance now focuses on Jesus and how you respond to Him

The change of mind God calls means coming to confess that Jesus should run your life for He is the one who exercises God's rule and teaches God's word.

So repentance is saying – not me, but Jesus. Jesus calls the shots, Jesus sets the direction for my life

He has the right to call, to summon me, to follow.

And that is still the same, for the gospel we hear, the gospel the apostles preach, is the same gospel

When they declare that Christ has died for our sins, been buried, and been raised on the third day

When they proclaim that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ

They are proclaiming that Jesus is God's King, that the reign of God is exercised by Jesus

It is the same gospel, and it calls for the same response

Repentance

The change of mind and heart that confesses Jesus is Lord, and He directs my life.

Acts 2; Acts 17:30-31; Acts 26:17-18, 20-23

Jesus is revealed in His preaching of the gospel, in His ministry, as God come amongst His people, God come to bring His reign

His call is a call to life, to find peace with God by coming under His reign

A call to be responded to urgently and completely.

And thirdly Jesus is revealed in His plan for ministry, a plan revealed in His calling of the apostles, as someone who knows He is the Saviour of the world.

Jesus revealed in the plan for His ministry

In the summary of His ministry we see that the message and ministry of Jesus is for the crowds,

He travels throughout Galilee so that as many as possible can hear

But as the one who brings light in darkness, the one who establishes God's reign

He knows what He does and the gospel He brings is for more than the people of Galilee

More than just for those alive at that time

for all – for all those living in darkness

And In the call of the disciples we see that He is already making provision for more to hear, that it is part of His plan from the beginning

He calls them to become fishers of people, of women and men, by following Him

He uses an image that relates to their work, their world

To picture for them the work, the service He is calling them to

As the net is cast out and gathers up and brings in [he is not talking about fishing as a hobby with a line]

So they will gather people into His kingdom

And they will be equipped for this service by following Him

Equipped to bring others to be followers of Jesus by their own following in response to His call

And that is what we see happening in the rest of the gospel.

Jesus equipping His followers to bring others to be His followers, to bring them to live under His life giving reign

From this time – they are always with him, until they abandon him in the garden

The see him interacting with the crowds

They receive His teaching

They are trained and sent out on a mission with His authority [Matthew 10]

All with the goal that they are equipped for the commission the risen Jesus renews when He sends them out to make disciples of all nations [Matthew 28:18-20]

Jesus' call of Peter and Andrew, James and John to be fishers of women and men, boys and girls, of all people

Tells you Jesus knows from the outset that His is a mission for al the world, and all its subsequent history

Even for us, who still receive the disciples witness in the word.

Jesus' makes this call on the lives of Peter and Andrew, James and John, fishermen, this disruptive call to follow, because from the outset He knows who He is and what HE will bring

He is the light of the world

He is God's Son, His King, the bringer of the reign of God

He is the Saviour of the world

The rest of the gospel will show us what this means for Jesus, How He will accomplish His work, and will demonstrate in its achievement in His cross and resurrection the truthfulness of Jesus

The rightness of His understanding of Himself

His authority to make this call on their and our lives

It is a Call to life and service

To life – to come to the light, to embrace the repentance needed to live in the Kingdom

And a call to serve by bringing others into the light and the life of repentance, of following Jesus

And it is a call Jesus still makes – even today

For Jesus thinks no less of Himself

And His Right to make that call to life and service is clearer than ever

We are on the other side of His death and resurrection, have the witness to the demonstration of the truthfulness of Jesus that only God can make, raising Him in the body in which He was killed, giving Him the Spirit to give to His people.

During His ministry they had the signs of the kingdom

Now – we know His exaltation as King, to an eternal reign at God's right hand

Then – He was dealing with the symptoms of a world under judgement for sin

Now – we know He has dealt with sin fully and finally through His death on the cross

Jesus makes His disruptive call with full authority, the authority of the one who can forgive or judge

But that is now

Why did these men respond as they did to what seems such an abrupt call – Jesus just appearing and saying ‘follow me’

Why do they respond as they do?

It is Dramatic – come, and they leave all and follow

But it can leave us puzzled

Was it something in His tone of voice – that we can’t hear

Something in His appearance – that we are denied

That is what you could think, and then either feel his call on you is not as compelling, or wish that you had some dramatic encounter as the basis for your following

Here it is worth remembering that all the gospels are selective in what they present about Jesus. Truthful, but selective – for Jesus did and said many other things that are not recorded.

They have recorded what they have in the way they have for a purpose.

Matthew’s snapshot of Jesus’ call is given to emphasise Jesus’ authority and purposefulness in calling the disciples

But the disciples don’t respond in ignorance, make some kind of blind leap of faith

From John’s gospel we see that these first disciples had already knowledge and experience of Jesus

In John 1 we learn that John the Baptist first pointed them to Jesus, and in John 2 that they had witnessed Jesus’ glory in his turning the water into wine.

All this happens before John’s arrest is recorded in John 3:22-24, that is before Jesus is recorded as starting his public ministry in Galilee in Matthew.

Knowing that helps us respond ourselves to Jesus’ call

What matters is not the drama, but the decisiveness of the call and their response

A response that has a foundation in what they have experienced, know of, Jesus already

Hearing and responding to His Call

So if you are not yet a believer and you are hearing Jesus’ call

The call of the one who can give you light in your darkness

Peace with God through embracing the reign of Jesus

A call to change your mind about who is in charge of your life – you or Jesus

Part of responding to that call is getting to know Jesus

That is why He called the disciples – so that we could learn of him through the witness He equipped them to bear

As you feel His call, feel His authority on your life

Ask Him to help you do that – by giving you understanding of His word

And come and talk to us

Help – the Christianity explored cause goes through a life of Jesus, a gospel, so you can know Him

But if you are someone who already knows about Jesus

Recognise that these disciples are models of the response Jesus calls for

The repentance that reckons following Jesus is worth more than everything

And decisively leaves all else behind, gives up all else, to follow Jesus

For us that following is not literally walking along behind Jesus

It is being committed to live a life directed by Him by conforming your life in every part to His teaching

No matter what the cost – to your financial security, to your relationships, to your plans, to the expression of your desires

That all gets left behind

Because Jesus is worth it

And recognise that this following is also a following where Jesus equips us to bring others to be His disciples

A call to life and service

Here I want to especially talk to the Young people amongst us –

Many of you have grown up with, are familiar with, the truth of Jesus –

Know His goodness

Seen a little of His power

Let yourself hear Jesus' call, and know you have to decisively commit to Him

Jesus settles for nothing less

Not calling for people to like Him on facebook

To be a mate who you let drop in for occasional chats about the meaning of life

To let him be your mentor whom you consult from time to time as you pursue your goals

He is looking for Much more than intellectual approval or cultural conformity

He is saying to you - the light of the world, the risen king, the Saviour

come, follow me

become a disciple who by following will bring others to know my light and life, and the good of my rule

But as I say that let me Warn you that the time when you become aware of Jesus' call is a perilous time for Jesus' call is so clear and total

That if we love things He forbids

May be our popularity

May be a non Christian girl or boyfriend

May be just wanting to run our own life our own way without any authority over us

Or if we think there are other things that can give us life

Our sport, or our academic achievement, our peer group, our money

– You will look for reasons not to believe

You will resent people asking you why you are not interested in Jesus

You will not want to be pressed on the truth of His resurrection

So hear His call

Recognise to deny it is to stay in darkness

To stay facing God's judgment

And be like the disciples

Embrace life and light and peace with God – by decisively committing yourself

Or ask the hard questions that will settle for you that Jesus is worth it once and for all

Older believer, someone who knows they have heard Jesus' call, embraced the repentance of trusting and following Jesus – keep on giving Jesus what He deserves as the light of the world, the King and judge of all, the Saviour of the world – your all, every day

And be what Jesus calls us to – a follower who is equipped by following to make other followers

We may not be on the move, have that physical distance from our possessions and homes that was called for from those first disciples

But we are not for that reason to be any less wholehearted in listening to Jesus and doing what He says, in reckoning that belonging to Jesus is worth all, in wanting others to become His followers

Jesus thinks He is worth all

And He has shown He is in His death for your sin, and His rising

Is that daily repentance, that daily saying to Jesus not my will, but yours still shaping and directing your life

Your relationships

Your conversations

Your use of your possessions

Your use of your time, more precious to many of us than what we have

And yes, if you have them, what you long for and desire for your children

Here is a little test

If you were put in Zebedee's position – how will you respond

If your child comes to you and says – I want to go and train to tell others the gospel, to teach Christ's word – how will you respond

When you see them giving up their job

Perhaps taking your grandchildren far away

Maybe not being there when you are old and frail

Because God has gifted them and called them, how will you respond

How will you respond now if you see them spending time teaching Sunday School or youth group, in growth group, and you are worried about their grades or their work

Concerned? Disappointed? Thankful

More – are you praying that in this world that is hostile to the rule of Jesus your children will be wholehearted in following him whatever the cost

Come, follow me

