

"Jesus, the Preacher-Teacher"

Matthew 4:12-25

Third S. a. t. Epiphany

Messiah, Boerne

January 22, 2023

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Text: Matthew 4:12-25

Dear Friends in Christ:

During the Advent and Christmas seasons of the Church Year, we were reminded of the meaning of the name *Jesus*: "The LORD saves." When you hear the name *Jesus*, what images of *Jesus* as Savior come to your mind? Perhaps you see Him on the cross, suffering and dying for the sins of the whole world. Or maybe you see Him as the Good Shepherd, safely guiding His flock to green pastures and quiet waters. Did you know, however, that most of the passages in the four Gospels portray *Jesus* as preaching and teaching God's word? In fact, in our text this morning, we see *Jesus* as the preacher-teacher of the Good News of God's Kingdom, "saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (v. 17).

Several verses prior to our text, we learn that Jesus had left Judea and withdrawn to Galilee after he heard that his cousin, John the Baptizer, had been arrested (v. 12). John had been imprisoned because he preached against Herod's adulterous marriage to his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. John's arrest signaled increased hostility to God's message of repentance and hope in the coming kingdom of heaven. However, Jesus changed his location from Judea to Galilee not only for his physical well-being, but also in fulfillment of a messianic prophecy, "as . . . was spoken by the prophet Isaiah. . . .:

'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.'" (vv. 14-16)

But just because Jesus changed locations doesn't mean that He changed God's message. In fact, Jesus continued John's ministry of preaching and teaching in Galilee, as our text says, "Repent, for the kingdom of

heaven is at hand" (v. 17). Jesus was a preacher and teacher of God's word, and his message to the people of Galilee was simple and pointed. To all who were held captive in the darkness of sin and death, he said, "Repent."

While different in many ways, the Galilee of Jesus' day and the Boerne of today are also similar. The differences have to do primarily with the people who lived there. Galilee was the northern-most region of the land of Israel and had been exposed to corruption by non-Jews and domination by foreign enemies for centuries. This resulted in a population that was quite mixed both ethnically and religiously. Therefore, they were despised by the Jews of Judea, especially the so-called "religious purists" who lived in Jerusalem. No wonder the people of Galilee so often felt helpless and hopeless. Isaiah does well when he describes them as "people dwelling in darkness." Yet to just such people Jesus came with the Good News of

God's Kingdom. "Repent," he said, so that his hearers might confess their sins and leave the darkness behind.

Now, if you take two shirts out of the dirty laundry basket and rub one of them into the ground, it's easy to see which one needs to be washed. But remember, both shirts came out of the dirty clothes. Both shirts need to be washed. So it was when Jesus went to Galilee to preach a message of repentance to the people living there. The Jews of Judea had no reason to boast because they had all come from the same fallen first parents, Adam and Eve, and from the same sinful forefather, Abraham. Although the external behavior of the Jews of Galilee may have appeared more "sinful" to the religious leaders of Judea, this was merely a delusion of the devil. Jesus' call to repentance was for *all* people—the Jews of Judea as well as the Jews of Galilee, the Jew and the non-Jew alike.

Jesus continues to preach His message of repentance right here in Boerne, right here at Messiah Lutheran Church. He calls us to repentance, to confession, to

leave the present darkness of this world behind. His purpose in calling you and me to repentance remains the same: to expose our sin and hopeless condition without Him. We may look at one another and think that we are somehow better than others, somehow less sinful. But remember: we are all sinners, all from the same fallen first parents. We have no business judging one another according to human opinion or preference. God's word judges and declares the same verdict for us all: guilty.

But notice that Jesus' message includes not only a call to repentance, but also the Good News that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (vv. 17, 23). Indeed, the kingdom of heaven is come in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the long-promised Savior through whom God offers His love, mercy, and grace, and through whom He delivers all people from sin's captivity. As the source of forgiveness of sins, of peace with God and one another, of meaning and purpose in life, of light and direction for our way, of hope even in the

shadow of death, Jesus brings God's kingdom close to us. Today, right now, Jesus continues to preach the same healing message that He did in Galilee through the Scriptures, the sermon, the Sacraments, and the witness of our lives and the lives of other Christians.

As we are beginning a new calendar year, we have an opportunity to review what we believe, teach, and confess about the coming of the Kingdom of God, for example, in Adult Bible class. Every worship service when we pray the Lord's Prayer, we ask that God's kingdom comes, but what does this mean? Luther explains in his Small Catechism regarding the Second Petition, "Thy kingdom come" (Your kingdom come.)

What does this mean?

The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God's kingdom come?

God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

God's kingdom of power is here already, and our God reigns. But His kingdom of grace comes to us

personally when by grace we receive the Holy Spirit through the preaching and teaching of God's word and in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, and as we live godly lives here on earth and there in the glory of heaven.

This explanation helps us understand how Jesus was bringing the kingdom of heaven to the people of Galilee and how we also can bring God's kingdom to the people of Boerne, Texas. Jesus' method was direct and effective, as we see in verse 23. First, he preached or proclaimed the Good News of the kingdom of heaven to people. Like a herald announcing the edict of a king, our Lord announced the kingdom of God's grace to people throughout all of Galilee. Second, Jesus taught about the kingdom of God in synagogues throughout Galilee. When Jesus taught the word of God, Jesus spoke with wisdom and authority, and by the Holy Spirit he dispelled the spiritual darkness that blinded people to the truth. Third, Christ demonstrated God's presence and power to save by healing people of every disease and affliction. Exorcisms, like those in our text,

were a clear demonstration of Christ's liberating power, rescuing people from the kingdom of darkness and bringing them into the kingdom of light.

Our mission as Christians—that of building relationships in Christ with people today and for eternity—means doing the things that Jesus did. In preaching the message of the kingdom of heaven, we need to be direct and to the point, confronting people with the law when appropriate and telling them the Good News about Jesus. In teaching we need to be clear, patient, and willing to go over the same ground as often as necessary. And thirdly, we need to be sensitive to introduce spiritual and emotional healing into situations and relationships as needed.

Dear Friends in Christ, Jesus came into the world to save sinners like you and me. In order to accomplish this, he spent most of his time as a preacher-teacher of the Good News of the kingdom of heaven. Like Peter and Andrew, James and John, Jesus also calls us to follow him in his mission of making

disciples, more fishers of men. So, let's join Jesus and proclaim to all creation, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (v. 17). Amen.