

12/7/25

Sermon Title: The Beginning of Jesus' Public Ministry

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 4:12-25

Jesus Begins to Preach

¹² When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee.

¹³ Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—

¹⁴ to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶ the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;

on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”

¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

¹⁹ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them,

²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Heals the Sick

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.

²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

After being baptized by John the Baptist and overcoming the temptations of the devil, Jesus finally begins His ministry.

Starting from this passage, Matthew records the public ministry of Jesus.

After receiving baptism from John, Jesus ministered for a time in Judea, the southern region of Israel.

But when He heard that John had been arrested and imprisoned by King Herod, He withdrew for a while to Galilee.

Then Jesus left Nazareth and went to Capernaum, located along the coast in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, where He began His ministry in earnest.

He recognized that His appointed time had come.

¹² When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee.

¹³ Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—

John the Baptist was imprisoned because he rebuked Herod Antipas, the tetrarch, for his immoral conduct.

John pointed out that it was wrong for Herod to take Herodias, who had been the wife of his half-brother Philip, as his own wife.

Galilee was one of the most neglected and spiritually dark regions at that time. Located in the northernmost part of Palestine, it had been allotted to the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar after the conquest of Canaan.

But after King Solomon handed over twenty cities in Galilee to King Hiram of Tyre as payment for building materials for the temple, the area was successively conquered by Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, Egypt, and Syria. Because of repeated invasions, deportations, and resettlements, the region became a place of mixed races and cultures.

1 Kings 9:10,11 (NIV)

At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built these two buildings—the temple of the Lord and the royal palace—

King Solomon gave twenty towns in the land of Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold he wanted.

For this reason, it came to be known as “Galilee of the Gentiles,” and people believed that no prophet could ever come from Galilee.

John 7:40,41 (NIV)

On hearing his words, some of the people said, “Surely this man is the Prophet.” Others said, “He is the Messiah.” Still others asked, “How can the Messiah come from Galilee?”

John 7:52 (NIV)

They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”

Jesus did not begin His ministry in Jerusalem, the religious center of the time.

Nor did He begin in His hometown of Nazareth.

Instead, He began His ministry as the Light of the world in a spiritually dark place that was called “Galilee of the Gentiles.”

Matthew stresses that this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet Isaiah.

¹⁴ to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—

¹⁶ the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”

This is from Isaiah 9:1–2.

Isaiah 9:1,2 (NIV)

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—
The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

At that time, people referred to Capernaum as a land of darkness and the shadow of death.

It was far removed from Jerusalem, and because it had long been occupied by Gentiles, many Gentiles lived there.

It was a region without the light of truth.

But Jesus, the Light, shone the light of the gospel into this dark land.

The place that had been the most neglected became the first to receive the glorious light of the gospel.

Jesus then began to proclaim the gospel in earnest.

This marked the beginning of His public ministry.

¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Jesus proclaimed the same message that John the Baptist had preached: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Although the proclamation of John the Baptist and that of Jesus may sound the same, there is an important difference in substance.

John’s announcement of the kingdom “coming near” was still future in nature, whereas Jesus’ message meant that the kingdom had actually begun, because His work on the cross and His resurrection were soon to take place.

Jesus first called disciples who would work with Him in the ministry of God.

He did not choose them from Jerusalem, where many highly educated people lived.

Instead, He chose His disciples from the shores of Galilee, a place despised and neglected by others.

There, Jesus called four fishermen to be His disciples—two pairs of brothers: Simon and Andrew, James and John.

He first called Simon Peter and his brother Andrew.

¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

¹⁹ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.

In fact, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew already knew Jesus.

Andrew had originally been a disciple of John the Baptist, but after becoming convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, he brought his brother Peter to Jesus.

At Peter's first encounter with Jesus, the Lord said, "You are Simon son of John; you will be called Cephas."

Cephas is the Aramaic word for "rock," and the Greek translation of it is *Peter*.

But today, Jesus formally calls them to be His disciples.

He tells them, "Follow Me."

This is an absolute and compelling command based on divine authority.

This command does not simply mean to follow Jesus physically.

It means that they must abandon the way of life, purpose, and interests they had lived by until now, turn entirely toward Jesus Christ alone, and accept Him as the Lord and Master of their lives.

Jesus then reveals the purpose for calling them and the mission they are to fulfill. Until now, they had been fishermen catching fish; but from now on, He will make them "fishers of men."

Their mission will be to lead human beings—who would otherwise remain forever in the land and shadow of death—into life, using the net of the Holy Spirit and the gospel.

Peter and Andrew immediately obey Jesus' call, leaving their nets behind.

It implies that when the two met Jesus, they received a deep spiritual impression and gained assurance of their calling.

The phrase "leaving their nets" shows the disciples' radical willingness to forsake worldly desires.

After calling Peter and Andrew, Jesus calls James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John as well.

²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them,

²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Zebedee was the husband of Salome, who was Jesus' aunt.

Therefore, Jesus and the brothers James and John were first cousins.

Their household was quite wealthy, and later on they provided much support for Jesus' ministry.

When called by Jesus, James and John also left their boat and their father to follow Him.

These two would become among the disciples Jesus trusted the most.

James was later killed by Herod Agrippa and became the first martyr among the apostles.

John became the beloved disciple who received the greatest affection from Jesus. He lived longer than any of the apostles and wrote the final book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation.

He remained at Jesus' side to the very end while Jesus hung on the cross, and in obedience to Jesus' request, he cared for Jesus' mother Mary devotedly in his home in Jerusalem until her death.

Like Peter and Andrew, James and John did not hesitate when Jesus called them; they left their boat and their father to follow Him.

To become a disciple of Jesus, one must forsake, leave, and follow.

They did not merely abandon a job or a family.

They abandoned their lives and their goals.

No one can serve both the world and Jesus at the same time.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John were able to follow Jesus without hesitation because of His spiritual authority.

In the command "Follow Me," there was the authority of the living God.

This authority was unlike the authority of the world— it was not a ruling authority like earthly powers, but an authority that could lead people.

When Jesus called the disciples with the authority of the Messiah, they had no choice but to leave everything behind and follow Him.

The call of God is an amazing blessing.

Among the many fishermen on the shores of Galilee, Peter, Andrew, James, and John were chosen to become disciples.

They were uneducated and ignorant, living lives unrelated to the kingdom of God, yet they became coworkers with Jesus, building and advancing the kingdom of God.

Thus they lived the most valuable and meaningful lives in the world.

After calling His disciples, Jesus traveled throughout all of Galilee with them, doing ministry.

Matthew summarizes Jesus' ministry as teaching, preaching, and healing.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing diseases and all kinds of infirmities.

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.

²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

All of Galilee is bordered on the east by the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee, on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, on the south by Samaria, and it includes the region of Paneas (Banias) to the northwest.

The northern part of Galilee was mountainous and barren, but its southern region was fertile due to the lake, making it suitable for agriculture and livestock. Therefore, many people lived in this area.

As Jesus taught the Word of God, proclaimed the kingdom of God, and healed the sick, the demon-possessed, the epileptic, and the paralyzed, news about Him spread rapidly—not only throughout all Galilee, but also down into Judea to the south, and even as far as Syria.

And great multitudes began to gather around Him.

The light of life that began to shine in Galilee through Jesus extended beyond Galilee into Judea and eventually began to shine upon the whole world.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,

The Lord calls His disciples to work alongside Him, and He began His ministry in Capernaum—a land despised by the world, a place shadowed by darkness and death.

Yet from that dark and forgotten place, the light of the gospel began to shine—and eventually, it spread to illuminate the whole world.

Today, let us reflect on Peter and Andrew, James and John—those who were called by the Lord to be His co-laborers.

They were unlearned, ordinary fishermen living along the shores of Galilee, far removed from the kingdom of God.

Yet when Jesus called them, they left their nets, their boats, and even their father, and followed Him without hesitation.

In that simple act of obedience, they entered into the most glorious work imaginable—working alongside Christ to establish and expand the kingdom of God.

The uneducated, humble fishermen of Galilee became bearers of the most valuable mission on earth.

And now, the Lord calls each of us. To us, who may feel small, unworthy, or insignificant, He says: “Will you work with Me? Will you help build My kingdom?” He calls us to partake in the most glorious work any human being can ever do—spreading the light of God’s kingdom and drawing others into His saving grace. Just as Peter and Andrew, James and John did, let us leave behind all that binds us—our worldly pursuits, our comforts, our old ways—and follow Him. Let us enthrone Christ alone in our lives and walk faithfully in His ways. The Lord who calls us is faithful and true. Through us, He will do marvelous things.

In the last days, He will use us as instruments to lead His chosen people into the fullness of His kingdom.

Through us, the light of the gospel will shine into our homes, our churches, our nation, and ultimately, the entire world.

This is the most glorious, most meaningful work a human life can accomplish.

Let us give thanks and respond in obedience to the Lord, who entrusts such a holy and weighty calling even to the humble, the weak, and the ordinary. Let us follow Him, and let His light shine through us into the darkness of the world.