

“What’s that Sound?”

Matthew 4: 12-25

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

¹⁵ *Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
alongside the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,*
¹⁶ *the people who lived in the dark have seen a great light,
and a light has come upon those who lived in the region and in shadow of death.*^[a]

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

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ “Come, follow me,” he said, “and I’ll show you how to fish for people.” ²⁰ Right away, they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ 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 ²² immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³ 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. ²⁴ News about him spread throughout Syria. People brought to him all those who had various kinds of diseases, those in pain, those possessed by demons, those with epilepsy, and those who were paralyzed, and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from the areas beyond the Jordan River.

Normally, this is a text we share during the Epiphany Season. However, its message is not limited to only the one season of the church year. Its call to reflect

on what it means to follow Jesus is a message for all times, especially now when our world is in such dire need of good news.

Let me explain: When we look at the beginning of our story, we learn that John the Baptist has been arrested. John the Baptist was not arrested for performing miracles. He was arrested for preaching the Kingdom of God. He was arrested for preparing a way for the one who was to come. Granted, John the Baptist did call the Pharisees and Sadducees “a brood of Vipers” and no one likes to be called that. You don’t make friends going around doing stuff like that.

But all joking aside, we know that John the Baptist got arrested for making waves, for preaching the Kingdom of God, for sharing words that made the powers that be uncomfortable. Plain and simple, John the Baptist was arrested for saying words that had the power to bring about change in this world and the ones in charge didn’t like it. Once again, I can’t state this enough. This should probably be a clue to what we actually signed up for when we became followers of Jesus. But we’ll get to that a little later.

Next in our text we are told that in response to John’s arrest, Jesus leaves Nazareth to make his home in Capernaum. Many reading these verses would assume that Jesus does this out of fear but they would assume wrong. Matthew is

quick to let us know that Jesus does this to fulfill a prophecy in Isaiah...to fulfill a promise by God to the people of God.

These words from Isaiah that Matthew's shares were reminders for the people that God had not forgotten or forsaken the people of God and God wasn't about to start now. These are powerful, powerful words, words that can and do bring about change. They bring about a change of heart. They bring about a change of mind. They bring about a change of understanding. These words are given to inspire hope, given to inspire new dreams, given to God's people to show us that death and darkness will not have the last word

Matthew uses these words of Isaiah to define Jesus' mission.... Which is to bring the light of hope, the light of peace, the light of God's Kingdom to the people, God's people who have sat in the darkness for way too long now. Matthew uses these words from Isaiah to show us that Jesus' mission has now been extended to us, just it was for the very first disciples who answered the call to follow.

Hopefully, by now, as people of faith, we are beginning to catch on. In answering the call to follow Jesus, there are no promises that it will be an easy life. There are no promises of success. There are no promises that we will see the benefits of all our hard work. There are only the words issued as invitation, words

that call us, that beckon us to follow Jesus, words call us to bring the light of love to others.

As I have continued to reflect on what it means to live out our call as disciples of Christ, I have to a conclusion, that conclusion being for too long, we as people of faith have domesticated and sanitized the Word of God, turning it around to meet our wants and needs, ignoring the powerful life changing word of hope and life. As people of faith, we have turned the Word of God into Hallmark cards and sentimental devotions that make us feel good, sappy sentiments that allow us to pat ourselves on the back without contemplating the commitment, something that no longer works in light of all the hurt and brokenness which fills our world right now.

You see, the thing we need to remember as we reflect on what it means to live out our call as disciples of Christ is that we did not become followers of Jesus on our own terms. We become followers of Jesus because we recognized the power of the invitation, we recognized the power of the call, we recognized that although it came with no promises of wealth or might, this invitation of life spoke to the very core of our souls and a light of hope was sparked, a light that will not be extinguished by the darkness.

So when we answered the call, when we accepted the invitation, when we responded to the power of God's word, we were signing up for things on God's terms, things that would take us out of our comfort zones, things that would lead us to encounter others. We were called to break bread with those who think differently from us, who look differently from us. We signed up to agents of change, agents of hope, agents of God's Kingdom in all that we do, in all that we say, and in all that we will become. We signed up, we followed, we accepted the invitation to answer the call because the power of God's words showed us that it is not enough to simply speak the words. We are called to live out these words in everything we do and say.

As I have said many times, I do not pretend to have all the answers. So I will share these words of theologian, of a pastor who put his life on the line, leaving the security of his parish, spending time in jail and ultimately giving his life because of this incredible Kingdom bringing, life transforming invitation to follow Jesus. These words are this: "Discipleship is not an offer we make to Christ. It is only the call which creates the situation. It is only the call of Jesus which makes it a situation where faith is possible."

May these words take root in our heart and may we find the strength and the courage to follow when Jesus calls so that we never ever forget that the power of the Word of God really does have the ability to bring about change. Amen