

Matthew Ch4v1-22 - Set Free To Follow

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[0:00] Let's go to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 4. Well, we're going to read Matthew, Chapter 4, up to verse 22.

Let's hear God's Word to us today. Verse 1, then, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted or tested by the devil. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, If you're the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread. And Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the highest point of the temple. If you're the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down, for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. Jesus answered him, It is also written, Do not put the Lord your God to the test. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their splendour. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me.

Jesus said to him, Away from me, Satan, for it is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee.

[2:26] Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali, to fulfil what was said through the prophet Isaiah. Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

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

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.

Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will send you out to fish for people. At once they left their nets and followed him. 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. And immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

[3:45] We're going to pray. I wonder if someone, I'm not sure who, would mind getting me just a glass of water. That would be helpful. Thanks very much. Thank you, Claire. Thanks.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Encourage us and build us up. And so we pray for ourselves, for the children, for our Sunday school teachers, that we would know your word working in us, guiding us to your light.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Claire. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you, Claire.

Well, we are in a battle. We're in a conflict. A war. It's a battle of two kingdoms. There's the kingdom of heaven, and there is the kingdom of Satan.

[5:32] One is a kingdom of light against a kingdom of darkness. But tragically, the story of humanity is all about how we have fallen for Satan's lives.

Instead of enjoying God's kingdom, we have become enslaved in Satan's kingdom. Instead of living under God's good rule, we have followed Satan's rule.

We have chosen the darkness rather than the light. And the problem is, we can't free ourselves.

Well, in Matthew chapter 4, we're going to see how God's promised king, Jesus, fights this battle for us. Three things we're going to see.

First, that Jesus confronts the devil for us and wins. Second, Jesus enters into the darkness to free us.

[6:31] And then third, Jesus, our commander, our warrior king, comes to us and calls us to follow him. So, let's take these in turn.

First, as we think about this battle, Jesus confronts the devil for us and wins. Look at verse 1 with me of chapter 4.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil or Satan. This isn't a chance encounter, is it?

It's intentional and it's planned. You see what it says in verse 1? The Spirit leads the Son of God into a confrontation with the devil.

Now, that shouldn't surprise us because this has been God's plan all along. God had promised a Son who would come and defeat the devil for us.

[7:33] You see, this battle has been raging since the beginning of time. It began way back in the Garden of Eden when the devil came and tempted the first man and woman to sin.

And instead of saying no to sin, they believed the lie. And immediately they were plunged into a darkness and faced the penalty of death.

And this has been the objective of Satan throughout history. He is leading the whole world astray. His desire is to lure and deceive, to tempt and destroy.

And yet from the outset of this battle, God promised to raise up a son. Genesis reminds us of this.

In Genesis 3 verse 15. God said to Satan, after he had deceived and led the man and woman astray, God said to him, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.

[8:41] He, that is one of her offspring, a son, will crush your head and you will strike his heel. A promise that one would come, a son from the woman who would crush the enemy for us, freeing us from the darkness that we might enter into the kingdom of heaven.

God's word was true. And a son came. But, that son failed.

Have a look at verse 1 with me again back in Matthew. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested or tempted by the devil.

After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. Does that ring any bells with you to an event back in the Old Testament?

It should remind us of God's son, Israel. Because God had promised to raise up a son who would follow and who would go his way and not Satan's way.

[9:56] And remember how Israel were slaves in Egypt under the brutal reign of Pharaoh. And God had come and said to them, Israel is my firstborn son.

Let my son go that he might worship me. And so God's son, Israel, were released. They were to go with God to worship him.

And on their release, they entered the wilderness for 40 years, where they went through a time of tempting, a time of testing. But it was a test.

They failed. They grumbled and they complained. They turned their back on God and longed to be back in Egypt again. They were deceived by the lies of Satan.

God's son, Israel, failed to be the people God called them to be. Instead of triumphing and being victorious, they were losing the battle.

[10:56] And that's been the problem throughout the history of humanity. Faced with a choice of walking with God or living as our own God, we choose self over God all of the time.

We've been born into sin, trapped and enslaved, and we can't free ourselves. In a sense, we are all failed sons.

But true to God's word, God promised a faithful son, didn't he? And that faithful son did come. Just as Israel went into the wilderness to be tested for 40 years, so Jesus comes and he is sent into the wilderness for 40 days.

And he goes through a time of testing. But unlike Israel, the unfaithful son, Jesus is the true and faithful son.

Verse 3, The tempter came to him and said, If you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread. And Jesus answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

[12:12] Three times the devil tempts, and each time the son remains steadfast, loyal and faithful as he enters into the battle, the confrontation. Have a look at verse 10.

And as the tempting came, Jesus said to him, Verse 10, Away from me, Satan, for it is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

You see, You and I go through times of testing all the time. And yet we seem to fail that test so often. We worship self.

We serve my desires and my wants. But there is one who stands strong. And he passes the test. And he worships God.

He never fails. For Jesus is the faithful son. Satan can't deceive him or trip him up or trick him. Satan cannot lead him astray, no matter what he throws to him.

[13:17] Here, Jesus, have the kingdoms of the world as if Satan could offer it to him. Already Satan had tried to destroy Jesus, didn't he?

Remember when the birth of Jesus was announced? King Herod was furious. He ordered that all the boys in Bethlehem age 2 and under would be slaughtered.

Yes, Herod would be responsible. But who's standing behind these evil acts? Only the desire of Satan to destroy God's king.

But God's promise of a faithful son will not be broken. God's plan never fails. That means this faithful son can come and help you and me.

Because we need somebody who will come in and stand for us and go where we cannot go. Because Jesus comes as our representative.

[14:18] He passes the test on our behalf. He doesn't fail. He confronts the devil for us and he wins. Jesus is the perfect son who is fully equipped and qualified to go into the battle for us.

And that's exactly what Jesus does. So first, Jesus confronts the devil and he wins.

Second, he means he can now enter into the darkness to set us free. The battle lines have been drawn.

The kingdom of heaven has come through the kingdom of his son and he confronts head on the kingdom of Satan. And the battle is truly fierce. Look at verse 12.

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Remember, we looked at John last week. He was the one, the forerunner, announcing the coming of Jesus.

[15 : 25] And what's happened to John? Well, he's now imprisoned. Satan is again at work trying to disrupt the ways of God. Verse 13.

Hearing this news, Jesus left Nazareth and went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali.

So he'd gone from Jerusalem following the river Jordan north up to the lake of Galilee. Once again, Jesus' movement is intentional.

He's not just escaping. There's a plan and a purpose behind it. For look what verse 14 says. He goes to Zebulun and Naphtali. Why? To fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah.

You see, Jesus is on a mission to set us free. Jesus is going to a people who are living in darkness.

[16 : 25] Look at verse 15, the quote. This is what we learn about the people. Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali. The way of the sea beyond the Jordan.

Galilee of the Gentiles. The people are living in darkness. Darkness is the Bible's way of talking about the presence of evil and our hearts of sin.

And the world has seen some very, very dark days. This weekend we commemorate the Holocaust when up to 8 million human beings, people just like us, were brutally exterminated.

What a terrible darkness it was. Today our nation commemorates Bloody Sunday which led to decades of violence and hatred and mindless death of over 3,000 people on our island.

What a terrible darkness we have experienced in our land. And we too, each one of us, if we were to put a microphone in front of us all, we all have our own stories of darkness, don't we?

[17 : 43] Of troubled days and hard times. Things that have come into our life. But we too are not innocent.

Because we too have added to the darkness by our cross words, our selfish actions and our unloving thoughts. Isaiah's description is right.

We live with a shadow over us. Look at verse 16. These people, he says, are living in the land of the shadow of death. The darkness of this world has only one end.

And that is death itself. This is the kingdom of Satan. Darkness and death prevails. This is what we experience in our life.

And sadly, this is what we inflict on each other. But yet, this is the world that God himself steps into. He's not immune to it.

[18 : 47] He comes in the person of his son. Look back at verse 13. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum.

He went to a people of darkness and he lived amongst them. He entered into the darkness. He entered into your world and my world.

He understands. He knows. Because he encountered darkness. But he enters it because he comes to bring light.

People are in darkness. But the light has come. Look at verse 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. Every morning at this time of year, if you're up early enough, that is, you will awaken in the darkness. But slowly as the sun begins to rise, so that darkness is dispelled.

[20:00] Light has come. Well, that's exactly what Jesus has come to do. He is the light who comes breaking through into the darkness for us. And to understand why we need the light of Jesus, we need to go back to Isaiah chapter 9 where this quote comes from.

So if you go back in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 9 and we'll see a little bit clearer why the light had to come.

Because we live in a world of darkness darkness, we live with the shadow of death and we look for a way out of it, a way to get through it.

And here in Isaiah 9, or really it's at the very end of chapter 8, the last couple of verses, we're introduced to, well, as Isaiah describes them, a people who've ignored God's word and sought their own solution to the darkness.

darkness. And this is what they find. Look at the very end of verse 21. Looking upwards, they will curse their king and their God, shaking their fists angrily at God for all that there is.

[21:26] And then they will look towards the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

Isn't that what we do? We look to ourselves and to other people to lift the darkness and to remove the shadow of death, but as we look to others, what do we find?

Well, just more distress and darkness. We look to other people and what do we get? More fear and gloom. Rather than fix our lives and our world, we only make things worse.

That's why we need the light. That's why we need Jesus. Look at chapter 9 verse 1. Nevertheless, there will be no more glooms for those who are in distress.

Verse 2. For the people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. Jesus has come.

[22:35] Matthew identifies that who Isaiah is speaking about is Jesus, the one who comes into the darkness of our hearts to destroy the shadow of death.

You see, Jesus enters the darkness to set us free. And how does he do that? Well, he wins the battle for us.

He wins the battle for us. Look down at verse 5, Isaiah chapter 9 verse 5. Isaiah here pictures a battle scene, but it's a battle that has been won.

Verse 5. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment that has been rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuelled for the fire.

The garments of war, the uniform of the soldier has now been taken off, stained in blood. The battle was fierce.

[23:43] It's been ripped off and now it is burned up because they are no longer needed. The battle has been won. we don't need to fight the battle because Jesus has come to do the battle for us.

And that battle was ultimately fought and won for us at the cross and it was a bloody battle. For as Jesus took my sin and your sin, we are told that darkness came over the whole land, symbolic of the ways and deeds of Satan.

Jesus was thrust into utter darkness, suffering the darkness of hell for you and for me. But yet three days later, that warrior who went into battle would rise again from the grave, destroying the shadow of death that is over us, his resurrection confirming that this battle has been won once and for all.

the apostle Paul would put it like this, you can read on screen. For he, that is the Son, has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of all our sins.

He takes us from darkness and brings us into light. a place of fear and gloom and distress to a kingdom of love and beauty where we are forgiven and treasured and made his children.

[25 : 34] That's what Jesus has done. He has faced the devil for us and he wins, fully equipped and able and qualified. He enters the battle and he does war on our behalf so that we can enter his kingdom.

So how do we experience this kingdom of light? How do we get to enter? Well, third, Jesus, if you like, the warrior king, the victorious champion, now comes to us and says, follow me as your captain.

Follow me as your captain. Because if we are to know and enjoy the freedom that he has come to give us, then we need to follow him.

Let's go back to Matthew 4. Back to Matthew 4. Matthew 4. Matthew 4. Matthew 4. Matthew 4. Matthew 4. Matthew 4.

Matthew 5. Because as Jesus came to live in the darkness, he comes to call people to follow him. Look at verse 19.

[26 : 54] As Jesus was walking by the lake, he sees two sets of brothers. Verse 19, he says, come, follow me. And at once they left their nets and followed him.

A little later he met two more brothers and Jesus called to them, saying, follow me, and immediately they followed him. You see, following Jesus is nothing less than a radical transformation of our whole life and thinking, our perspective.

And the question that is before us, are we going to follow the triumphant king? Are we going to be loyal to our commander and captain? For Jesus comes to us and says, if you want to experience this kingdom, then you must follow me.

You must follow. Look back in verse 17. From that time on, Jesus began to preach, repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

The call to follow is essentially a call to repent. It's saying, will you turn from yourself? Will you put down the weapons that you fight against God and your desire to be Lord and King over your life?

[28 : 11] Will you lay down your weapons and will you turn and trust in the Saviour, the one who has won for you? Will you trust him who entered the darkness and has given you life?

You see, to follow Jesus is a commitment to say, I am no longer going to trust in my own resources or willpower. I see my weakness and the only one I can follow is the strength of my warrior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us grace and mercy in every test and trial we come up against.

There is nothing so big or so great that he cannot supply the grace that we need in our times of trial and temptation. And when we fail, he gives us forgiveness.

Will you follow this captain? Will you walk with him? It's a life of continuous repentance and faith as we trust in our redeemer who takes us from darkness into light.

life of God. But not only that, our warrior king calls us to a new purpose. He gives us a brand new mission.

[29:37] Jesus is come, hasn't he, to rescue people from the kingdom of Satan. He's come to free us from the kingdom of darkness, to bring us into the kingdom of light. And now that mission is ours, not to fight the battle because that's already won, but to go with new weapons of war, the weapon of the gospel, the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look what it says in verse 19. Jesus says to these fishermen, come follow me, Jesus said, and I will send you out to fish for people.

our mission is now to go empowered and equipped with the good news of Jesus, not to convince people because that's what God will do, but to call people, to point them to Jesus and say, look at him, the one who can take you from distress and darkness, one who can bring you into light and beauty and forgiveness.

He will do it for you. As one writer commented, we are not here to gaze at the aquarium in comfort.

We are to go into the rough sea of this world and do the work of a fisherman. I'm challenged by that. Maybe we're too busy gazing at the aquarium, looking at one another.

[31:08] We're to go into the rough seas of this world and to do the work of a fisherman. This is our purpose. This is our new goal. This is our aim in life.

This is the mission that the risen Lord Jesus, the victorious captain, has given us. Go and make disciples of all nations is how Matthew finishes his gospel, because that is the purpose.

So when we waken up each morning, remind yourself, who are you? Maybe you think, oh, I'm a teacher, I'm going off to school today, I'm a mother, I'm looking after my kids today, I'm a worker, I'm going to be online today.

Whoever we are, you wake up and you remind yourself, well, remind ourselves this, I need to do it. Johnny, you're a fisherman. You've been called by God to go and present the good news to people, the gospel, the power that brings people from the kingdom of darkness to a kingdom of light.

So mums, when you wake up, you're not just a taxi driver for your children, you're calling your children to the kingdom. kingdom. When you spend time with your family, yes, you're there to provide and to care, but you're to raise a family for the kingdom.

[32:45] When you socialize with your friends, yes, we have a laugh, yes, it's to be good fun, but we are calling them to a kingdom.

And when you go to work, yes, you want to get a salary to pay off all your bills, yes, you want to perhaps go up the career ladder, but you are there, God has placed you there to bring the light of his kingdom through every act of service by listening attentively and sensitively, praying for those who will meet, giving a reason for the hope we have, calling people to the kingdom.

Are we going to be loyal? to this kingdom work that we have been called to? Did you notice the response of the brothers? Do you see what they said at verse 20?

At once, they left their nets and followed him. Verse 22, immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.

this is a matter of life and death. This is serious. It's the kingdom of darkness versus the kingdom of light. The kingdom of Satan which ends in destruction or the kingdom of heaven which is life eternal.

[34:13] God you see when Jesus calls us and he is calling us today he's calling us to leave work.

They left their nets. He's calling us to leave family. They left their father and they followed him. Now does Jesus really mean for me to leave work and not to go to work tomorrow and move out of my house and leave my family?

Now if we read on through Matthew's gospel we discover that they did continue fishing and they did spend time with their family. So what does it mean? Well it means holding loosely our work and our family and grasping tightly the priorities of Jesus.

You see I think it's fair to say isn't it? Aren't work and family the things that dominate our minds most of all? Aren't we thinking about our families the most? Don't we think about work the most?

Don't we talk about these things the most? It's what we build our lives around. But rather than hold on to work for our security he's saying hold on to me.

[35 : 30] Hold on to Jesus. Instead of clinging on to family for comfort and for all our needs cling to Jesus. Why?

Well because we can lose our work at any stage. Your job can be taken from you just like that. We can lose our family, any members of our family, myself, any of us could die at any moment.

None of it lasts. But we can never ever lose Jesus. Nothing can separate us from him.

Not even the darkness, not even death. The kingdom of this world will be blown away but the kingdom of heaven will last forever.

Forever. Jesus has confronted the devil for you and for me and he has won. He's entered the darkness and he's fought the battle for us.

[36 : 32] And now he calls us, follow me, follow me in this kingdom work. Join the fight. Pick up the weapon of the good news of Jesus Christ and go wherever you are scattered.

Your loyalty to me and I will be with you. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, once again, your word presents before us your amazing son, our savior, who has won salvation for us, who has brought us from a kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the son he loves and how we are treasured and loved and cared for by you.

Thank you for life today. Thank you for an eternal kingdom to come. And we pray that in light of all of this we will follow you.

[38 : 04] Father, would you impress upon us the areas of our life that we so tightly hold on to that we would let it go and grasp firmly the priorities of your kingdom.

Go with us as you have promised. Use us to bring our children, our family, those within our community, those we'll meet tomorrow.

Use us to bring them and point them to the kingdom of light. Help us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

We're going to sing the church. We're going to sing