

Trailer (Evening Service)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 May 2018

Preacher: Ben Short

- [0 : 0 0] Father, I'm so thankful for your words, and I'm so thankful for your person, for sending the person of Jesus Christ to us. I pray that these spiritual words will land on spiritual people.
- Amen. Well, maybe you knew this already, but Peter would have smelled like fish a lot.
- He was a fisherman. Probably his father was a fisherman. He grew up in a town called Capernaum, which was a fishing town on the Lake of Galilee.
- Actually, it's a freshwater lake. It's not a sea. And he fished with his brother Andrew. And you can imagine on a hot Galilee day, he is out on his boat with his brother Andrew.
- And they're pulling in fish, and they smell like fish. That's a real smell. And they use these circular nets with kind of stones on the sides, and there's a long string on it.
- [1 : 1 3] Probably one held on the string, and the other is throwing that net in the sea. And they pull it up, and they're hoping to gather fish. And they're sweating. And those are the boats on the lake.
- And as they're fishing, a man walks up to the shore and looks at them, and he says one small sentence. Matthew chapter 4, verse 19.
- He said to them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Immediately, they left their nets and followed him. What an amazing story.
- That's all there is to it. He spoke, and they followed. I guess the question is why? Why did they follow? We are looking at Matthew's gospel right now.
- We have the privilege of learning about Jesus. This passage, from about verse 12 to verse 25, is like a summary of what's going to happen. It's kind of like the highlights of Jesus.
- [2 : 1 6] It's like the table of contents. And I want to make three points out of these highlights. I want to say, Jesus brings a kingdom. I want to say that Jesus brings a call.
- And I want to say that these are the same thing. Jesus brings a kingdom. Jesus brings a call. And these are the same thing. All right. Let's look at our Bibles. Chapter 4, verse 17.
- Chapter 4, verse 17. This little verse is a summary of Jesus' preaching. Matthew says, From that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- Jesus was a preacher, and he preached about the kingdom. It was the thing he talked about. It was the thing he wanted people to understand. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- Again, how about verse 23? Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease.
- [3 : 2 8] As we read through the rest of the gospel, we learn that Jesus teaches us about the kingdom. Again and again, we keep coming up to the kingdom of heaven.
- Let me just take one example of a future one. Next week, we're going to read chapter 5, verse 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

So, Matthew is putting it here to signal for us this is an important thing for Jesus. So, the natural question is, what is the kingdom of heaven?

When you read the kingdom of heaven, I'd like you to think about a rule, or a reign, or a sphere of influence and sovereignty.

The kingdom is not one place. The kingdom is wherever God's rule is. Any place that is submitting to the rule of God is where the kingdom of heaven is.

[4 : 30] Perhaps an illustration might be another ancient one. Today, when we think about politics, we think about countries divided with lines, but that's not how people used to think about it.

So, an illustration might be the Pax Romana. So, the Roman Empire had a sphere of influence called the Pax Romana, and they had that big staff with the eagle on top, SPQR, and wherever that dude goes, the standard goes, that's where the kingdom of Rome is.

And when a city declares they are under Rome's rule, that's where the rule of Rome is, and cities that are under the Pax Romana, there's certain consequences, certain taxes, certain buildings will be built, and it's kind of a dynamic, fluid concept.

So, the kingdom of heaven is not one place. It's where the rule of God is. We should think about a dynamic sphere of influence.

And, Jesus wants to say one thing. The rest of the gospel, Jesus teaches lots and lots of things, but here he says one thing.

[5 : 46] Verse 17. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus said, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. I want you to picture a dam with water behind it, and the water is growing and building, and the doors of the dam are having trouble holding that water back.

The water is about to flow through. When Jesus came, the kingdom of heaven came. And where God's rule is, the world will be made right.

A person who heard Jesus hear this, the kingdom of heaven, would think, God is coming and bringing the rightness of the world back again. The light in the dark place.

This is what verses 24 and 25 are about. See, Jesus preaches and he heals. And the healing is wonderful. Verse 24. This is a picture of the world being made right.

This is a picture of the kingdom of heaven. And when Jesus came, the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Now, that's my first point.

[7 : 16] Before I go on to my second point, I just want to make a little application. I want to make a big application, but I don't have time. But I want to just say that because the kingdom of heaven is here, is breaking in, is coming, we can have hope.

Because the kingdom of heaven is here, we can have hope. And this hope should consume us.

This hope should be the hope on our hearts. And we will know that this hope has consumed us if the hopes of this world have been relativized.

The hopes of this world are there, but not quite so big. That's the point of verse 16. The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light.

For those dwelling in the region, and the shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. We live in darkness, and this world is dark. And we need Jesus to bring the kingdom.

[8 : 25] Now, when I start talking about this, it can get a little bit controversial. You see, the kingdom image is a political image. Right? Right? I'm a king ruling sovereignty.

And Jesus relativizes the politics of this age. I used to do debating a little bit in high school, and sometimes we would get out an egg timer.

And if you were speaking a bit long, they would, you know, seven minutes. You hear the thing. And you know, when the thing stops, you've got to stop too, right?

When Jesus came and declared the kingdom of heaven is here, it was like Jesus wound up a big egg timer and put it on Justin Trudeau's desk.

The politics of this age are not nothing. But they are only here for a certain time. They will leave. Politics today is, I think, driven by two things mostly.

[9 : 29] Driven by hope and driven by fear. And when we think about politics today, it's worth thinking about those two things, hope and fear. All I want to say is this.

As a Christian, my hope is not first and foremost in politics. My hope is first and foremost in the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus Christ is bringing the kingdom of heaven.

That's all I'm going to say about that. So, Jesus brings a kingdom. Secondly, Jesus brings a call. It's really interesting. Verse 17, Jesus from that time began to preach, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And he then goes on to do some miracles to demonstrate that. But that's not the next thing he does. The next thing he does is he goes to the Sea of Galilee and he calls.

He calls Peter and Andrew. And then he does it again. He calls James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Jesus calls. And this is the subject of discipleship.

[10 : 35] This is the other great theme of Jesus' teaching, actually. Jesus teaches about the kingdom a lot. And he teaches about discipleship a lot. So, let's ask the same question.

What is the kingdom? Now we ask, what is a disciple? What is a disciple? What does it mean to be a disciple? A disciple is a follower. So, when Jesus says, follow me, he is calling them to be disciples.

The picture is of a teacher. And the teacher is calling people to learn from him. But not just in the classroom. To learn from him in all of life.

Perhaps we might make a little definition. A disciple is someone who submits their whole life to Jesus Christ. A disciple is someone who is increasingly submitting their whole life to Jesus Christ.

So, I heard an interview a few weeks ago with a woman who loves Dr. Joy Brown. I don't know if there's anyone else here who loves Dr. Joy Brown.

[11 : 43] My mother and I used to listen to daytime radio in the car. And we mostly listen to Dr. Loris Fleshenzer. But sometimes we listen to Dr. Joy Brown. Those were fond days.

And this interview was really interesting. It was about this woman's love for Dr. Joy Brown. Dr. Joy Brown gives social advice, relationship advice. Her most famous piece of advice is, what is it?

Happy and stupid. Something like that. So, when you get into conflict, just act happy and stupid. It's actually pretty great advice. I recommend it. And she says all kinds of other stuff.

And this interview was really interesting. So, the interviewer was asking this woman about her life. And she was saying some things. And when the interviewer asked her about why she did something, she would say, well, Dr. Joy Brown says blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And so, I did that. And she lived her life with reference to the teachings of Dr. Joy Brown. That woman was a disciple.

[12 : 46] She was a disciple of Dr. Joy Brown. Jesus calls disciples. He calls people to learn from him. He calls people to obey him.

He calls people to be obedient to him. A disciple is a student of Jesus. In other words, a disciple is a Christian. Let's notice a few things about discipleship from here.

Again, there are many teachings about discipleship in this gospel. But there's a few things we learn here. Notice. The call is yes or no.

It's amazing. Verse 19. Jesus said, follow me. And I will make you fishes of men. And immediately, they left their nets.

There is no contract. There are no conditions. There is no, this is what it will mean. Jesus says, follow me. And they have a choice.

[13 : 49] They can follow him, or they cannot follow him. And they hear the call in his voice to choose to follow him. Notice.

This is the beginning. This is the beginning of their walk. Again. Jesus says, follow me, and I will make you fishes of men. They are not fishes of men right away.

They have many, many things to learn. They are fishes of men. When Jesus gives them the great commission. In Matthew chapter 28. Until then, they have many things to learn.

They need to learn about forgiveness. They need to learn about how to be a servant. They need to learn about lots of things. But here is the beginning. And it begins with Jesus speaking.

Jesus says, follow me. That's the beginning. And they say, yes, we will go. Notice this. Jesus makes a promise here.

[14 : 52] Follow me, and I will make you fishes of men. Jesus does not say to them, follow me, and try very hard to become a fisher of men.

They can't do that. You see, discipleship does not start with me saying yes to Jesus. Discipleship begins with me. Sorry, not with me.

Discipleship begins with Jesus saying, come, follow me. And he promises that he will make us fishes of men. You see, discipleship starts with the call of Jesus.

And our job is simply to respond to the call. And Jesus is the only one with authority to make this kind of claim on our life. And that's why people respond to him.

Because when he calls, he speaks with authority. Discipleship means we take Jesus' words with absolute seriousness. Discipleship means we take it seriously when he says, if your right eye causes you to sin, you should pluck it out.

[15 : 57] We take seriously when Jesus says, where your treasure is, there your heart will be. We take seriously the command, love your enemy.

And we take seriously the command, go and make disciples. But most of all, we take seriously Jesus. We follow Jesus.

He is my teacher and I choose to follow him. It means we orientate our lives and our identities around Jesus. So my first point is that Jesus brings a kingdom.

My second point, Jesus brings a call. And my last point is this. These are the same thing. These are the same thing. The kingdom and discipleship are the same thing.

From two different pictures. Now these pictures are very different pictures. The kingdom is a collective, social, political picture. Discipleship is an individual, personal, private picture.

[17 : 02] But notice, this passage is a sandwich. Jesus declares the kingdom and it ends with the picture of the kingdom and miracles. But discipleship comes in the middle.

And the reason is, the kingdom is a picture of discipleship. And discipleship is a picture of the kingdom. These are two lenses on the same thing that Jesus brings.

Notice verse 17. Jesus says, repent. I skipped over that bit, really. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repentance is a thing that I do.

And the kingdom is the public thing that Jesus brings. There's a connection between the privates and the public. Or again, notice verse 19. Follow me.

That's an individual thing. And I will make you fishers of men and women and people. Right? That's a public thing. That's a social thing.

[18 : 01] That's a wider thing. Jesus wants everything. There's a great book about discipleship by a theologian called Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

And his first chapter is called Costly Grace. And basically he says, when we separate the kingdom from discipleship, we get cheap grace.

Cheap grace is forgiveness without repentance. It is baptism without a community. Cheap grace is the kingdom without discipleship.

And we want instead costly grace. Costly grace is the gospel which comes to us again and again. Costly grace is the kingdom and discipleship.

It is costly because we must give up our lives. And it is grace because Jesus gives us our lives back to us. And it is costly most of all because it costs God.

[19 : 10] Grace costs God the life of Jesus Christ. And costly grace is grace because we get Jesus Christ. We are called to be disciples and to come follow him.

Let me pray. Father, I am so thankful that your son Jesus Christ came and he spoke about a kingdom and he gave us a call. I ask that you will help us to heed the call of Jesus.

Amen. Amen.