Proclaiming The Gospel of the Kingdom

Matthew 4:17-25

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**Introduction:** None of us here would say that we know our US Representative McClintock or know Elon Musk, but we know who they are. Knowing someone requires a deeper dive into their minds and hearts. The people we truly “know” seldom surprise us by their reactions, thoughts or emotions. We know what is important to them and what they most cherish. We know how they think! The same is true of God.

Our God is one God who exists as three persons. “The Three in One” are co-eternal and one in nature and substance. A truly astounding God. While we finite beings will never know everything about our infinite God, we can know the things He wants us to know and that is a lot….trust me. I am still working on it.

But rather than think about what we might not know, I want to particularly speak about what we can and do know about how God thinks and feels about the evangelization and salvation of the lost in this world.

**GOD THE FATHER: Jn. 3:16-17**  "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

**GOD THE SON: Matt. 23:37** "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

**Lk. 19:10** "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

**GOD THE SPIRIT: Tit. 3:5-6** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

The spiritual condition of humanity is very much on the heart and mind of God. As the world descends into total spiritual darkness (which we discussed last week) we begin to imagine that God is mainly thinking about Judgment and punishment of sin, but we would be wrong. Judgment of sin is inevitable because God is perfectly just and His ways are perfectly righteous. His ways absolutely bring supreme good to humanity. His love for humanity requires that He eventually destroys all evil and His perfect justice requires that He rights every wrong in His creation. “Closure” the world calls it today! A year has passed since Jesus was baptized and tempted by Satan. To escape the hatred of Herod, Jesus goes back to where he was raised in Galilee. Matthew tells us that…

**Matthew 4:17** From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus was above all “a preacher.” This observation is often lost amongst His surpassing greatness and other attributes. Jesus began to preach in the spiritual darkness known as “Galilee of the Gentiles.” Preaching is an activity with a very precise meaning. The Greek word describes a herald who goes about faithfully proclaiming what someone with authority tells him to say. He has no authority of His own and does not have to convince anyone of anything. He is a herald! He is a preacher! Lutheran Commentator Richard Lenski gives this clear explanation of preaching:

“….To preach is not to argue, reason, dispute, or convince by intellectual proof, against all of which a keen intellect may bring counterargument. We simply state in public or testify to all men that truth which God bids us state. No argument can assail the truth presented in this announcement or testimony. Men either believe the truth, as all sane men should, or refuse to believe it, as only fools venture to do”

Jesus is still the consummate roll model for all preachers. The Pharisees and Sadducees did not speak with authority because they had diluted God’s Word with their religion and their culture. Church growth, global warming and social justice are among the kryptonite of today’s preachers.

**Matt. 7:28-29** When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; 29 for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.

Only God’s Word has authority! No preacher has authority! Our words only have authority if they are God’s Word faithfully proclaimed. God’s Word has power to save men.

**Jn. 3:34** "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.

**Jn. 12:49-50** "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak. 50 "I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

Jesus fulfilled the roll of preacher perfectly and is the example for all who follow. But He was also God the Son who became a fully human man. He was equal with the Father in every way. As The Only Begotten Son, He was also the heir to and recipient of all of God’s authority.

**Matt. 28:18-20** And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Matthew records Jesus exercising that authority in this morning’s text.

**Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen [18]:** Jesus has now transferred His preaching ministry away from the glittering Capitol of Jerusalem to Galilee, the most spiritually dark province of Israel. The light of the world is starting to dispel the hopelessness of men there. Jesus grew up in this area and He actually knew the men mentioned here.

**Jn. 1:28-30** These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

**Jn. 1:35-37** Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

**Jn. 1:40-41** One of the two who heard John *speak* and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah " (which translated means Christ).

**And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." [19]:** This is both a literal statement and a metaphorical one. Jesus said, “come behind me!” Come where I am going and do what you see me do.” Christ’s Words do not mean, “I will make you (force you to) fish for men!” They mean I will re-make you or create you into “a fisher of men.” When I am done with you, you will be as comfortable testifying to men about me as you are dragging in nets full of fish. We do not just decide to be a witness for Christ. When we follow Him He turns us into His witnesses because He has all authority and power to do it. Humanly The Disciples were abject failures (as today’s churches count success). Remember, Jesus is preaching (heralding) exactly what the Father has told Him to say. The Gospel of the Kingdom is the greatest news the world has ever heard but only those whom the Father draws can come to Christ.

**Jn. 6:65-71** And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." 66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." 70 Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and *yet* one of you is a devil?" 71 Now He meant Judas *the son* of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

If you want great throngs of people to like you and laud your success you will definitely want a different message than the one Jesus preached to the crowds that followed Him. This is why the church in our day is in such crisis. She prefers success to faithfulness. She does not consider her responsibility to simply herald the gospel good news about who Christ is and what He came to do. Many churches are actively opposed to preaching the gospel at all. “It will drive men away from Christ,” they say. It may drive away the crowds of unbelievers, but it will save to the uttermost the ones the Father calls.

**Immediately they left their nets and followed Him [20]:** They did not come to join a mission, become a deacon, elder, Sunday School teacher or worship leader. They left off what they were doing to follow a person. The Man Christ Jesus. They knew who He was, remember? They had no idea where He was going to take them…and neither will you if you decide to follow, but they were confident He was worthy of their trust. But even the twelve eventually all failed in their human strength…not just Judas.

**Matt. 26:54-56** "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, *which say* that it must happen this way?" 55 At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as *you would* against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. 56 "But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

**Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them [21]:** James and John, you will remember had the audacity to ask Jesus to elevate them above all the others when He became king…which they were expecting to happen right away. This would have so endeared them to the other 10 disciples!!

**Matt. 20:20-21** Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. 21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."

Does Jesus just not know what these guys are like when He calls them. Did Jesus not know what you were like when He saved you and called you to follow Him. If He had known how broken I am…If He had known how afraid of life I am and how incapable of being a Christian I am then surely He would have passed on me and picked someone else. But He did know. He knows all things.

**Jn. 16:29-31** His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. 30 "Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God." 31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?

**Jn. 21:17** He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

Now please let this sink in for a moment. God knew your nature, inclinations, personality before He gave you your human life. He also knew every sin you would ever commit. He knew all your weaknesses and inclinations to fail in your faith and obedience. In short, you are an open book to Christ from the womb to the tomb and yet…

**Eph. 1:4-5** … He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

We are looking at the first 4 disciples. They were fisherman. They had leathery skin, calloused hands, and they were smelly from work and from old fish. They were doing menial work when Jesus called them. They were uneducated, unsophisticated, self-centered, and even rude. They are the poster children for spiritual transformation. Jesus is not calling them to be witnesses as much as He is calling them to be transformed into witnesses. Here are a few of their more stellar moments along that path.

**Matt. 14:15** When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

**Matt. 19:13** Then *some* children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them.

**Matt. 18:21** Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

**Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him [22]:** Like Peter and Andrew, James and John followed the man Christ Jesus, not knowing were it would lead, but confident that Jesus was worthy to be trusted with their future and their eternal lives.

**Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom [23a]:** They followed Jesus throughout Galilee. They went into synagogues in every town and not just to common workers of the field. The religious, self-righteous, arrogant moralists had the exact same need as the rough, crude fishermen and farmers. As they followed, they made fools of themselves again and again. But Jesus never disowned them! He never washed His hands of them and began to look for someone more suitable! He was busy “making them” fishers of men. He is doing the same exact thing with you. Following Christ is clearly explained by Paul.

**Romans 12:1-2**  I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

**And healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people [23b]:** This is part of their training. Becoming absolutely convinced that they are following the Son of the Living God and learning to trust Him unconditionally. Today’s healers claim to do so in the power of Christ but their healing is nothing like Christ’s! Jesus healed real diseases for every single person He encountered. There was no screening before the big revival meeting. There was no telling people they lacked faith. There were no excuses and there were no failures with Jesus. Every disease and every kind of sickness was treated the same.

Jesus healed immediately and completely. Peter’s mother-in-law…instant healing!

**Mk. 1:30-31** Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Him about her. 31 And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.

The paralytic lowered through the roof…He got up and carried his own bed away!

**Lk. 5:24-25** "But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"-- He said to the paralytic-- "I say to you, rise, and take up your stretcher and go home." 25 And at once he rose up before them, and took up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God.

The blind beggars crying out for mercy?

**Matt. 20:32-34** And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" 33 They said to Him, "Lord, *we want* our eyes to be opened." 34 And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

And then there is the ultimate disease…death itself.

**Jn. 11:43-44** And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." 44 He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

**The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them [24]:** Damascus is the principle city of Syria. Although Jesus never left Israel during His lifetime, His fame certainly did. God the Father was already working to fulfill His promise to make Jesus the Savior of the world…of all men regardless of race or nationality .

**Isa. 49:6** He (The Father) says, "It is too small a thing that You (The Son) should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

From across international borders people were bringing their sick, their demon possessed, their epileptics and the paralyzed. Jesus healed everyone.

**Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and *the* Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and *from* beyond the Jordan [25]:** Decapolis means “Ten Cities” and is the area east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan river. It was heavily Roman and Greek. People came from the entire area. Jesus used His miracles and particularly His healing ministry to attract a huge crowd so that He could preach the Gospel to them. And that is exactly what He does in the next 3 chapters of Matthew. It is called The Sermon on The Mount.

**Matt. 5:1**  When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

**CONCLUSION:** Following Christ is not optional for believers because we are not observing religious rituals or trusting in good works or membership. We are trusting in Jesus Christ and nothing else. This means that we trust Him with our earthly lives and with our eternal ones as well. We believe He loved us. He did not need to leave heaven, enter the womb and live a human life in a fallen and broken world, but He did! He was not obligated to take the punishment for the wicked, rebellious and hateful human race, but He did! His love is unconditional. His sinless perfection is evident. His mercy and compassion are legendary. So following Him is the most perfect and perhaps the only true measure of our faith in, and love for, Jesus.

**1 Jn. 4:9-11** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.