

Matthew 4:12-24

Opening: Good morning Church!

What a weighty privilege it is to share the Word of God with you this morning. Cole Flanigan's message last Sunday, Jesus is our Champion, our righteous substitute, really blessed me all week as I prepared today's sermon. I trust you were also blessed.

My title today is A GREAT LIGHT HAS PIERCED THE DARKNESS

I would like to begin with a short camping story that relates to light and darkness. 16 years ago, I put together a young adult trip to Mt. St. Helens to better understand what happened after the eruption. Once there, we realized the weather was in our favor to summit the mountain. After hiking for an hour, our group of nine split in half due to my half being in not the best shape. By the time we got close to the top the first group was descending after taking a long break at the top. After another hour we summited and the clouds cleared and we could see the entire crater and spirit lake. It was absolutely breathtaking. After an hour we decided to head down. My friend Cornelius realized at that time that both his knees were swollen so badly that he could barely walk. We had the entire mountain below us with some large boulder sections that require big steps. Cameron and I shouldered him slowly off the top of that mountain while Melody, my now wife, quietly walked along singing hymns. After about 10 hours total of hiking we were around 20 minutes from the tree line when we just couldn't make out the trail or navigate all the giant rocks due to the darkness. Because it was just a day hike, we had no flashlights, no food, no way to make a fire, and no jackets. Hard to believe but hardly anyone had cell phones back then. Confronted with total darkness, we quietly sat down in the dark, no hope till dawn for the ability to get down. Magnified by darkness, a debilitating fearfulness began to creep in due to our being exposed on the side of that mountain. We will come back to this story later but let's get started with the passage. Turn your Bibles to Matthew 4:12.

Intro:

As we look closely at the life of Jesus Christ after His temptation, it is absolutely critical that we not let this be a history lesson. Don't allow yourself to miss this opportunity of spending time in fellowship with Him as we remember His great acts of love. Do you remember who Cleopas was? He was one of two disciples who walked to Emmaus, not knowing the whole two hour walk, that it was the resurrected Jesus who was with them. Don't worry, I won't preach for two hours but please enjoy the presence of the Lord as I share with you. I also want you to enjoy his humanity as we go through the story. Reconsidering the hypostatic union, Christ being fully God and fully man, you will see Matthew strongly portray Him as the Son of Man.

In fact, the gospel of Matthew uses the phrase Son of Man 28 times. I find joy in seeing our great High Priest be a true man. He heard, He withdrew, He went, He lived, He proclaimed, He walked, He saw, He called, He taught, He healed.

MAIN IDEA: God's Saving Love is Clearly Seen in Jesus' Pursuit of Sinners - if you leave with anything today, let it be a clearer understanding of God's love for you.

**HE WENT (Read 12-16)**

TIMING: In verse 12 we see Jesus hearing the news of John's arrest and immediately He left Nazareth, His home, for Capernaum. I believe John's arrest was perfect timing for Jesus to start His public ministry, but don't take my word for it.

In John 3:29-30 recognizing the bridegroom was with them, John states this; "Therefore this joy of mine is now complete, He must increase and I must decrease."

The Gospel of Luke chapter 4 states this after the temptation, "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee."

We hear Jesus say this in John 8, "for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

God was not surprised or upset with John's arrest. Jesus did not leave Nazareth in fear of Herod, in fact, He went toward Herod's seat with purpose and in fulfillment of prophecy.

TYPE: Considering the relationship between John and Jesus, there is an interesting picture/type in the Old Testament, Moses and Joshua. Moses name meaning "Drawn out", he himself was drawn out of water as a baby and became the one who drew God's people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. Yet he would not see them enter the promise land. Joshua, meaning "Jehovah is Salvation", was told by God he would be the one to bring the people into the Promised Land. As John is arrested and eventually killed, we see Jesus, same name as Joshua rise in His brightness to lead the people he pursued into the Promised Land, the kingdom of heaven.

PROPHECY: There are three prophecies that we must look at. Two from Isaiah are around 700 years old by the time Jesus fulfills them. The third is right around 30 years prior to Jesus ministry.

*Isa 42:6-7 - I am the Lord: I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.*

*Isa 9:1-2 - But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.*

*Zechariah's prophecy - Luke 1:67-79 - Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

The land of Zebulun and Naphtali were contemptible. Known as Galilee of the gentiles. A place considered to have rough, uneducated, and ignorant men. It was far from Jerusalem in distance but also in Jewish purity and zeal. The Jewish leaders that were confronted in Acts 4 by the boldness of Peter and John recognized them as Galileans calling them uneducated and common. I like seeing Jesus going to the rough places first to make them straight.

DARKNESS & DEATH During the time of Jesus ministry, the people in darkness had a lot of similarities with us now. Even though they would argue, you would find the self-righteous, and the hypocrites in darkness. You would also find those that were ignorant of God and His promises. There were those that had believed in God but had lost hope due to difficult circumstances; people oppressed by demons, pagans worshipping false gods, people suffering from tragic diseases with no cures. One difference then was that there were people waiting for the Messiah, the King of kings to come. Waiting for the light, waiting for deliverance.

What is interesting is you have John and Jesus both stating the Kingdom of Heaven is so close you could reach out and touch it. The people hearing this message were daily confronted with death, being so close they were constantly standing in its shadow. Loved ones dying or falling terribly ill regularly. Death and suffering in this life lurking along with the huge question of am I good enough to go somewhere good when I die. Does somewhere good even exist?

### HE CALLED (Read 17-22)

A KING CALLS HIS SUBJECTS: To have a kingdom, you must have a king and he must have subjects. Jesus began to preach about the Kingdom of Heaven, the good news of the Kingdom. John preached He is coming, Jesus preached He was with them in fulfillment of so many prophecies. When Jesus goes back to Nazareth to preach in the synagogue, he reads Isa 61:1-2: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* Then he tells them all that: *"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."* Jesus boldly began revealing Himself as the Anointed One to all He came in contact with. Some answered the call, some for only a season, and some outright violently rejected it. Later in Luke's account of Jesus approaching the Mt of Olives, all the disciples are praising God saying blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. They saw Him as their sovereign and worshiped Him accordingly.

HIS CALL WAS SIMPLE: Jesus call to sinners was very simple; turn away from sin, turn toward God, and follow Him. When He asks some fishermen, Peter and Andrew, to follow Him, it was not the first call but it was a personal call to discipleship. In John 1, John sees Jesus walking by and says, Behold the Lamb of God. Andrew was with John as one of His disciples and began to follow Jesus at that point. Immediately Andrew tells his brother Peter that he had found the Messiah. His call to these Galilean fishermen was just to follow. His call was not a call to swords, not political or anti-political, it was not a call to prosperity, and it was not a call to safety and comfort. Just follow.

DUAL PURPOSE: As Jesus called His first four disciples He was revealing that His disciples would become His co-workers, that they too would help Him gather subjects into His kingdom. Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Later in Matthew 5 Jesus emphasizes this by stating: *You are the light of the world; let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and glorify God.* Jesus pursuit of sinners was a long-term plan that would be carried out by His followers that are filled with and led by His Spirit. His pursuit of mankind started before the fall and has not stopped since.

### **HE SERVED (Read 23-25)**

TAUGHT In His pursuit, Jesus went to the synagogues to teach to the scribes, Pharisees, and elders. He also went to where the people were not necessarily religious. He taught at the sea, on the sea, on boats, on mountains, in storms, and in the temple. He taught in parables, in trials, in fasting, in miracles, and in tragedies. He taught that the humble would understand His grace and the proud would be brought down. He taught how He was the one to fulfill the prophecies and the promises of God. He taught them how much his Father loved them and that there was wrath to come. He taught about eternal life. John 3:36

PREACHED Jesus proclaimed God's truth, the true meaning of scriptures, confronting the traditions of men that crept in. He proclaimed the good news of God's way of escape from sin and destruction was through Himself. In Luke 4:43, you see His urgency to keep going to more towns to preach; He says *"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns."* And again in Mark 1:38 and He said to them, *"let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."*

HEALED For Jesus, healing established the fact that He was no ordinary man, no run of the mill prophet. To further complicate matters for the religious leaders, He would mix the forgiveness of sins along with healing. In Matthew 9, the paralytic man had his sins forgiven and then was told to rise up and walk. Jesus states, *"but that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"*. This enraged the leaders as it put Him on level with God. He had compassion on people for their great suffering and in His pursuit of sinners used the healing to further spread His gospel of the kingdom to more and more people.

CLOSING: In closing allow me to finish my camping story. While my friends and I sat in chilly darkness without much hope and no plan to escape our situation, we saw a small flicker of light comparable to fire flies in the distance. After a few minutes we could see the light getting brighter and even here some voices shouting. Our dear friends came for us, by their love, they left their comfort, shined their lights, called out to us, and saved us from that dark mountain.

Please consider how wonderful our Lord is, pursuing us while we were still in sin, to shine His light of grace on us, and to give us His spirit that we would have the privilege of Him continuing His work through us.

Let me finish with this scripture - Rev 1:5-6:

*"And from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

**“A GREAT LIGHT HAS PIERCED  
THE DARKNESS”**

Matthew 4:12-25

**Main Idea:** God’s saving love is clearly seen in Jesus’ pursuit of sinners.

**He Went** (12-16)

Timing and Type of John

Undeniable Prophecy

Darkness and Death

**He Called** (17-22)

A King Calls His Subjects

His Call is Simple

His Call is Dual Purpose

**He Served** (23-25)

Taught

Preached

Healed