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Read Matthew 4:12-17 - Jesus leaves the desolate place and withdraws into Galilee, a lush and fertile region in Northern Israel where Jesus will spend much of his ministry. As the landscape shifts, so does the tone of Matthew's Gospel.

The prophecy Matthew alludes to in 4:15–16 is from [Isaiah 9](#). Take a moment to read it.

Jesus is the light that breaks into our darkness. As the light dawns, Jesus picks up the message of John, proclaiming, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"

Questions:

- Why do you think repentance is so important to God's kingdom being here?

- What darkness are you living in?
- Where do you need Jesus to breakthrough? Invite him to do so.

Read Matthew 4:18-22 -- Jesus is out for a stroll by the sea when he calls his first disciples, brothers who are fishermen: Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew.

*“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”*

*Immediately they left their nets and followed him.* Immediately. No second thoughts.

He keeps walking and calls two more brothers, also fishermen: James and John. *Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.* Again, immediately. No second thoughts.

So Jesus, Andrew, Simon Peter, James and John head off to fish for men.

Questions:

- What makes you hesitate when you hear Jesus calling your name?
- What’s in the way of your “immediate” yes?

Now read 4:23–25. This is one of those passages that challenges us to reconsider what we think about Jesus. Here, he is a teacher *and* a healer. He doesn’t just preach from his platform. He moves toward the sick and diseased.

Picture the crowd gathered around him: *the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics.*

These are not the usual people invited to parties. Frankly, they’re people who make us uncomfortable and awkward. But this is who Jesus attracts and includes and cares for. *And he healed them.*

Questions:

- What are you having trouble leaving behind in order to follow Jesus?
- What kind of king builds his following with the weakest in the kingdom?
- Why is this good news for you and me?

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## Chapter 5

At first glance, Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5 (often called the Beatitudes) seems straightforward: "If you're like this, you'll be blessed, right? So, be like this." Except who wants to be poor in spirit, meek, mournful, or all those other things listed? And how do you become those anyway?

That's actually not what Jesus intended this to be—a set of character traits we should all try to emulate in order to secure God's blessing. He's doing something different.

After his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, Jesus begins his ministry, proclaiming, "Turn around! God's kingdom is here!" We don't live in a monarchy, so it's tricky to understand the rule of a king. It may help to think of it like this, "Wake up! Change your life! God's economy is now. He's in charge."