

## Jesus Begins His Ministry

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Third Sunday after the Epiphany) is Matthew 4:12-25. This reading has 3 narratives: Jesus beginning his ministry, Jesus calling the first disciples and Jesus ministering to great crowds.

Following the arrest of John, Jesus now fills the void of that John left. By doing so he again fulfilled an OT prophecy. Jesus now made Capernaum his home base. Although not mentioned in the OT, it was evidently a sizable town in Jesus' day. Peter's house, there, became Jesus' base of operations during his extended ministry in Galilee. Galilee had a significant Gentile population. Here in despised Galilee, light dawned. That light still dawns in the most humble places.

When it says "*from that time,*" it means that Jesus wasted no time in getting going. He continues his humble approach in his life, but he also continues the message of John to repent.

Both John and Jesus announced the presence of "the kingdom of heaven" lest it be misunderstood as a physical, earthly or political kingdom. It comes from God in heaven through the incarnate Christ. God does the acting. This is purest Gospel. We are in God's kingdom by virtue of our baptism.

In light of the nearness of God's reign, which even now has come into the world in his own person, Jesus calls his first disciples. Four men are specifically named. Both pair are fishermen. They had acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah a year earlier (John 1). This explains their immediate compliance at this time. They were not blind followers, but were believers.

*Teaching ... preaching ... healing* were Jesus' threefold ministry. The synagogues provided a place for him to teach on the Sabbath. During the week he preached to larger crowds in the open air.

Isaiah described the sinful state of this world: "*people walking in darkness and the shadow of death, unable to find their way and lacking the ability to help themselves.*" Into this back hole comes Jesus, the light of the world. His great light shines first in Galilee, where he calls disciples, teaches, preaches, and heals. His great light continues to shine in our darkness. The good news of God's reign continues to be sounded in Word and Sacrament. To sinful, hurting people, Jesus gives life, hope, and deliverance.

Prayer: May your light shine in us as we share your Gospel with the world, O Christ, our light. Shine on us and through us. Amen (TLSB)