

Jan. 22, 2023 Mt. 4: 12-23 & Is. 9:1-4

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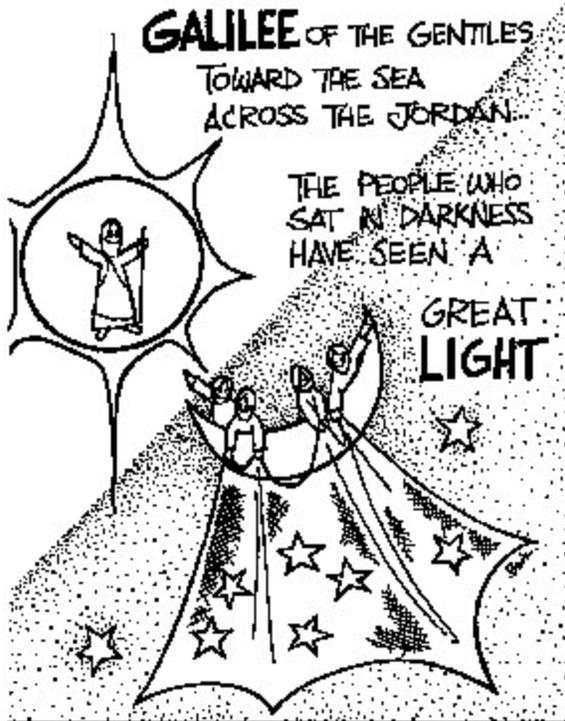
Drawing with permission by Fr. Robert Beck

Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [How is Love Calling Us?](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Naming our Restlessness](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)



ENTERING THE SCENE:

Howard Thurman teaches: Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive, and then go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive." Twice the author of this text uses the word immediately. We find Jesus with haste making his way to the place where so long ago everything fell apart. Fulfillment follows. Darkness gives way to light, a light that gives all in this text the ability to see what direction they need to go towards. There is no time to settle back into the day to day routines. The promise of God's word seems to be tangible. Leave the familiar- go towards the opening God is providing. Like the people eating unleavened bread and striking out of Egypt, the ones hearing the call to follow-do. We strike out into a new and deeper exploration of what God is doing in our lives in this New Year. We are asked to turn around and look at things in a new way. Let us begin. Let us "come alive".

Mt. 4:12-23

12 Now when Jesus heard that **John had been arrested**, he **withdrew to Galilee**. 13 He left Nazareth and **made his home in Capernaum** by the **sea**, in the territory of **Zebulun** and **Naphtali**, 14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet **Isaiah** might be **fulfilled**: 15" Land of **Zebulun**, land of **Naphtali**, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, **Galilee** of the **Gentiles**-- 16 the people who sat in **darkness** have seen a **great light**, and for those who sat in the region and **shadow of death light has dawned**." 17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven has come near**." 18 As he walked by the **Sea of Galilee**, he saw two brothers, **Simon**, who is called **Peter**, and **Andrew** his brother, **casting a net into the sea** --for they were **fisherman**. 19 And he said to them, "**Follow me**, and I will make you **fish for people**." 20 **Immediately** they **left their nets** and **followed** him. 21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, **James** son of **Zebedee** and his brother **John**, in the boat with their **father Zebedee**, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 **Immediately** they **left the boat and their father**, and **followed** him. 23 Jesus went throughout **Galilee**, teaching in their **synagogues** and proclaiming the **good news** of the **kingdom** and **curing every disease** and every **sickness** among the people.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

Jesus now knows that he needs others to help him as he begins his ministry. Would he find you ready to join him?

PRAYER: This poem called Journey expresses what the disciples must have told their families when they set out to follow Jesus. Where are you going i asked / to places I have never been / was the answer / what do you plan to do i asked / my purpose will be evident at journey's end / who has planned your itinerary i asked / its plan will be revealed at times most unlikely / why would you consent so such a vague plan i said / I accepted the challenge / when i accepted life was the answer
Grana, Janice. [Images](#). St. Mary's College Press, Winona, MN. 1976. **JOURNEY:** Mary Eleanor Rice. Page 135

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

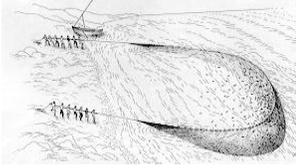
JOHN HAD BEEN ARRESTED: Jesus must have been grieved and greatly troubled by John's arrest, because he knew that Herod had little problem killing those who promised any trouble to him and his power base.

What do you think was going on in the mind and heart of Jesus as he received this bad news? What implications for his life did this arrest have?

WITHDREW TO GALILEE: Galilee was a mixed bag of cultures and religions, located on the border of Herod's territory, and therefore a good place to withdraw and get out of harm's way quickly. It was where Mary and Joseph went when they returned from Egypt when Jesus was a child.

Have you ever given much thought to the challenges of the political issues during Jesus' life and ministry? If you were to begin teaching or preaching news that was seen to be very good for the poor of today, but troublesome to the status quo, where would you withdraw to today? Why?

MADE HIS HOME: In Jesus' day, a person could be called a "son" of somewhere if they resided there for a year. *How could being known as a "son of Capernaum" help Jesus as he began his ministry there?*



CAPERNAUM: (see below) Capernaum was a place that was used to being exposed to new people and new ideas.

What makes this a good location for Jesus' home base? Is your current hometown a good place to be exposed to new people and new ideas?

ZEBULUM / NAPHTALI: Isaiah tells us that these places were the first to be lost among the northern tribes, and Matthew implies that they are to be the first restored now that Jesus is bringing the good news.

How does this promise of restoration help the people to grasp the meaning of the good news Jesus brings?

GENTILES: Part of the promise of restoration was the inclusion of the Gentiles as God's people. By the time of Matthew's gospel, the early church included great numbers of Gentiles.

If you were a Jewish Christian, how do you think you would feel about that? If you were a Jew?

DARKNESS / SHADOW OF DEATH: The people of Jesus' day were living under conditions that were very "dark", and like John the Baptist, always just one wrong move away from the 'shadow of death'.

Can you name examples of people who would identify with these words today? Who are they?

GREAT LIGHT / LIGHT HAS DAWNED: Isaiah promised a great light, and those experiencing Jesus felt the promise shining on them as they listened to news about the kingdom of heaven.

As this New Year begins, are there any lights dawning for you that can dispel dark or shadowy areas in your faith life? Does this text have any power to illumine those areas?

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN HAS COME NEAR: The kingdom of heaven is that place/time/condition where God's will is being accomplished. Jesus proclaims that this reality is now near.

If you had been there that day, how would you have understood these words? If someone were to proclaim those words today, what would be your response?



SIMON / PETER / ANDREW / JAMES / JOHN: Today's text describes the beginning of the assembly of the disciples. These men were people who were open and ready for the news that Jesus brings.

Are you a person who is open and ready for God's new revelation at any moment? If so, what enables you to be that way?

CASTING A NET INTO THE SEA: To be a good fisherman/woman, you need to be willing to take risks and work hard.

How do these characteristics make for good disciples?

(One of several mosaics along the upper wall of the Church of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna circa 6CE)

LEFT THEIR NETS / BOAT / FATHER: The four men leave everything that gives them identity and security, and strike out into the unknown with Jesus.

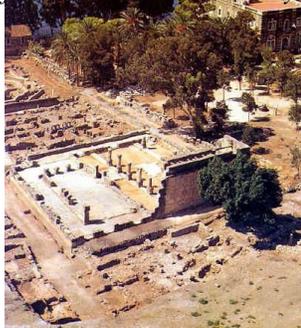
Has your faith life required you to do this? How?

FISHERMEN / FISH FOR PEOPLE: These men went from men who fished for fish, to men who fished for people.

What qualities of fishing made them ideal candidates for their new roles?

IMMEDIATELY / FOLLOWED: The response of the four men to follow Jesus without delay must have given the people in their lives a real jolt.

If someone in your life did the same thing, how do you think you would react? If you knew that this person was truly on the right track for their life, do you think you could give your wholehearted support?



Ruins of Synagogue in Capernaum

SYNAGOGUES: (see below) the synagogues were places of study and prayer in the local communities of Jesus' day. Any male could be invited to read the scriptures and enter into dialogue with the congregation on how he understood those words.

If you belong to a scripture study group, do you have the same invitation for dialogue there?

GOOD NEWS: In Jesus' day, the scriptures (Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures) were often presented in ways that made them bad news, or at least not new news.

How did Jesus take the same scriptures and turn it into good news?

CURING / ILLNESS /DISEASE: When a person is sick, the primary concern is a cure. Only then can other things be considered. Jesus knows this, and immediately removes this impediment to their being able to hear what he has to say.
Are there any impediments in your life today that keep you from being able to hear the gospel as good news? What needs to be 'cured' in order for you to hear?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 4: 12f // Mk. 1: 14f; Lk. 4: 14f; **Mt. 4:13** //Jn. 2:12; **Mt. 4:15f** // Is. 9:1f; **Mt.: 4:16** // Jn. 8:12; **Mt. 4:17** // Mt. 3:2; Lk. 17:20; **Mt. 4:18f** // Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11; Jer. 16: 16;**Mt. 4:23** // Mt. 9:35; Mk. 1:39; Lk. 4:15, 44;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Is. 8:23- 9:3; Ps. 27:1,4,13-14; 1 Cor. 1:1-13, 17; Mt. 4:12-23;
Revised Common Lectionary: Is. 9:1-4 (8:23-9:3); Ps. 27:1, 4-9; 1 Cor. 1:1-18; Mt. 4:12-23;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

"Do not imagine that character is determined at birth. We have been given free will. Any person can become as righteous as Moses or as wicked as Jeroboam. We ourselves decide whether to make ourselves learned or ignorant, compassionate or cruel, generous or miserly. No one forces us, no one decides for us, no one drags us along one path or the other; we ourselves, by our own volition, choose our own way." - Maimonides, 12th Century

It is heaven all the way to heaven. What you choose now is exactly what you choose to be forever. God will not disappoint you. Richard Rohr

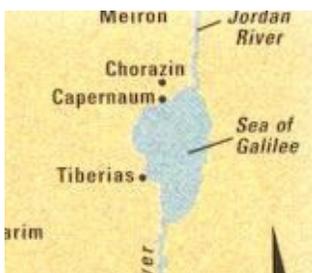
Every time you make a choice, you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And, taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a Heaven creature or into a hellish creature — either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is Heaven: that is, it is joy, and peace, and knowledge, and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other. ... C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

How are we treating the people of God? I dream of a church that is a mother and shepherdess. The church's ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like the good Samaritan, who washes, cleans and raises up his neighbor. This is pure Gospel. God is greater than sin. The structural and organizational reforms are secondary—that is, they come afterward. The first reform must be the attitude. The ministers of the Gospel must be people who can warm the hearts of the people, who walk through the dark night with them, who know how to dialogue and to descend themselves into their people's night, into the darkness, but without getting lost. The people of God want pastors, not clergy acting like bureaucrats or government officials. The bishops, particularly, must be able to support the movements of God among their people with patience, so that no one is left behind.....In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation. It is necessary to accompany them with mercy." Pope Francis

In his *Banished Messiah*, Fr. Beck examines the role of the returning prince who nonviolently comes to rescue his people. He sees similarities in many classic stories of the hero's journey, where the legitimate hero returns to establish a rule of justice and prosperity.

God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination. - St. Augustine

Every action of our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity.....Edwin Hubbel Chapin (1814-1880)



For almost 60 years, Mendel Nun ("Ports of Galilee") has lived on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where he has become the resident expert on the history of the lake and its fishing trade. A fisherman, author and raconteur, Nun received the Ben-Zvi prize in 1964 for his book *Ancient Jewish Fisheries*. His article "Cast Your Net upon the Waters--Fish and Fishermen in Jesus' Time" appeared in the November/December 1993 *BAR*. Nun, Mendel. [Cast Your Net Upon the Waters: Fish and Fishermen in Jesus' Time](http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org). www.biblicalarchaeology.org: 11-12/93. Pgs. 47f.

Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. [Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men: What We Know of the First Disciples from Their Profession](#). *Bible Review*. June 1999. Pages 22ff. Information and pictures that help to round out our knowledge of the fishing profession in Jesus' days. Naphtali and Zebulun were located slightly north and south of the Sea of Galilee respectively

To follow the vocation does not mean happiness; but once it has been heard, there is no happiness for those who do not follow.
C. S. Lewis

As such they (the disciples) would have enjoyed a relatively stable existence in the present and decent prospects for the future, since commercial fishing in the Sea of Galilee was (and is) a fairly prosperous business enterprise. There is no indication that they had me

Jesus or even knew anything about him. This serves to highlight the extraordinary power of Jesus' call and the attractiveness of his person. Moreover, the usual Jewish pattern by which students became associated with a master teacher was by their seeking out the teacher. Pg. 51. Harrington, Daniel –Keenan, James Jesus and Virtue Ethics. NY. Sheed & Ward Book. 2002.

Jesus' detractors are those who find their authority in the Scriptures; Jesus turns their authority upside down. The power of God's ways to be found in the authoritative teacher and the oral tradition. Pg. 209. Schniedewind, William M. How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Inracl. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge Univ. Press. 2004.

God's heart is the center where all paradoxes are held in tension. Wendy Wright

Commitment brings with it a great deal of freedom because, by its nature, it closes down options. 205
Commitment settles us down and makes room inside for another to enter. 206
Homan, Daniel, OSB & Pratt, Lonni Collins. Radical Hospitality. Brewster, MA. Paraclete Press. 2002.

For more information and pictures on [Capernaum](#) and the ruins of the Synagogue.

Capernaum was a relatively large town with a population approaching fifteen thousand, and was located on along an important trade route. It was important enough to be a center for the collection of taxes, and located out of the reach of Herod who has just killed John the Baptist. Talmudic sources tell of a Christian community there by the second century. It was destroyed in the 7th century and never rebuilt. A synagogue (Lk. 7:5) thought to be the one in which Jesus taught was discovered there as early as 1857 by Edward Robinson. Hoppe, Leslie, O.P. The Synagogues and Churches of Ancient Palestine. Collegeville, MN. The Liturgical Press. 1994. Pages33ff.

For Jesus, the *Reign* or *Kingdom of God* consisted in a generous offering of salvation and a pressing invitation to conversion. Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies. Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002. Pg. 405.

The healing ministry of Jesus was seen as the manifestation of the reign of God and the overcoming of the power of Satan. This healing power was often interrelated with a change of heart and a new faith on the part of the one being healed. At times, such as the case of the lepers, it reintegrated the person into the religious society.

The need for healing is very broad and deep in our society. There is good evidence for this need. The number of new medicines and drugs coming on the market along with their constant commercials on Television indicate our "addiction" to drugs and our need for healing. The spiraling cost of health care and health insurance bears witness to the demand for healing. In some parts of our society seeing a psychiatrist is almost as normal as seeing a dentist. The physical and emotional illness of so many people indicate the need for healing in society, in our neighborhoods, and in our planet. The church itself needs healing from the wounds of power politics, clergy sexual abuse, and the oppression of women. Wessels, Cletus. The Holy Web. Maryknoll NY. Orbis Books. 2000. Pgs. 153-4.

You are as sick as your sickest secret and you will remain sick as long as it remains a secret. (AA wisdom)

He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find him the rest of the day. - John Bunyan

Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive, and then go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive. -Howard Thurman

In a book called "The Cities that built the Bible" by Robert Cargill we find an examination of Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jesus in pages 225-228. This probes the use by Matthew of these biblical cities and the life of Jesus.

A portion of a poem called **Choice** by Mary Anne Morefield expresses some of the feelings the disciples must have had. The choice is made. / The agony of choosing done. / Yes to one possibility is no o that other way. / But the turmoil does not cease. / I stand alone with my choice / Freely made. My future no unsure. / The security of that not chosen gone. / I fear some are hurt by my choosing / And that weighs my spirit down. / My ears ring with a bitter voice, / "Well, I hope you got what you wanted." / My God, are you in the choosing? / I do not know..... Grana, Janice. Images. St. Mary's College Press, Winona, MN. 1976.

In our society our being chosen always implies that others are not chosen. But this is not true for God. God chooses his Son to reveal to us our chosenness. In the Kingdom of God there is no competition or rivalry. The Son of God shares his chosenness with us. In the Kingdom of God each person is precious and unique, and each person has been given eyes to see the chosenness of others and rejoice in it. Henri Nouwen

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com
Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs. 47-50. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)
Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs. 33-36. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)
Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 20011. Pgs. 39-42. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)