



LIVING THE GOSPEL



**Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 25th 2026**

Theme: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Gathering Prayer

All: Almighty ever-living God, direct our actions according to your good pleasure, that in the name of your beloved Son, we may abound in good works. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:12-23

¹² Hearing that John had been arrested he went back to Galilee, ¹³ and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:

*¹⁵ Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!
Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan,
Galilee of the nations!
¹⁶ The people that lived in darkness
Has seen a great light;
On those who dwell in the land and shadow of death
A light has dawned.*

¹⁷ From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand'.

¹⁸ As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men'. ²⁰ And they left their nets at once and followed him.

²¹ Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² at once, leaving the boat and their father, they followed him.

²³ He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

Gospel Focus

The death of John the Baptist marks a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. John's mission to prepare the way has concluded: Jesus' mission must begin in earnest. Likewise, as a church, we must enter into the "substance" of Ordinary Time: the

teaching, proclaiming, and curing works of Jesus. Thus, we return this week to Matthew's Gospel (where we will remain until nearly halfway through Lent) and hear the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. The good news of Jesus starts with an invitation to the first apostles: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." We are invited to follow Jesus the same way this liturgical season, which is far more than an in-between for Christmas, Lent and Easter. As these apostles come to know Jesus in his ministry and teaching, so will we. Each teaching from Jesus and each miracle that Jesus works is an invitation to see more clearly who Jesus is for us.

Gospel Reflection

In the Gospel of Matthew, the account of Jesus' forty days in the desert-fasting, resisting the temptations of the devil, quoting Scripture, and being ministered to by the angels-immediately precedes the passage that we hear today. These preparations in the desert make him ready to begin his prophetic ministry.

The Gospel of John notes that after Jesus' baptism, he spent time baptizing in the Judean countryside, while John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim (Jn 3:22-23), a location likely in Samaria. Matthew's gospel picks up the story with John having been arrested, which prompts Jesus to return to Galilee. It is likely that John had moved on to Galilee with his baptizing ministry, since it is Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, who imprisons him (Matt 14:1-12). The reason for Jesus' return to Galilee may have been to pick up where John left off. This is an ominous move. Jesus does not go to his hometown of Nazareth, a sleepy village of a few hundred families, but to Capernaum, a bustling fishing town on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was located at the crossroads of Herod and Philip the Tetrarch, along the Via Maris, the "Way of the Sea," the international trade route that connected Damascus and Syria with Phoenicia and Egypt. This was a strategic choice by Jesus. The light he would ignite with his preaching, teaching, and healing would have a far greater reach from such a locale.

One of the things the gospels recount is that, like moths drawn to light, others are attracted to Jesus' invitation to share in "catching" people in the net of the reign of God that is now at hand. It is a communal endeavor. In today's gospel, two pairs of brothers are called. In Luke's Gospel, Mary from Magdala, another important fishing village on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, follows Jesus and ministers along with Joanna, Susanna and many other Galilean women (Luke 8:2-3); their healing has prompted them to join Jesus to be agents of healing for others. The response of the disciples in today's gospel also initiates radical changes in their lives. They leave their occupation, though they bring their skills with them to be used in a new way. There are also changes in their family relationships, as the relationship with Jesus and devotion to his mission becomes a hub for the mission. While it is said that James and John left their father, later episodes in the gospel imply that in the case of Peter, his family home becomes a hub for the mission, in which his family members play an important role (see, for example, Matt 8: 14-17).

Together, Jesus and his disciples spread the light of hope for those who struggle against the despair of disease, illness and sin. The forces that tried to extinguish this light in John will be no more successful in doing so with Jesus and his followers.

Old and New Testament links

First Reading — Isaiah 8:23-9:3

^{8:23} In days past the Lord humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in days to come he will confer glory on the Way of the Sea on the far side of Jordan, province of the nations...

^{9:1} The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. ² You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase; they rejoice in your presence as men rejoice at harvest time, as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils.

³ For the yoke that was weighing on him, the bar across his shoulders, the rod of his oppressor, these you break as on the day of Midian.

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

R: The Lord is my light and my help.

The Lord is my light and my help; whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; before whom shall I shrink? **(R)**

There is one thing I ask of the Lord, for this I long,
to live in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life,
to savour the sweetness of the Lord, to behold his temple. **(R)**

I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living.
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart. Hope in the Lord! **(R)**

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make up the differences between you, and instead of disagreeing among yourselves, to be united again in your belief and practice. ¹¹ From what Chloe's people have been telling me, my dear brothers, it is clear that there are serious differences among you. ¹² what I mean are all these slogans that you have, like: 'I am for Paul', 'I am for Apollos', 'I am for Cephas', 'I am for Christ'. ¹³ Has Christ been parceled out? Was it Paul that was crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?...

¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News, and not to preach that in the terms of philosophy in which the crucifixion of Christ cannot be expressed.

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878. Finally, it belongs to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry that it has a *personal character*. Although Christ's ministers act in communion with one another, they also always act in a personal way. Each one is called personally: "You, follow me"(Jn 21:22; Cf. Mt 4:19. 21; Jn 1:4) in order to be a personal witness within the common mission, to bear personal responsibility before him who gives the mission, acting "in his person" and for other persons: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..."; "I absolve you...."

1720. The New Testament uses several expressions to characterize the beatitude to which God calls man:

- the coming of the Kingdom of God;(Cf. Mt 4:17)—the vision of God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"(Mt 5:8; cf. 1 Jn 2; 1 Cor 13:12)
- entering into the joy of the Lord;(Mt 25:21-23)
- entering into God's rest(Cf. Heb 4:7-11)

There we shall rest and see, we shall see and love, we shall love and praise. Behold what will be at the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end?(St. Augustine, De civ. Dei 22, 30, 5: PL 41,804)

1989. The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is *conversion*, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt 4:17) Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man. (Council of Trent (1547): DS 1528)

Sharing and Discussion

1. What does discipleship mean, and what does it mean to live as a disciple? Has following Jesus grown into a way of life for you, beyond your initial response?
2. Repentance opens the door to the Kingdom. Do you experience repentance as a freeing invitation from God rather than a demand driven by fear?
3. Jesus invites the disciples into a shared journey of following Him. How does belonging to a community help you live out discipleship, grow in faith, and respond to Christ's call?

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Loving God, you call us by name and know all our needs. Hear these prayers and answer them according to your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Facilitator: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen