

Matthew 4:12-17  
Into the Darkness He Shines

Katie and I had an awesome experience in Savannah last week for the Georgia Baptist convention. It was a busy time, but a time where we had the privilege of being encouraged and prayerfully encouraged others as well. Time for us was short. My responsibilities were over at the convention after 4 and the convention ended a little before 6 on Tuesday evening. Wednesday morning at 10 Adalee had an event at her school at 10:30 that we were not going to miss. So, we got up about 4 something on Wednesday to ensure that we would make it back to see Adalee's Thanksgiving program and eat with her at her school afterwards.

When we started up the road back to Covington it was dark and we progressively watched the sun come up in our rear view mirror while the moon was ahead of us. I remember Katie saying from the backseat, "It got light fast, it was just night just a moment ago and now it is bright as day." It was neat to see that sun, not even in its height having a devastating effect on the darkness. Suddenly, the sun came up, night was over, and a new day was dawning.

We are studying Matthew as a Church on Sunday mornings and we are seeing Matthew paint a portrait of Jesus as the King of Kings, the long expected Messiah who was promised to bring order back into the world, who was coming to bring help and healing to a world desperate for salvation. Last time we were together we saw Jesus be baptized by John and then we saw him being led by the Spirit to be tempted by the Devil. Where everyone else had failed, Jesus was tempted in all ways like we are except with no sin.

Today in our passage we see this Jesus personally proclaiming his mission and purpose. Let's look at it together.

#### READ TEXT

Do you see Jesus mission? Jesus mission is to bring light to the darkness; to devastate the darkness with his light. Today from this text let's learn of the mission of Jesus as we see his glorious light shining into darkness

### **1. Jesus is the Fulfillment of the Hope of the World (12)**

Just after Jesus comes from the victory over the Devil's temptation, he learns that John has been arrested. Remember who John is. John is the baptizer, the one who came preaching in the wilderness a call for repentance and assuring that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. In chapter 3 we learn that John was the forerunner to the Christ, the one who was preparing the way for Jesus to come. We learn that Jerusalem and all the region around the Jordan were coming to him. John is the representative of the hope of the Old Testament. This is why John is standing in the wilderness by a river, he is saying that there is one who is coming who is going to lead the people of God into the Promised Land.

It is after John is arrested that Jesus takes the public scene in his ministry. Why is this so significant? Jesus says of John in Matthew 11 that, *Among those born of women there has*

*arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:11)* John's ministry was to yield to one greater, the ministry of the Old Testament was to lead us to Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

When we say Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament what do we think of? Often some are inclined to think about certain prophecies that Jesus came fulfilling and that is as deep as we go. What I want us to do this morning is to think a little deeper. Yes Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, yes the Old Testament points to Jesus, but what does that mean? Often we think in terms of Old and New as relevant and irrelevant. You want a new car, most of us don't keep our old one. You want a new bedroom suite, most are okay to pay for the disposal fee of the old bedroom suite. We are not to think in those terms when we consider Holy Scripture.

Jesus waits until John is imprisoned purposefully. Jesus didn't want to seem like he was competing with John. John and Jesus are not telling different messages, there are not two ways to God, there is one way to God. Listen closely, the way to God is through the Son of the Scriptures. Mark this as we study Matthew: One of Matthew's key phrases is, *this was to fulfill, or so that this might be fulfilled. Why? Because we don't want just any Jesus, we want the Jesus who has come according to Scripture. This is why Paul says what he says in one of the most significant passages in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures....*

Jesus has come to fulfill the longing and expectant hope of the Old Testament. What is the expectant hope of the Old Testament? Hope for the world. The Bible is the true story of the whole world. This is why we begin in Genesis with creation. This is not just your story, this is our story, everyone's story. And if this is everyone's story then we all have the same hope. All of our hopes and dreams come true in Jesus. The hope that we have is a hope of salvation in the Son who by fellowshiping with us causes us to fellowship with God for all of eternity. He has come to take our lives to conceal our lives in God's own life (Col. 3:3) - enfolding our lives into his very own, uniting us with himself (theosis) for all eternity. That is good news!

This is why verses 13-16 are so powerful. Verses 13-16 show the situation that Jesus has walked into. Jesus has walked into a land that was fast bound by sin and nature's night in order to shine the brightest light into the darkest night. And even the darkest night was no match for him. You see:

## **2. Jesus Turns the Darkest Night into the Brightest Day (13-16)**

And, by the way, of course he is the brightest of all lights. This is our confession, that he is the only begotten of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father. As Colossians says: *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:15-20 ESV)*

So what do we see him doing after he hears that John is arrested? He goes down to Galilee. The reason? Really only one reason; not because it was a safe place, or that he was avoiding the authorities. The reason - *so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled.*

This is a reference from Isaiah 9, but before we can appreciate Isaiah 9 we need to move to Isaiah 6. Hold your place in Matthew and find Isaiah 6.

As you are turning over there let me tell you a little about Isaiah. Isaiah is a book filled with imagery of light. The people of God were to be a light to the nations (Isa. 49) but instead chose unfaithfulness through their own stubborn sinfulness. Isaiah 1:21-2:5 sums up the darkness the people of God enjoy and encourages them to *walk in the light of the LORD*. Isaiah promises a day coming when *though their sins be as scarlet they would be as white as snow and though the hare red like crimson they would become as white as wool.* (Isa. 1:18-20)

Isaiah 6-9 has a common thread - grace coming through judgment. Such a theme should sound familiar to our ears after our experience of the Cross of Christ who brought grace through judgment.

Let's look first at Isaiah 6. This passage is one of the most famous in the book. Isaiah has a glorious vision of the throne room of God, a vision that prompts his awe-struck surrender to the purposes of God. He goes from woe is me (judgment) to here I am send me (grace).

Isaiah 7 tells of the fall of King Ahaz which eventually led to the Assyrian invasion which brought desolation (judgment). But, God promises a miraculous Son who is to come to bring deliverance (grace).

Isaiah 8 continues the story of chapter 7. Isaiah 8 tells the story of judgment - the people have gotten themselves into an absolute mess by choosing to trust in themselves instead of waiting on the LORD. Isaiah 8 shows the deepness of darkness. Look at 8:20-22.

But, thankfully the book chooses to not end in the night of chapter 8. Morning is coming, and with it comes warmth, peace, serenity, joy. Grace comes with the morning. Look at chapter 9 of Isaiah. (Read 9:1-7)

What does Jesus do in Matthew? The first place that he begins his ministry is in the darkest place. Look at the language in Matthew 4:16. In the deepest and darkest of places - the land of the nations a people cut off from revelation, a people lost in the dark groping for any light, trying to find satisfaction but never being satisfied, trying to find joy but finding sadness, looking for love but seeing selfishness, a people in darkness on THEM a light has dawned.

God took the initiative. God determined to bring salvation regardless of how lost they were in deep darkness. They didn't come up for the light, they were not on some quest and once they fulfilled the quest the lights came on. Out of nowhere a light appeared. God is solely responsible for salvation.

And look at his message, verse 17 - Repent. Why? For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. What is repentance? Not simply turning away from something but turning towards something. And what does Jesus desire us to turn towards? Jesus desires us to turn towards him. Who is he?

The light of the world who stepped down into darkness, the one who opened our eyes and let us see beauty, let us know love.

Number 3 this AM:

### **3. Jesus Cannot Be Ignored (17)**

If he is this light and we are in darkness, he cannot be ignored. What he does is completely unavoidable. It is amazing what he does, the gospel message is a message that the world will never get over. This is why we sing: *How deep the Father's love for us, How vast beyond all measure, That He would give his only Son, To make a wretch his treasure.*

The way the kingdom comes, the way the light dawns is by Him, Jesus, the Christ, the Eternal Son of God, being our salvation. He, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but *emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (Philippians 2:6-11 ESV)

This is why we love him, this is why he is the object of our affections, the one that we worship - we have seen the light.

Light looked down and beheld Darkness.  
Thither will I go, said Light.  
Peace looked down and beheld War.  
Thither will I go, said Peace.  
Love looked down and beheld Hatred.  
Thither will I go, said Love.  
So came Light and shone.  
So came Peace and gave rest.  
So came Love and brought life.  
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.  
- L. Houseman

Do you know him? Is he beautiful to you? Do you love him? He loves you.