

# FIRST STEPS

## MATTHEW 4.12-25



*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

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First Steps: Matthew 4.12-25  
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## Matthew 4.12-25: Introduction

Immediately after His victory over the devil in the wilderness, and upon learning that John had been imprisoned, Jesus began His public ministry. It was a ministry of good works and true words, and by all measures, it got off to a flying start.

He called His first disciples and began both to show and teach what it meant that the Kingdom of God was at hand. His first steps in ministry are instructive for us as we consider how we must serve the Lord in our own Personal Mission Field.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 Light in a Dark Place

*Pray Psalm 66.1-4.*

Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!  
Sing out the honor of His name;  
Make His praise glorious.  
Say to God,  
“How awesome are Your works!  
Through the greatness of Your power  
Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.  
All the earth shall worship You  
And sing praises to You;  
They shall sing praises *to* Your name.”

*Sing joyously Psalm 66.1-4.*

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Shout for joy to God, all people, sing the glory of His Name!  
Give Him glorious praise and say, “How great Your pow’r and great Your fame!  
All the earth shall worship gladly as they praise Your glorious Name!”

*Read Matthew 4.1-16; meditate on verses 12-16*

*Prepare.*

1. What seems to have prompted Jesus to return to Galilee?
2. Which Old Testament prophecy did Jesus fulfill by doing this?

*Meditate.*

Jesus did nothing without redemptive purpose. All His movements were planned and executed with a view to fulfilling all the Word of God. We have already seen – both in the genealogy of Jesus and the visit of the Magi – that the Good News Jesus brings is for the whole world, and not just for the people of Israel. Here again, Jesus signals the broad scope of His mission, He returns to “Galilee of the Gentiles.”

Jesus remained in the wilderness, being ministered to by angels, until He heard the report that John had been imprisoned (we’ll learn more about this in two subsequent chapters). The ministry of the trailblazer had come to its end; now it was time for Jesus to begin His own work.

We might wonder, “Why didn’t He go to Jerusalem? Why did He return to a place that had a bad reputation?” (cf. Jn. 1.45, 46)

We remember, first, that He was to be regarded as a “Nazarene” – with all the implications attached to that (Matt. 2.22, 23). Second, the Old Testament had specifically prophesied that the light of God’s salvation would shine in the darkest of places – where Israel shares borders with pagan Gentile peoples. Third, by recalling verbatim this prophecy from Isaiah 9.1, 2, Matthew also signaled the greater and all-conquering mission of Jesus, referred to in Isaiah 9.3-7: “For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given...” By beginning His earthly ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles, Jesus fulfilled the first part of Isaiah’s prophecy (vv. 1, 2). The end of that same prophecy – vv. 6, 7 – would be realized in Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. The middle part – vv. 3-5 – with the images of

rejoicing and conquest and death, would be fulfilled during the rest of Jesus' earthly ministry.

By including this detail – about His returning to Galilee of the Gentiles – and quoting from Isaiah's prophecy, Matthew tells us volumes about the work Jesus came to do. It was a work of Light in the darkness, of victory in a great warfare, of exaltation to a Kingdom that would never end. And it all began in the most unlikely of places – Galilee of the Gentiles.

*Reflect.*

1. What did the fact that Jesus began His ministry in Galilee signal about His work?
2. Why is light a good way of thinking about what Jesus came to do?
3. Since Jesus could bring light to darkness in an unlikely place like Galilee of the Gentiles, how should this encourage us?

*Those who are without Christ, are in the dark. They were sitting in this condition, a contented posture; they chose it rather than light; they were willingly ignorant. When the gospel comes, light comes; when it comes to any place, when it comes to any soul, it makes day there. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Matthew 4.12*

*Be the light on my path today, O Lord, and help me to follow You obediently as I...*

*Pray Psalm 66.5-20.*

Praise God for the great works He does, especially those He has done in saving and sanctifying you for His Kingdom. Pray for those you will see today, that God will give you an opportunity to share with them what He has done for your soul.

*Sing Psalm 66.5-20.*

**Psalm 66.5-20** (Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Great and awesome is our Savior in the works which He has done.

He the sea and river dried to let His people cross as one.

Then our joy was great to worship Him our mighty, sovereign One.

He the nations watches ever – all you rebels, humbled be.

Bless our God, all men and nations, praise His Name eternally!

He preserves our souls, and He will keep His paths beneath our feet.

You have tried us, Lord, as silver, and have brought us into nets,

made us carry heavy burdens, let men trample o'er our heads.

But through all Your grace sustained us and has brought us through to rest.

To Your house we come with offerings, what we vowed, Lord, help us do.

O, receive our praise and homage as we give ourselves to You.

Come and listen, all who fear Him: hear what this great God can do!

When we cried to You, You answered, filled our mouths with highest praise.

Let not sin abide within us, lest we languish all our days.

Bless the Lord, Who hears our pleadings and preserves His love always.

## 2 The Gospel of the Kingdom

*Pray Psalm 98.4-6*

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;  
Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.  
Sing to the LORD with the harp,  
With the harp and the sound of a psalm,  
With trumpets and the sound of a horn;  
Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.

*Sing with conviction Psalm 98.4-6.*

(Duke Street: *Come, Let Us Sing unto the Lord*)

Raise to the Lord your loudest voice! Break forth and sing! Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Praise, praise to You our God and King, with all our hearts and strength we bring!

*Read Matthew 4.1-17; meditate on verse 17*

*Prepare.*

1. What did Jesus begin to do when He returned to Galilee?
2. How was the message Jesus preached similar to that which John preached?

*Meditate.*

Matthew records the first words of public ministry spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. His was a message of repentance and Good News: The Gospel of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God had come to earth in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. For now, that was a strictly local presence; wherever Jesus was, the Kingdom was, because Jesus is its King. But that would all change, and Jesus, by His life and teaching, was preparing His followers to receive, not just eternal life, but the Kingdom of God.

Jesus will begin to show us now what the Kingdom is like, and why it is such Good News – such great Good News that, following His example, we must seek every opportunity to proclaim it. Matthew summarizes the content of Jesus’ message, which reminds us very much of what John the Baptist preached. The Kingdom has come near, and repentance is the key to entering it. Those who were attracted by what Jesus preached and did, and who wanted to enter His Kingdom, must repent of all known sins, and maintain the discipline of repentance for as often as sin returns in their lives.

For this is the Kingdom of heaven – literally, the Kingdom which has its origins in heaven, which manifests the pure and holy character of heaven, and which extends as far as the heavens extend above and throughout the vast cosmos. The Gospel Jesus preached was not merely one of forgiveness and eternal life. It was that, but it was much, much more – as we shall see. The Gospel of the Kingdom comes with the intent of setting things right with God, of restoring the brokenness, corruption, ruin, and desolation of the sin-filled world, and of making all things new by the power of grace and truth. We are not preaching the same Gospel as Jesus unless we preach it as He did, requiring repentance as the entrance requirement and badge of citizenship, and looking for the healing of souls and all creation and culture.

We cannot construe the meaning of Jesus’ life and teaching in any other way. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a cosmic Gospel. “He comes to make His blessings flow/far as the curse is found...” And

since the curse of the father of lies reaches to all aspects of the groaning creation (Rom. 8.20-22), the Gospel we believe must impel us, following the example of Jesus, to bring the healing power of grace and truth to everything in our lives.

*Reflect.*

1. Why is repentance so necessary a part of life in the Kingdom?
2. We would expect the Kingdom of heaven to be vastly different from all earthly kingdoms. In what ways?
3. Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of heaven had come near. What is our role in continuing that proclamation in our day?

*“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This refers to the blessedness of the heavenly kingdom, which God has prepared for the faithful. The message is to prepare yourselves by penance and by patience to receive the blessedness of the heavenly kingdom. Anonymous (no date), *Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 6**

*Use me today, Lord, by my life and words, to live and proclaim Your Kingdom, as I...*

*Pray Psalm 98.1-3, 7-9.*

Rejoice in the salvation of the Lord, and commit this day for making His Good News known to as many people as you can. Encourage your fellow believers, and talk with your unbelieving friends, keeping in mind that the Lord is coming one day to judge the earth and gather into His Kingdom all who love and serve Him.

*Sing Psalm 98.1-3, 7-9.*

**Psalm 98.1-3, 7-9** (Duke Street: *Come, Let Us Sing unto the Lord*)

Come, let us sing unto the Lord new songs of praise with one accord!  
Wonderful things our God has done: Jesus has our salvation won!

Now let the whole creation ‘round burst into song with joyous sound!  
Jesus will come to judge the earth; let all proclaim His matchless worth!

### 3 The Big Frogs

*Pray Psalm 42.1-3.*

As the deer pants for the water brooks,  
So pants my soul for You, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?  
My tears have been my food day and night,  
While they continually say to me,  
“Where is your God?”

*Sing joyfully Psalm 42.1-3.*

(Nettleton: [Come Thou Fount](#))

As the deer pants for fresh water let my soul, Lord, pant for You!  
Let my soul thirst as it ought to for the Savior, ever true!  
Tears by day have been my portion, tears by night have been my food,  
While my foes add to my sorrow, saying, “Where now is your God?”

*Read Matthew 4.1-20; meditate on verses 18-20*

*Prepare.*

1. Who were the first disciples? What was their occupation?
2. What did Jesus promise in calling them?

*Meditate.*

The defeat and binding of Satan was an important first victory in Jesus’ work. The next would be almost as big.

There’s an old saying that goes, “If you have to swallow a frog, don’t spend too much time looking at it. If you have to swallow a lot of frogs, start with the big one.”

This is what we see Jesus doing in these first twenty verses of Matthew 4. Having swallowed the big frog by defeating the devil, He now takes up the second big frog: winning disciples.

For Jesus to heal diseases, calm the seas, give sight to the blind, even bring people back from the dead – as marvelous as these seem to us, they were not His greatest challenge. His greatest challenge would be taking back His own life from the grave, as we shall see. But winning a human soul is a great challenge as well, and requires a miracle of God, which only Jesus can accomplish.

Human beings, after all, have what winds and seas and diseases don’t have – a will. And the human will is bent, corrupted, and focused inward because of sin. For Jesus to exert power over a human will, so that people willingly and gladly come to Him, is a remarkable and miraculous achievement. It requires a work of God’s Spirit in the inner person, transforming us from one kind of being into another, from one domain into another, and from one focus to another.

And Jesus accomplishes it with a simple, powerful Word: “Follow Me.”

Peter and Andrew were not the sort of people one might select to begin a world-changing

movement. Neither are you or I. But Jesus knew what He was doing with them, and He knows what He's doing with us. He is working in us to make us "fishers of men." Peter and Andrew seized on that image, although they could not possibly have understood what it meant. Like them, we are called to be fishers of men, to reach the souls of people – lost and saved – and point them to Jesus. If we can help people to see Jesus, like Peter and Andrew did, He'll take it from there.

These men were so compelled by Jesus' call that they left their work and went after Him. This was not their first encounter with Jesus (cf. Jn. 1.40-42), and it would not be the decisive one for Peter (cf. Lk. 5.1-8). But Matthew wants us to understand that following Jesus means being willing to surrender everything for the sake of taking up His calling and agenda.

We're not all called to leave our occupations, families, or settled way of life. But we are all called to follow Jesus, and to reach out to the souls of people around us with the Good News of His Kingdom and righteousness.

*Reflect.*

1. How would you explain what it means to be a "fisher of men"?
2. Why do you think Peter and Andrew followed Jesus so immediately?
3. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend what it means to follow Jesus?

*So the Lord chose fishermen who in a better way of plying their fishing trade were converted from earthly to heavenly fishing, that they might catch the human race for salvation like fish from the deep waters of error, according to what the Lord himself said to them: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Chromatius (fl. 400), Tractate on Matthew 16.2*

*Today, Lord, I go as a fisher of men into my Personal Mission Field. Help me to...*

*Pray Psalm 42.4-11.*

In times like these, it can be easy for our souls to be cast down. Look to Jesus, and call on Him. Let His Word, like the sound of mighty waves and billows, surround, buoy, and protect you for the day ahead.

*Sing Psalm 42.4-11.*

**Psalm 42.4-11** (Nettleton: [\*Come Thou Fount\*](#))

Now I pour my soul out in me as these thoughts come to my mind.  
And I long to once again be where true worship I might find.  
Oh my soul, be not despairing! Hope in God, and praise His Name!  
For the Lord, your burden bearing, will restore your peace again.

Oh my God, my soul is weary, therefore I remember You.  
Let Your grace and goodness near be, and Your promise, firm and true.  
Lord, when trials and fears surround me, Your commands will be my song;  
When distresses sore confound me, Your great love will keep me strong.

Lord, forget me not in mourning 'neath my foes' oppressing hand.  
See their mocking, hear their scorning; help my weary soul to stand.  
Hope in God, praise Him forever when despair on you has trod.

Look to Jesus; never, never doubt your gracious, saving God.

## 4 And Again

*Pray Psalm 110.5-7.*

The Lord is at Your right hand;  
He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.  
He shall judge among the nations,  
He shall fill *the places* with dead bodies,  
He shall execute the heads of many countries.  
He shall drink of the brook by the wayside;  
Therefore He shall lift up the head.

*Sing contemplatively Psalm 110.5-7.*

(Aurelia: [\*The Church's One Foundation\*](#))

The Lord at Your right hand, Lord, in wrath shall shatter kings,  
when judgment by His strong Word He to the nations brings.  
Then, all His foes defeated, He takes His hard-won rest,  
in glorious triumph seated with us, redeemed and blessed!

*Read Matthew 4.1-22; meditate on verses 21, 22.*

*Prepare.*

1. Who were the next disciples to be called?
2. How did they respond to Jesus?

*Meditate.*

Jesus was not some Pied Piper, using His wiles to draw the people to follow Him. He wasn't calling people for a romp; He was calling them to die (Bonhoeffer). He knew those He had come to save. He knew that they had been chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1.4). In calling these first disciples, Jesus was manifesting both the power and the certainty of His Word. When Jesus calls His chosen ones, they drop whatever they're doing and follow Him. James and John could no more resist that powerful call than could Andrew and Peter.

What about us? Paul says God has called us to His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2.12). This is the call that greets us every morning as we rise, and from which we rest at the end of the day. The Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, Who generates in us power to be witnesses for our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 14.17, 18; 1 Cor. 4.20; Acts 1.8). Is this the defining motif of our lives? Are we, first and foremost, seekers of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6.33)? Do we see our individual callings – whatever they may be – as arenas in which, and ourselves as conduits through which, the rule of King Jesus is coming on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6.10; 1 Cor. 10.31)?

The first disciples left home, family, and work to follow Jesus. In a certain sense, we must all be prepared to do the same. God has spoken His Word over us; our duty is to hear and obey. James and John, like Andrew and Peter, may have known Jesus, or heard Him preaching the Kingdom (v. 17). When He called them, He and His message were irresistible. They wanted to be with Him. They wanted to enter that Kingdom. They gave up everything for that which they barely understood, and Him Whom they scarcely knew. But it is clear that in Jesus they glimpsed something eternal, beautiful, good, and true, and they devoted themselves to obtaining it, whatever the cost.

Their example is the model of discipleship to which we must aspire. When what we see in these disciples is true of us, we'll follow Jesus no matter how He leads us, in whatever calling He has appointed for us.

*Reflect.*

1. What does it mean for you to be called to the Kingdom and glory of God?
2. How do you seek the Kingdom and righteousness of God in your present calling?
3. How can Christians help one another to become more consistent and fruitful in seeking the Kingdom of God?

*But note both their faith and their obedience. For though they were in the midst of their work (and you know how time-consuming a chore fishing is), when they heard his command they did not delay or procrastinate. They did not say, "Let us return home, and talk things over with our family." Instead, "they left everything behind and followed," even as Elisha did when he followed Elijah. For Christ seeks this kind of obedience from us, such that we delay not even for a moment, though something absolutely most necessary should vehemently press in on us. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 14.2**

*Help me in seeking Your Kingdom and righteousness today, Lord Jesus, especially as I...*

*Pray Psalm 110.1-4.*

Jesus rules as King at the Father's right hand, and we are those He sends out each day like the refreshing morning dew. Whom will the Lord refresh through you today? How will you serve the progress of His Kingdom in your calling?

*Sing Psalm 110.1-4.*

**Psalm 110.1-4** (Aurelia: [The Church's One Foundation](#))

"Sit by Me at My right hand," the Lord says to my Lord,  
"Until I make Your foot stand on all who hate Your Word."  
From in His Church the Savior rules all His enemies;  
while those who know His favor go forth the Lord to please.

Filled with the Spirit's power, in holy robes of love,  
from early morning's hour they serve their Lord above.  
Christ reigns a priest forever, the King of Righteousness  
and King of Peace who ever His chosen ones will bless.

## 5 True Words, Good Works

Pray Psalm 24.3, 4.

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?  
Or who may stand in His holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,  
Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,  
Nor sworn deceitfully.

Sing Psalm 24.3 4.

(Foundation: [How Firm a Foundation](#))  
Oh, who may ascend to the Lord's holy place?  
And who may appear to His glorious face?  
All they who are clean in their hearts and their hands  
And true in their souls with the Savior shall stand.

Read Matthew 4.1-23; meditate on verse 23.

Prepare.

1. What activities characterized Jesus' ministry?
2. Where was He doing His work?

Meditate.

It is significant that, in Acts 1.8, Jesus promised His disciples – and us through them – that the coming of the Holy Spirit would empower them to *be* His witnesses – not just *do* witnessing.

Jesus provides the template in what it means to *be* a witness to the living God and His Kingdom. Being a witness for Jesus involves true words and good works; and this is true for individual believers and for their churches, which are the Body of Christ in their community.

Preaching and teaching are different but complementary activities. Preaching is *proclamatory*, while teaching is more *explanatory*. Jesus did each of these, and as His witnesses, we must learn to do them, too.

Jesus' Personal Mission Field at this time was Galilee. Each of us has a Personal Mission Field as well; we need to make sure we have identified and are working it daily.

Jesus went to where the people were – in synagogues, mainly. But He also welcomed the people to come to Him with all their various sicknesses and diseases. He healed them all. He did good to people, because bringing the goodness of God into the land of the living is what the Good News of the Kingdom is all about.

In general, we should lead the way, in our Personal Mission Field, by doing good to people. Not everyone who needs a touch of God's goodness will be sick or diseased. They may be lacking a material need, or a helping hand, a thoughtful gesture – assistance of some kind. Like Jesus, we bear witness to the Kingdom when we bring it near to such people by our good works. Then, by sharing the true words of God's love for them in Jesus Christ, we round out our witness with proclamations, explanations, answers to questions, and ongoing conversations.

Paul commanded us to imitate him as he imitated Jesus (1 Cor. 11.1). We do well to consider the extent to which we – who are appointed as Jesus’ witnesses in the world – are actually imitating Him in our daily lives.

*Reflect.*

1. Have you mapped out your Personal Mission Field? Watch this brief video ([click here](#)), then download the worksheet and get started being a more consistent witness for Jesus.
2. How would you explain the Good News of God’s Kingdom to an unsaved friend?
3. How can you help your church be more consistent in doing good works and speaking true words in your community?

*By the word of divine power he cured the weaknesses of the body, but by the medicine of heavenly teaching he healed the wounds of the soul. Chromatius (fl. ca. 400), Tractate on Matthew 16.4*

*Help me, Lord, to be a faithful witness today as I...*

*Pray Psalm 24.1, 2, 5-10.*

All that you are and have belongs to the Lord, and you are His as well. Open wide the gates of your soul and ask God to use you with true words and good works today.

*Sing Psalm 24.1, 2, 5-10.*

**Psalm 24.1, 2, 5-10** (Foundation: [How Firm a Foundation](#))

The earth is the Lord’s, as is all it contains;  
the world and its peoples He daily sustains.  
He founded it fast on the seas long ago,  
and bid gentle rivers throughout it to flow.

A blessing all they from the Lord shall receive  
who seek Him and on His salvation believe.  
For these are His people, the children of grace,  
who earnestly, eagerly seek for His face.

O lift up your heads, all you gates of the soul,  
for the Savior would enter and render you whole!  
The Lord strong and mighty in battle draws nigh;  
He rules in His glory above us on high.

O Who is this King, Who approaches our gate?  
His might is before us, His glory is great!  
This King is the Lord of all glory above,  
Who comes to indwell us in mercy and love!

## 6 Drawing Power

*Pray Psalm 115.1-3.*

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,  
But to Your name give glory,  
Because of Your mercy,  
Because of Your truth.  
Why should the Gentiles say,  
“So where is their God?”  
But our God is in heaven;  
He does whatever He pleases.

*Sing joyfully Psalm 115.1-3.*

(Plainfield: [\*Nothing but the Blood of Jesus\*](#))

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!  
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!  
Why should the nations cry, "Where is their God on high?"  
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

*Read Matthew 4.1-25; meditate on verses 24, 25.*

*Prepare.*

1. What does Matthew mean by Jesus' "fame"? How does His fame spread today?
2. What was the result of Jesus' faithful ministry in His Personal Mission Field?

*Meditate.*

Our text should cause us to ponder the times we're going through: Sick people, diseased people, people who are frightened, people who have no hope – desperate people of all sorts flocked in great numbers to the faithful witness of good works and true words. They came by their own strength, or were brought by friends. And when they came to where Jesus was, He did not disappoint: "He healed them."

Jesus' ministry in Galilee was not restricted to Jews. People from Syria, Decapolis (the ten cities east of the Jordan between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea), and "beyond the Jordan" among the Gentiles – people from all over came to Jesus. He received them, spoke Good News to them, and healed their diseases. Thus He shows us the power of a faithful witness.

No wonder "the fame" of Jesus spread rapidly throughout that region. People are made to know and enjoy God and His goodness. Sin has blighted the souls and lives of all people, even those who are not aware of it. Jesus came to restore the world to that good and upright condition in which God made it (Gen. 1.31; Eccl. 7.29; Jn. 3.16; 2 Cor. 5.17-21), and when people realize *this* is what Jesus is all about, they flock to Him in great multitudes.

Have we been sending wrong signals to the world about Jesus? Have we conveyed a false understanding of what Jesus is about, and what He can do? At this time, when so many people pass their days under a pall of uncertainty and dread, we who, like Peter and Andrew and James and John, have left all to follow Jesus, need to make sure our witness is what the Lord intends. What opportunities for doing good works and speaking true words are before us today? How can we cause the fame of Jesus and the Good News of His Kingdom to come to the attention of the people we

know? We may realistically expect that, if we bring our work in our own Personal Mission Fields into line with what Jesus did in His, dramatic and positive and God-honoring results will ensue.

*Reflect.*

1. Would you say the fame of Jesus is spreading throughout your Personal Mission Field? Explain.
2. What can you do to make sure that you are available and ready each day to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ? What might you expect if you do?
3. How can believers encourage one another to be more faithful in our witness in our own Personal Mission Field?

*Since as then "his fame went out into Syria," so now into the whole world. And they indeed ran together when they heard that he healed demon-possessed people. And you, after having much more and greater experience of his power, do you not rouse yourself and run? John Chrysostom (344-407), The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 14.3*

*Use me today, Lord, for the fame of Jesus Christ, as I...*

*Pray Psalm 115.9-18.*

In a time like this – indeed, at all times – we need to remember that God is sovereign, that He does all things well, works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, and that He works good through those who know Him to show His love to the world. Pray that He will use you thus today.

*Sing Psalm 115.9-18.*

**Psalm 115.9-18** (Plainfield: [\*Nothing but the Blood of Jesus\*](#))

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory! –  
find in Him their help and shield – ever to Your Name be glory!  
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!  
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious Lord – ever to Your Name be glory –  
will attend us evermore – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,  
all who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore  
and bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

## 7 The Power of the Kingdom

*Pray Psalm 111.1-3.*

Praise the LORD!

I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,  
In the assembly of the upright and *in* the congregation.

The works of the LORD *are* great,  
Studied by all who have pleasure in them.  
His work is honorable and glorious,  
And His righteousness endures forever.

*Sing joyfully Psalm 111.1-3.*

(Manoah: [When All Your Mercies, O My God](#))

Praise the Lord! O let my heart give praise here amid His chosen race!  
Your works are great, O Lord, and sought by all who know their grace.

For Your work is full of splendor, Lord, and of majesty most pure;  
Your righteousness, O glorious God, forever will endure!

*Read aloud and meditate on Matthew 4.1-25.*

*Prepare.*

1. Summarize Jesus' first steps in ministry, following His temptation by the devil.
2. How would you describe the results of Jesus' ministry?

*Meditate.*

Jesus' first steps in ministry are defining in many ways. We can learn much from verses 12-25 about what our own "works of ministry" (Eph. 4.12) should entail.

First, we note that Jesus began His ministry in a *specific place*. He had a [Personal Mission Field](#), which God had prepared for Him, where He began His work, and from which His work expanded. Each of us has a Personal Mission Field as well, and Jesus has sent us there as surely as He was sent to earth (Jn. 20.21), and with the same mission – to bring near the Kingdom of God (Matt. 4.17).

Second, Jesus' ministry involved *words and deeds*. He wasn't just a preacher or a teacher. And He didn't just heal people of their various maladies. He did both. Underlying all He did was the message of the coming Kingdom of God (v. 17), a message which is much bigger than just helping people get saved. Jesus came to restore the goodness and uprightness with which God originally created all things. That meant His work had cosmic and not merely salvific effects: His salvation is for the *world*, and not just for our *soul*. What Jesus is sending us to do is of the same order. We are ambassadors of a Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18), and not just of helping people get to heaven.

Third, Jesus quickly began to *enlist others* in His work. He has commanded us to make disciples as well (Matt. 28.18-20), so we should always be looking for people we can teach, equip, encourage, and send in ministry, just as we have been sent. All believers are called to teach others (Heb. 5.12); this is how the Kingdom expands so that the whole earth becomes the Mission Field of God's Church.

Fourth, I have no doubt that Jesus *expected results* – *spectacular results*. He knew that people would come to Him by the thousands, and they did. What are our expectations for the Kingdom work we take up each day? Are they as hopeful as what Jesus realized? As Matthew will show us, not everyone was thrilled with Jesus' ministry, and not everyone will be thrilled with ours. But we serve a King Who is making all things new, and we should go forth conquering and to conquer with Him every day, sowing seeds, tending the Lord's field, and gathering a harvest for Him (Rev. 21.5; Rev. 6.1, 2; Ps. 126).

Finally, we want to make sure that, as we pursue our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12), that what we seek is what Jesus realized, *the fame of Jesus Christ*. We seek no glory for ourselves, but only that people might know and believe and love and follow Jesus.

May our every next step mirror the first steps of Jesus, to the praise of His glorious grace!

*Reflect.*

1. How do you apply the lessons of Jesus' first steps to your own calling?
2. How can believers encourage one another to follow Jesus according to His example?
3. Begin praying that God will help you to be more consistent in following in the first steps of Jesus. Have you mapped out your [Personal Mission Field](#)?

*An earthly king gathers together an army that by its efforts he may attain glory. The Lord gathered together his apostles not that by their efforts he might attain glory but that by his own effort he might win victory for them.*  
Anonymous (no date), *Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 8*

*Help me to follow in Your footsteps today, Lord, as I...*

*Pray Psalm 111.4-10.*

Pray that God will so work in you that you will follow Jesus every step of every day of your life.

*Sing Psalm 111.4-10.*

**Psalm 111.4-10** (Manoah: [When All Your Mercies, O My God](#))

You have caused Your many wondrous works to remain before our face.  
For You are full of mercy, Lord, and abounding all in grace.

For all who fear You, You provide; Your covenant endures.  
Your pow'r You show Your people, Lord, and make the nations theirs.

The works of Your all-sovereign hands are faithful, Lord, and just.  
Your precepts ever more are true and worthy of our trust.

You have sent redemption, to us, Lord, in Christ of cov'nant fame,  
and we in wonder, grace, and awe adore Your holy Name.

All they who would true wisdom know must learn to fear You, Lord,  
And in that wisdom daily live and praise You evermore.

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. Summarize Jesus' first steps in ministry. Why is important that we note these?
2. What were the results of Jesus' first steps in ministry?
3. What did Jesus promise those first disciples who followed Him? What does that mean for His followers today?
4. How is Jesus' Personal Mission Field instructive for us?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 4.12-25? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.