**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**The Incarnation – Part XII**

***Jesus is Calling . . .***

***Over and Through the Darkness***

**February 18th, In the Year of Our Lord 2024**

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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Today, we are going to focus on Jesus’ approach in calling His disciples and the reasons God has for the Incarnation. There have been many studies conducted to determine the locations, the times, and the relationships surrounding the calling of each disciple. With four Gospel accounts of Jesus calling the disciples, we have four complimentary reports that blend together.

**The Reason**

God has His sovereign reasons for the timing and geographic location for His Incarnation and the three-and-one-half years of ministry. One of the main messages of the Incarnation is that God chose to work through people. . .to the point of becoming one of us. Once His ministry years started, He reached out to call ordinary people to work with Him to fulfill His redemptive plan. Other than Paul and Luke, all the writers of the New Testament and Disciples were from the middle class of the Jewish community and had a basic education of their culture, being Jewish men. God is an Equal-Opportunity-Savior in that through the disciples He affords all of us an opportunity to surrender to Him despite all of our failures, rebellion and disappointments. He knows we are created in His image and therefore possess the ability to choose Him, the Messiah, for an eternal life.

Concerning the disciples, Jesus called from the Jewish community. We need to keep in mind that the Jewish community of the 1st c. was anticipating a person (the Mashiach – see sermon Jan 28, 2024) who would come to deliver them from their Roman occupiers. We can see this in the text in John 1:41. . . "We have found the Messiah " (which translated means Christ). This is in contrast to the prophesied suffering Messiah of Isaiah 53, who comes to die on the Cross for the sins of the world. . . being that unblemished sacrifice.

Jesus was in contrast to the Jews, who viewed the Temple system and High Priest as their path to be justified to God. Therefore, to accept Jesus as a substitute. . . was a hard sell. But the Jews had misunderstood the intent of the Law which was never intended to take away the penalty of sin (Hebrews 10). Jesus supplanted the whole Temple system including the priestly class and High Priest. Again, the entire Temple system was just an object lesson that was never designed or intended to take away sin or justify fallen humanity to God. The works of man can never justify a person to God (Ephesians 2:8, Romans 4). And, yes, once more, we will make the observation that Jesus prophesied the destruction of the Temple which did take place within 40 years after the Resurrection by the Romans.

**Sequence of Events**

The sequence of events in Jesus’ life chronicled in the Gospels is important because it details God’s intent for all of us. Jesus came to model the life God desires for us to live. Therefore, we see John the Baptist baptizes Jesus and then Jesus, led by the Spirit, goes into the wilderness to demonstrate His superiority over the devil. Jesus’ water baptism signified His relationship to God the Father. This is the same witness we have when we are water-baptized. Jesus was not saved nor was He emulating the act of salvation for our benefit. The act was to highlight His already established relationship with God. In Jesus’ circumstance, He was already the Messiah. Water-baptism did not make Jesus the Messiah. The act was orchestrated by God to show all humanity that Jesus was the Messiah of Isaiah 53, and that God intends to have His Holy Spirit reside within a person to withstand and defeat the tests of the devil. In fact, right after John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus goes to the wilderness to show His superiority over the devil. This sets the stage for the rest of the ministry time.

God had set aside this ministry time to showcase, to highlight. . . that He, The Creator of the world and all life, whom He gave free-will-choice. . . has the singular sovereign power and authority to incarnate Himself as one of us to demonstrate that the devil is already a defeated being. Therefore, God, as Jesus, came into this fallen world to demonstrate that the only way for fallen humanity to have a chance against the schemes of the devil is to have a heart-cut-surrender to His Holy Spirit conviction. . . thereby, enabling a person to be regenerated (reborn of Spirit) to avail God’s Spirit to guide their life. Because this fallen world is the dominion of the devil.

Many people have missed the point that this fallen world is the domain of the devil. The devil is the *power and prince of the air* and the *ruler of the fallen earth*. There are many verses declaring this fact. Remember, God created us with the potential to withstand the devil and his schemes. We are called to choose love because that is who God is (1 John 4:8). The most clarifying Scripture detailing God as love is found in 1 Corinthians 13. I see that God love is our spiritual power and authority. We read *that love is patient, kind, not jealous; doesn’t brag and is not arrogant, . . . bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things and never fails;* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). For love to be love. . . it has to be chosen and not programed or coerced over the choice of sin and death, hate and unforgiveness. This is how the devil is overcome.

Here are some key Scriptures highlighting the devil’s position.

**Luke 10:18** And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

**Revelations 12:9** And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

**Isaiah 14:12** "How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations!

**Job 1:6** Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. **7** The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

**Ephesians 2:1** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

**Ephesians 6:12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places

**John 12:30-32** 30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. 31 "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

**1 Peter 5:8** Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

**John 14:30** "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;

**John 16:11** and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

**2 Corinthians 4:4** in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

**1 John 3:8** the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

**1 John 4:4** You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

**1 John 5:19** We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Once the devil is exposed as the failure he is, Jesus continues to preach and say *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matthew 4:17). Jesus then calls His first disciples. Scripture tells us that Jesus left the area where He was Baptized and went to Capernaum, which is by the sea in the Galilee region. The large inland lake in the region is called the Sea of Galilee.

The Sea of Galilee, also Kinneret, Lake of Gennesaret, or Lake Tiberias is the largest freshwater lake in Israel, and it is approximately 33 miles in circumference, about 13 miles long, and 8.1 miles wide. The lake has a total area of 64.4 sq miles at its fullest, and a maximum depth of approximately 43 m (141 feet). At levels between 705 ft and 686 ft below sea level, it is the lowest freshwater lake on Earth and the second-lowest lake overall (after the Dead Sea, a saltwater lake). [Lake Michigan, in the U.S. is 307 miles long by 118 miles wide,

<http://coldfusion-guy.blogspot.com/2016/04/just-how-large-is-sea-of-galilee-in.html>

In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, there is a brief account given when Jesus called two sets of brothers being Simon (called Peter) & Andrew and James & John, sons of Zebedee.

**Matthew 4:18-22 (Mark 1:16-20)**

18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

21 Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them.

22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

After calling these four (4) disciples, who immediately left their current station in life and followed Jesus. . . Jesus continued His preaching and healing ministry. Jesus’ ministry soon attracted large crowds.

**Matthew 4:23-25**

23 Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

24 The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

25 Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.

In John’s Gospel, we see that after Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John, He calls Philip and Nathanael.

**John 1:43-45**

43 The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me."

44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote-- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

**Matthew 10:2-4**

The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

From reading the accounts of Jesus calling His twelve Disciples, we see that the text only records seven of the twelve where Jesus engages them in conversation at the time of their calling. The others are listed as one of the twelve in Matthew 10:2–4, Mark 3:16–19, Luke 6:14–16 and Acts 1:13–13 (minus Judas).

Peter and brother Andrew,

James and brother John the son of Zebedee,

Philip, Bartholomew (Nathanael),

Thomas,

Matthew the tax collector and brother James the sons of Alphaeus,

Thaddaeus,

Simon the Zealot,

and Judas Iscariot.

The others are listed, but there is not any description of the time or dialogue Jesus had with them regarding their initial calling. We do know that Jesus approached many of them while they were working. From reading the text, we get the visual that Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Additionally, Jesus called out in a similar way to James, John and Philip who went and found Nathanael(Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20).In Luke’s Gospel, it appears that Luke expands the conversation Jesus had with Peter recorded in Matthew and Mark. At the end of the dialogue, Luke records a similar statement by Jesus. . . "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." As compared to “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Basically, the first six apostles were called this way or in a similar way. Jesus calling Matthew (Tax Collector) to be a disciple is also a recorded conversation Jesus had with him.

I find Jesus’ recruiting methods revealing of God’s intent to reach the average person. Instead of Jesus posting a job notice (Disciples Wanted) through the normal channels of their day. . . Jesus took a stroll down to the lake, to where the commercial fishermen worked, and started recruiting. Obviously, in God’s perfect knowledge, He knew the men He recruited. . . like He knows you and I. He knew they (we) are hard-headed and stuck in their ways. Jesus knew they were Jews steeped in Hebrew religious traditions, customs and culture. He knew they would stay with Him for His ministry time to the Cross and then runaway. He knew who Judas was from the beginning (John 6:64). He knew Peter was a braggart and would eventually deny knowing Him. But then. . . He also knew He would restore Peter with His love (John 20:15ff). Jesus knew His Great Commission would depend on these men fulfilling their calling. And Jesus knew that all but John would be martyred for His name’s sake.

**What does Jesus’ recruiting methods mean to us?**

First, you do not have to be in church to be called by God. Second. . . God can come to you anywhere at any time. Third, you do not need prior training but be advised on-the-job-training will be challenging. Fourth, what you first thought you were getting into is not going to match the final outcome.

**Disciple’s Impact on the New Testament**

Three of the twelve were closest to Jesus (Peter, James, and John). These three witnessed the raising of Jairus’s daughter (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51), the Transfiguration (Mark 9; Matthew 17; Luke 9), and the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33; Matthew 26:37). Two of these (Peter and John) wrote seven letters of the twenty-seven letter New Testament. And Matthew wrote one of the Gospels giving a total of eight of twenty-seven New Testament letters were written by eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus. To carry the point further…regarding eyewitnesses who wrote a New Testament letter, we have Jesus’ brothers (James and Jude) writing one letter each raising the total to ten New Testament letters written by eyewitnesses. Peter, Matthew, James and Jude all wrote before 70 A.D. giving eyewitness accounts within thirty (30) years of the Resurrection. And John wrote his eyewitness letters before the close of the 1st c.

**Jesus is tenderly calling you home** Fanny Crosby

1820-1915 A.D

**1** Jesus is tenderly calling thee home,

Calling today, calling today;

Why from the sunshine of love wilt thou roam

Farther and farther away?

**Chorus:**

Calling today,

Calling today;

Jesus is calling,

Is tenderly calling today.

**2** Jesus is calling the weary to rest,

Calling today, calling today;

Bring Him thy burden and thou shalt be blest;

He will not turn thee away.

**[Chorus]**

**3** Jesus is waiting; O come to Him now,

Waiting today, waiting today;

Come with thy sins; at His feet lowly bow;

Come and no longer delay.

**[Chorus]**

**4** Jesus is pleading; O list to His voice,

Hear Him today, hear Him today;

They who believe on His name shall rejoice;

Quickly arise and away.

AMEN