



Bringing God Close - Matthew 4:12-17

Bringing God Close

- God was close to Adam and Eve in the Garden after creation
 - God would come down in the cool of the evening and walk with them, love them close and intimately
 - God was close and sinful rebellion was far away, outside of the Garden, until Satan brought it close
 - From that point forward sinful rebellion was close to man's heart
 - Life became dark
 - And now God must be brought close

Bringing God Close

- **Psalm 13:1-3a NIV**, 1 How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?
 - 2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?
 - 3 Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes

Bringing God Close

- We find Jesus in our text this morning stepping into our darkness
 - He has been authenticated through severe testing by Satan in the wilderness having been led there by the Spirit
 - Every one of our human passions, desires, needs, decisions was presented to Jesus
 - He withstood every sinful rebellion opportunity and came forth victorious
- Out of the light of His glorious victory, the Spirit leads Jesus into the depths our “valley of the shadows” and into lives lived in sinful rebellion

Scripture

- **Matthew 4:12-17 NIV**, 12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— 14 to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:
 - 15 “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
 - 16 the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

Scripture

- **Matthew 4:12-17 NIV, 17** From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

We find Jesus stepping into a very dark area at a very dark time

- Notice how this area of Israel is described by Isaiah in **verse 16**
 - “people living in darkness”, “living in the land of the shadow of death”
 - Think of it like those who must live in the drug-controlled, crime-ridden areas of large cities or under the control of brutal armed forces
 - Your options are limited, and you feel left alongside the road broken down
 - No hope to better yourself, get out of, finding peace
 - If only someone would come

We find Jesus stepping into a very dark area at a very dark time

- This was spiritually dark area
 - The tribes of Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali failed to remove all the Canaanite influences from their territories as God commanded
 - The Jews there struggled with mixed marriages and pagan influence on their families, rulers, spiritual leaders
 - This region was the first to be conquered and harassed by their Gentile neighbors over and over again

We find Jesus stepping into a very dark area at a very dark time

- This was spiritually dark area
 - Even their language took upon itself the tone and sound of their conquerors
 - **Matthew 26:73 NIV**, 73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”
 - Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth even tried to kill him

We find Jesus stepping into a very dark area at a very dark time

- This was a politically dark area
 - Here was the hotbed of political unrest, resistance, and rebellion
 - Hatred for Roman authority ruled their lives
 - This meant more Roman authority presence that responded harshly, closely watched, quickly subdued

We find Jesus stepping into a very dark area at a very dark time

- This was an economically dark area
 - Rome's way of controlling rebellion was taxation
 - The area was so poor, crime and crime gangs were rampant
 - Making it dangerous to move around or through an area

We find Jesus stepping into a very dark area at a very dark time

- This was an identity dark area
 - Galilee was physically distant and isolated from the Temple in Jerusalem, the center of Jewish worship
 - They were looked down upon and judged by their more religiously observant brethren in the south
 - **John 1:45-46 NIV**, 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” 46 “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

We find Jesus stepping into a very dark area at a very dark time

- Maybe you find yourself this morning included in this darkness list
 - Spiritually, Financially, Identifiably, Politically
 - Jesus longs to step into your darkness too with His message of hope and acceptance

It is into this darkness that Jesus brings God the Father close

- Satan had to bring a sinful rebellion close, now Jesus brings God the Father close into our darkness
- Jesus isn't standing outside Galilee of the Gentiles shouting into it
 - **Vs. 13**, “he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali”
 - **John 1:14 NIV**, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

It is into this darkness that Jesus brings God the Father close

- Jesus stepped into their darkness, not to judge them, but bring them full, meaningful, abundant life
 - **John 10:10 NIV**, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”
- Jesus brings God the Father close
 - Jesus provides the light of truth for those living in darkness
 - Jesus brings the Father’s voice close enough for us to hear

It is into this darkness that Jesus brings God the Father close

- **Matthew 4:23-25 NIV**, 23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. 24 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. 25 Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Hear Jesus say, “God the Father has not forgotten or discarded you”

- **Vs. 17**, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”
- The Jewish mind would have heard the word, “Return”
 - “You’ve been out wandering in spiritual darkness – return”
 - “You’ve been struggling with life issues – return”
 - “You’ve forgotten who you are – return”
 - “Return to Torah, the Word of God”

Hear Jesus say, “God the Father has not forgotten or discarded you”

- The Father has not forgotten you even though you think He has
- The Father has not discarded you just because you are not as spiritual as others seem to be
- “Return to Me by returning to the truth of My Word”
- **Luke 15:20 NIV**, 20 So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Bringing God Close

- The person of Jesus Christ is described in **Vs. 16** as “a great light” and “a light in the shadow of death”
- His light still shines today
- **John 8:12 NIV**, 12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
- **John 18:37 NIV**, Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”



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