

# Conveyors of Light

Matthew 4:18-22

*Halifax: 31 August 2003*

## **Introduction:**

How blessed was Galilee, exalted up to Heaven!

- It was here that the Sun of Righteousness first cast His rays into this dark and lost world!
- It was here that Jesus began His public ministry.

Last week I showed you how He began with those who were His covenant people—

- God always does...
  - but He did not begin where we might expect—
  - He did not begin at Jerusalem in the house of the High Priest, or in the courts of Herod the King.
    - He began in a place that was known for fishing and farming rather than scholarship and government.
    - He began in Galilee.

And where Jesus was, light was...

- Jesus is the light of the world, He is the Sun of righteousness who arose with healing in His wings.
- He went throughout the cities of this region proclaiming His kingdom, calling the people to repent and enter life with God.
  - He called them to turn from the darkness to the light—
    - From living their own way, which was the way of darkness,
    - to living His way which was the way of light!

The light that arose in Galilee arose for the whole world!

- Galilee was only the starting point...
  - The light had come to awaken the whole wide world that was sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death!
    - To awaken them from the darkness or aimless, fruitless, corrupt, ungodly living that brings eternal death...
    - To the light of joyful connection with the living God, to holiness, righteousness, goodness, truth and beauty in the kingdom of God...

- where love is the principle practice, and the glory of God is the principle delight.
- This is the kingdom of light that Jesus introduced into the world at Galilee, and soon brought forth by His death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

How blessed was Galilee where the sun of righteousness first shed its rays—

- How blessed was the entire world for whom the sun of righteousness was destined to shine!
- The light that Jesus brought was never to be extinguished...
  - It was not to leave this world when He ascended into Heaven...
  - but it was to shine over the whole world!

Matthew 4:18-22 shows you how Jesus graciously made a way for the light He brought into the world to continue and spread into all the world.

**I. He raised up men to be conveyors of the light—or as He calls them here, “fishers of men.”**

A. Jesus makes the training of men for ministry a priority in His work.

1. It is one of the first things He does.

a. His public ministry only lasted for about three years...

- It was important that those who were chosen to carry on His work should be with Him from the very start.
  - They needed time to learn of Him.
- John’s gospel indicates that they had been John the Baptist’s disciples and had had previous encounters with Jesus—
  - In John 1:35-51 we have the account of John the Baptist pointing out Jesus as the Lamb of God to Andrew and another of his disciples—
  - And we are told how Andrew and the other disciple (probably John) go to investigate,
    - and how Andrew brings his brother Simon Peter.
  - At this time, they do not leave their occupations,
    - nor are they yet set apart as the twelve apostles,
    - but they begin a relationship with Jesus.

b. Matthew picks up almost a year after these earliest encounters...

- He begins with the time just after John is put in prison when Jesus stations Himself in Capernaum.
    - right in the area where Peter and Andrew and James and John lived and worked.
  - Andrew and Peter were from Bethsaida which was only about 2 or 3 miles along the shore from Capernaum—
    - In verse 18, we see that Jesus walks down the beach, and sees Peter and Andrew at their daily work—fishing.
    - It does not seem that He just happened upon them, but that He went deliberately to find them.
- c. But what is especially important to us is that gathering these men is one of the first things Jesus does...
- It was His will that they should be with Him from the beginning in order that they might be His witnesses.
  - Peter tells Cornelius this when he carries the gospel to him:
    - Acts 10:37-41: "that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead.

TRANS> Jesus wanted the twelve to be with Him from the beginning in order that they might be able to declare Him—as eyewitnesses—to us.

- But not only is the gathering of the twelve around Him one of the **first** things He does:
2. The training of these disciples is also where He spends much of His time and energy.
- a. They are His constant companions as He goes from city to city to preach the gospel—
    - Not only do they hear His public discourses, but He speaks with them much in private as well.
  - b. We see Him labouring to explain the parables to them...
    - Giving them things that are hidden from the wise and prudent.

- c. We see Him asking them questions to make them think—
  - “Who do men say that I am? Who do you say that I am?”
- d. We see Him correcting their bad attitudes—
  - When they want to call fire down from heaven upon those who are not in their party...
  - or when they quarrel about who is the greatest among them...
  - or strive for honour and position and He teaches them that the greatest is the one who serves.
- e. We see Him allowing them to see His sorrow over the hardness and impenitence of Jerusalem—
  - to see His struggle in preparation for the cross...
  - to see His anger toward hypocrisy.

TRANS> Clearly, Jesus makes the training of the twelve an ultimate priority of His ministry...

- 3. And in this He gives us an example that ought to be followed today!
  - a. We ought to spend much time and effort training men for the ministry!
    - Paul gave the instruction to Timothy:
      - 2 Timothy 2:2: And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
    - In churches that take God’s word seriously, there is much money and time spent preparing men for ministry—
      - often three or four years of concentrated study are required.
      - This is the pattern that was begun our Lord.
        - This is one of the primary functions of Presbytery.
        - Much of our time is devoted to the training and preparation of men for the ministry.
  - b. Those who are called to minister the word of Christ to others must have a stable, thorough, practical, and systematic understanding of God’s word.
    - Paul told Titus that a minister must be a man who is:
      - “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”
    - There is often a temptation to send men out before they are fully prepared,

- either in doctrine or in practical application of doctrine.
- Some think a degree is enough, others think experience is enough...
  - Jesus shows that both are essential—
    - He shows us this by example—
      - by the way He took such pains to train the twelve in both doctrine and practice.

B. You can see why Jesus places such an emphasis on the work of training ministers.

1. Consider where we would be today if Jesus had not done this!

a. Suppose He had had none but a casual relationship with any throughout His three-year ministry?

- People would know Him as a man who worked wonders in the world...
  - who taught wonderful things, healed diseases and cast out demons...
- They would know that He was arrested by the authorities and crucified on a cross, and even that some people saw Him risen again.

b. But that would have been about the end of it!

- There would have been nobody to carry on the work after He was gone!
- The light would have arisen in the world,
  - the Sun of righteousness would have arisen with healing in His wings,
  - and then it would have gone back down again and that would be the end.
- There would be no New Testament written!
  - There would have been no one to establish churches according to the will of God...
  - There would have been no one to preach repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin.
    - Only wonderment at why such a man was taken from the earth so soon.

2. Jesus invested in the twelve because, in the way He had chosen to do things, the future of the kingdom depended upon them.

- The Bible tells us that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.
- They apostles are the channel for the light that came into the world in Jesus—

- They took the things that they saw and heard and declared them to us so that we might have fellowship with God in Christ—
    - so that we might walk in the light.
    - Without them, we would still be in the darkness and in the shadow of death—headed for a crisis eternity!
3. How important it was for this foundation to be firm!
- a. The truth is always going to be challenged!
    - Even while the apostles were still living, there were many adversaries—
      - not just those who were outside the church, but insiders as well...
    - Just look at how many of the epistles were written with one of their main purposes being to refute false doctrine.
      - If it was that way in the pristine days of the early church when the apostles themselves were still ministering...
      - Should we expect it to be any different today?
  - b. And of course history has shown us time and again that corruption has almost always entered the church through a ministry that was not sound.
    - Mere education, however, is not enough!
      - A degree is no safe guard against heresy!
      - Instead Presbyteries must be vigilant in examining men for ministry to be sure that they hold to the truth.
    - With the testimony of history and the example of Jesus,
      - there is no excuse for churches and presbyteries that ordain men whose doctrine is suspect—
        - or men whose lives do not demonstrate godliness.
      - Unqualified men will be conveyors of darkness rather than conveyors of light—
        - They will extinguish rather than radiate the light.
        - Jesus Himself has taught us to make their training a priority.

TRANS> As Matthew's account goes one...

## **II. Jesus tells these men how they will become fishers of men.**

- Verse 19: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

A. It is by following Him.

1. A lot of people change the command to say, “Be fishers of men,”
  - but that is not what Jesus says.
  - The command is “Follow Me,” and the resulting promise,
    - “I will make you fishers of men!”
  - a. This is important because there are lot of people who claim to be fishers of men who were not made fishers of men by Jesus Christ—
    - They are people who don’t follow Him!
      - 1) Sometimes they have huge, successful ministries,
        - Sometimes they write popular books about how to be a fisher of men...
          - But these books aren’t about following Jesus!
          - They are full of all sorts of techniques and devices to attract the fish, but sadly Jesus is not the attraction...
        - 2) Sometimes they invite people to come merely to escape Hell, but not to be restored to godliness.
          - Even worse,
            - Some of them use entertainment, flattery, empty promises, appeals to covetous and fleshly desires to lure their fish...
            - But they do not use the promises of God and the call to repent of sin and follow Jesus.
  - b. The bottom line is that those who are not themselves following Jesus can never lead others to Him...
    - and if they do, it is in spite of themselves.
    - Jesus has not made such charlatans fishers of men,
      - they have made themselves fishers of men.
      - Sadly, Peter tells us how successful these self-made fishers often become in 2 Peter 2:2-3:
        - And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

TRANS> So you see then that no one can be a fisher of men unless He follows Jesus.

2. But what does Jesus mean when He says, “Follow Me?”
  - a. For the four fishermen, this was spoken partly in a purely literal sense—
    - Jesus was calling them to go with Him wherever He went.
      - It was a common thing among the Jews for a Rabbi to have some disciples who assisted him in his work as they learned.
    - One difference with Jesus, however, is that the disciple was the one who usually initiated the relationship—
      - The disciple chose the rabbi rather than the rabbi the disciple.
    - Jesus emphasises this difference towards the end of His public ministry when He reminds His disciples:—
      - “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.”
      - He tells them this to encourage them that even though the ministry He had given them seemed impossible—
        - Here it was that He their master was going to the cross—
          - and it seemed to them that they were not at all ready to accomplish anything without Him...
        - Even though it seemed impossible, they were to remember:
          - “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you should bear much fruit.”
        - They would need this encouragement through the hard times—when they sat in prisons and when they faced the difficulties of ministry with luke-warm disciples and apostasy.
        - They would be able to look back and remember that Jesus was the One who had come to them and said, “Follow Me.”
    - b. And of course, following was more than just tagging along behind Jesus.
      - It was to follow Him so as to imitate Him and learn from Him.
      - Disciples would follow their masters in the sense of following their ways in both teaching and living.
        - In future days, they would need to be able to say: “Follow me as I follow Christ.”
      - It is essential for God’s people to have more than mere instruction.
        - You need godly example to *show* you how to live.



- c. But with Jesus there was even more than imitating His example and learning His doctrine...
    - 1) Following Him also involved learning to rely on Him in a sense that no other master could expect His disciples to do...
      - relying on Him in the sense of depending on Him to supply grace and power to us to do God's will—
      - relying on Him in the sense of depending on His work on the cross to secure for us the forgiveness of sin.
    - 2) Jesus was continually teaching His disciples this reliance.
      - For example,
        - when they were terrified in the storm at sea—Jesus showed them that He could calm the storm.
        - They had to learn that all that they did was by His grace, not by the power of their own flesh.
          - As Paul put it, “Not I, but the grace of God that was in me.”
    - 3. It was only as they followed Jesus in all these ways—
      - physically spending time with Him, imitating His teaching and His manner of life, and depending on Him—
        - that they would become fishers of men—
      - It was only by following Him that they would be of any use as far as gathering people into His kingdom from the tumultuous seas of this world.
        - Only by following Jesus would they be able to convey life to others.
- B. This promise pertains to all of you—each in your own calling.
- Follow Jesus and He will make you to draw people out of this world and to bring them into His kingdom!
1. For the Apostles, this was true in the most absolute sense!
    - By following Christ while He was here, they became, as we have seen, the channels of His light to all of the rest of the people of God who came after!
    - By following Him, they were able to bring the knowledge of Him to the nations through their preaching, their example, and the written word.
  2. But this is also true the church as a society, as a body.
    - It is only as we follow Christ as He is presented to us in the Bible that we are able have an impact in the world for Him.

- a. To whatever extent we adhere to His word in our doctrine, our practice, and our faith,
  - to that extent we influence others for Him.
  
- b. Surely what Moses said long ago about the word pertains to us:
  - In Deuteronomy 4:5-9, He said:
    - Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according *to them* in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, “Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.” For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? And what great nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren...
    - It is by adhering to the Lord, His truth, His ways, His grace, that others will learn of Him.
  
- c. Now I know that you can’t control what the entire church does in this regard—
  - but surely you ought to be praying for the church and doing your part to correct whatever abuses you see in the church, and doing your part to let your light shine as an individual within the church that together we might shine for Jesus Christ!
  
3. If you are called to be an elder—
  - What a responsibility you have to set an example to the flock over which Christ has made you and overseer!
    - You can hardly expect the members of the church to follow Christ if you are not following Him.
  
  - When the children of Israel went astray and worshipped the golden calf, Moses did not say,
    - “What a rotten people you have given me...”
    - But He said, “Show me your glory!”
      - He knew that if the people were going to see God’s glory, he needed to see it himself!
      - In other words, the problem was not just with them—
        - The problem was with Moses too...

- Moses needed to see more of the glory of Christ if he was going to be of any use to help the people see it!
  - Elders should always begin repentance with themselves, and then they will be of most use to others.
  - The principle Jesus taught applies very much here—
    - “Take the beam out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the spec out of your brother’s eye.”
    - “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
4. And you men who are heads of a household—
- a. What a responsibility you have to follow Christ as you lead your home!
    - When you look at your children and your wife and their weaknesses, you will often see a clear reflection of yourself!
  - b. Do you struggle because your children are materialistic, always wanting things?
    - Check yourself—have they been hearing you complain all the time about not having enough?
      - It’s no wonder that they want all the treasures of this world!
      - You have taught them to look for happiness there!
      - In this, you are not following Jesus!
  - c. Do you struggle with a nagging wife?
    - Check yourself—have you been driving her crazy by your failure to take responsibility?
      - Does she nag because she feels like it is the only way to get you into action and because you are constantly irritating her?
        - It’s not a godly or a right response on her part, but neither is it right for you to provoke her.
      - If you are not following Jesus, you are spreading darkness rather than light into your home.
5. And you as an individual Christian—
- Are you a conveyor of light or of darkness?
  - a. How about it children?
    - Do you whine and complain when your parents tell you its time to go home and you are having a great time at a playground?

- Are you whining and complaining about something so small as leaving a play ground when Jesus so willingly left heaven to come to earth and die for you?
  - Shame on you!
  - You are not following Him, so you are spreading darkness to people instead of light.
- Do you know how much difference it makes when a child obeys cheerfully?
  - People notice it—it really stands out to them!
  - You can be a fisher of men even if you are young.
    - You can spread the light of Jesus in your home and to your friends and parents—
    - Even to strangers who see you—
      - I saw some children I did not know when we were on our trip and they were spreading light just by the way they behaved.
      - Interestingly, I spoke to someone else about this family and they had noticed them too!
      - They were following Jesus.
        - It would be such an encouragement to hear that one of your children remembered this lesson...
        - I would love to hear a report that one of you was kind to your brother or kind to your sister all week, and then when your parents asked you what had happened, that you said:
          - I am following Jesus because I want His light to shine through me!
          - You may be small, but you can have a big impact for Him!
          - If you follow Him, He will make you a fisher of men.
- b. And Christian, what about you at work, or in your neighbourhood?
  - Do people know that you are a Christian by your love?
  - Do they know it by the words that you speak?
  - Do they see the Sabbath as a delight to you or as a burden?

**I. Now I want you to look at the way these four fishermen responded to Jesus!**

A. Matthew says that they **immediately** followed Him!

1. They did not waver in indecision, going back and forth about what to do.
  - As soon as they knew what He wanted, they immediately obeyed!
  - a. Peter and Andrew were actually at work, lawfully employed, casting their net into the sea...
    - But as soon as Jesus called, they left their nets to follow Him, just as He commanded.
    - We often say, “but Lord, I can’t obey you because I have to do something else... I have to catch these fish... or whatever it is...”
      - You know,
        - “I have to pay these bills so I can’t tithe...”
        - “I have to remodel the house so I can’t have family worship...”
        - “I have to get this contract so I have to stretch the truth a little...”
      - It all begins when you are small—
        - Your Mom calls, and you say.
          - “I can’t obey you because I have to put my toys away first.”
        - When you do that, you are telling Jesus, “
          - I can’t obey my mother as you have told me to do because I have to finish this first.”
    - But Peter and Andrew did not delay...
      - As soon as they knew what the Lord’s will was,
        - they immediately obeyed.
  - b. James and John did exactly the same thing—only they were mending their nets and were with their father...
    - Now we have no idea what their father thought about Jesus’ call to them, but what is interesting is that they didn’t care what he thought.
      - I don’t mean that they were callous toward their father,
        - but as soon as they knew it was Jesus’ will for them to go, they didn’t ask their father for permission!
        - A higher authority had spoken and they knew it!
        - It didn’t matter what their father thought because Jesus had spoken.
    - This is true for you—
      - Did your boss tell you to lie? Jesus told you not to...

- Do your parents not want you to discipline your children?
  - Jesus commands you to.
2. These four disciples responded this way because they knew who Jesus was.
- a. He had led them to the truth about Himself in steps...
    - I already mentioned how John the Baptist had pointed to Him and said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”
    - And how they had come to investigate and had concluded that He was the Messiah.
  - b. What is so exemplary about these men is that they respond to the Son of God the way everyone ought to respond to Him.
    - He is the Son of God!
    - 1) Does He call you to serve others?
      - Then why are you hesitating?
    - 2) But I bet I know what some of you are thinking...
      - a) You are thinking,
        - “Yea, but they had Jesus right there, speaking to them and telling them what to do in a clear voice.”
        - “If I was at work and He came to me and told me to follow Him, I would do it to, but He is in heaven now...”
      - b) But wait just a minute—the examples I used were not about hearing some mystical, uncertain voice—
        - I’m not suggesting that you should get up and leave work one day because you claim to have heard some voice from heaven.
        - The examples I used were about things that were just as clear that He has said to you as what He said to Peter, Andrew, James and John!
          - If you are telling a lie at work, His voice is just as clear as it was to the four disciples...
          - Or if you are whining child, His word to you is crystal clear when He says in Philippians 2:14,
            - “Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”
            - or in the fifth commandment when He says:
              - “Honour your father and mother.”

- c. The application is not that you are all to leave your work because the four disciples were commanded to leave theirs...
  - The application is that you are to obey Jesus without question as soon as you know His will just like they did...
    - You are always to leave whatever you are doing, no matter what it is, to do what He wants.
      - It is only then you will be an effective witness for Him...
      - It is only then that He will make you a fisher of men.

TRANS> The obedience of Peter, Andrew, James and John is wonderful and admirable, isn't it?

- But there is something here that you ought to admire even more!

B. And that is the power of the voice of Christ that calls you!

1. Oh my brothers and sisters,

- Peter, James, John and Andrew would never have obeyed Jesus the way they did if His voice had not come to them in the power of the Holy Spirit!
  - a. By nature, their hearts were just the same as everyone else's—
    - They were sinful and dark and stubborn...
    - But what you see here is the powerful, gracious voice of Jesus breaking through all that sin and darkness to reach them!
  - b. If you are a true believer, it was this same powerful, gracious voice that broke through all your resistance to awaken you from spiritual death!
    - Yes, the four men are fine example of the way everyone ought to respond—
    - But you have not understood what happened here if your admiration doesn't reach beyond these men to see the powerful grace of Jesus Christ.
      - Here you see that powerful voice of Christ that commands the light to shine in the darkness—and it is so!
        - The voice that commands the stars to hang in space—and they do!
      - It is the voice that Jesus tells us about in John 5:25-27
        - "Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself."

2. Have you heard the voice of Christ that raises you from the death to follow?

- a. Then give thanks to God for His wonderful gracious work!
  - He has given you a new heart.
  - He has made you arise from death to follow!
  
- b. Are you still in the darkness?
  - Then look to Jesus!
  - He is able to speak words of life to reach you too!
    - There is great hope here—
      - Jesus raises people from the dead!
    - Come to Him and He will raise you also!
      - It is not just about you obeying, it is about Him saving!
      - Look to Him, come to Him, and He will give you life.

### **Conclusion**

- How thankful we should be for the powerful gracious voice of Christ that broke through to these men—
  - Jesus called them and took them to be His followers in order that they might shine forth His light into all the world!
  - He gathered these men to be His disciples for us—
    - that we might have the light through them today!
  
- And down through the ages, He has continued to call people to the light and to raise them from the dead..
  - He has raised up ministers to carry His light to us...
  - He has raised up godly people to convey the light in their own callings!
  
- Follow Him and He will make you a fisher of men!
  - He will make you a transmitter of His glorious life-giving light.