

January 25, 2026
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Matthew 4:12-23

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen." From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him.

He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.

Background:

The arrest of John the Baptist signals the end of John's ministry. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all agree that Jesus does not begin his ministry until the end of John's. However, in John's Gospel Jesus does begin his ministry while John is still ministering. Some scholars believe that it is possible that Jesus was a disciple of John in the early part of his ministry. He, like John, would have called people to repentance and baptism as a sign of their conversion. But as Jesus preached, he discovered that he was also gifted by God with the grace to heal. As he experienced this gift of healing and it became more a part of his understanding of his unique ministry, he began to invite followers. The Gospels do not give us a clear understanding of how Jesus came to his own awareness of his ministry.

While John is distinct in describing Jesus beginning his ministry while John the Baptist is still ministering, Matthew is unique in his use of quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures to explain events in Jesus' life. The fact that Jesus began his ministry among Gentiles of the north could have been a real scandal and a reason to reject him as the Messiah. But by quoting the prophet he is making the point that Jesus should be understood as being obedient to God's plan.

On another level, Jesus reveals himself as a man who leaves his familiar hometown of Nazareth and moves to Capernaum, a fishing village on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. It is also on an important trade route that would have provided access to a broader audience.

Followers of the Rabbis normally took the initiative and presented themselves for training to their chosen teachers. Contrary to this tradition, Jesus called his disciples. During the dry season, when farmers were waiting for the harvest, the work was left to servants. Traditionally, this was the time when men gathered to debate and "be seen." It was the time when one who wished to promote a cause or had a grievance would gather followers. It was assumed that these followers would eventually return to their normal daily lives. The pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, and James and John, are described as being part of one of the most successful and stable family businesses in the area. They are engaged in the work of the day when Jesus approaches them. They are presented as leaving the business, their position in the community, and, in the case of James and John, even their father, to become his followers.

Jesus' ministry, as described by the text, begins with preaching a message that is similar to John's: repentance to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom. After Jesus has attracted his first disciples, the ministry shifts to include healing the sick.

Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever moved from what was familiar to something very new and unfamiliar? What was going on inside of you as you made that change? What did you discover about yourself, and your relationships to others and to God?
2. How does being personally asked to do something differ from you taking the initiative to apply or volunteer to take on a role or responsibility?
3. Do you think it is significant that Jesus called the disciples?
4. What are some things James and John and Andrew and Peter might have thought or experienced to have Jesus come up to them and ask them to be his disciples?
5. Has God ever called you to a new relationship, way of living, or ministry? How did that happen in your own life?
6. Does this text point to how God might be calling you now to a new kind of ministry, or new kind of relationship?
7. From what you know about Peter, Andrew, James and John from other places in the Gospel, what strikes you about Jesus' invitation to them in the text here?
8. Can you talk with God about how this Gospel text affects you and what it stirs within you?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for January 25, 2026, the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First the Lord degraded the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali;
but in the end, he has glorified the land west of the Jordan, the District of the Gentiles.
Anguish has taken wing: there is no gloom where there was distress.
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy, and they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
as people make merry when dividing spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole
on their shoulder, and the rod of their taskmaster you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The Lord is my life's refuge.
One thing I ask of the Lord: To dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
That I may gaze on the loveliness of the Lord and contemplate his temple.*

*I believe that I shall see the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord.*

I urge you that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose. For it has been reported to me that there are rivalries among you. Each of you is saying, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel, and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen. From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." They left their nets and followed him. He saw James, and his brother John, in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and they left their boat and their father and followed him. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.

Excerpts from Isaiah 8:23-9:3; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17; and Matthew 4:12-23

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for January 25th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. The Gospel from Matthew tells of the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, and the call of the first disciples. Jesus went to live in Capernaum by the sea, and he began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Walking by the Sea of Galilee, he called the fisherman brothers Simon and Andrew, and James and John, saying, "I will make you fishers of men."

The other readings have references to light dispelling the darkness in the district; the Lord being our light, salvation, and refuge; and the necessity to be united in Christ, under the preaching of the Gospel. In the first reading from Isaiah, "He has glorified the seaward road. Where there was distress, now there is no gloom. A light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing." Psalm 27 exclaims, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, and my life's refuge. One thing I ask, that I may gaze on the loveliness of the Lord." In the second reading, Paul writes to the Corinthians, "I urge you that there be no divisions among you. Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel."

In the Gospel, Matthew relates that Galilee, where Jesus began his preaching, is also referred to as the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, and that this fulfills what had been said through Isaiah the prophet. The passage he refers to is within our first reading from Isaiah. This "Galilee of the Gentiles," this "land of gloom," was northernmost in the land of Israel and furthest from Jerusalem; it was the first territory devastated when the Assyrians invaded, about 733 BC. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." The great light in Isaiah's prophecy is the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!