

Matthew 4:12-5:1

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 January 2018

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] I'll turn if you will to Matthew chapter 4, Matthew 4, and we're looking at verses 12 to chapter 5 and verse 1.

! It'll be lovely to see you tonight, if you can come, I'm going to speak on how can anyone believe that Jesus rose from the dead? So it's one of these talks of this mission, so you are guinea pigs on that.

Matthew 4, 12 to 5, 1. There's an early 20th century preacher in London called Arthur John Gossip. And Arthur John Gossip preached a well-known sermon on the fear of suffering.

The title of Mr. Gossip's sermon was, When Life Tumbles In, What Then? When Life Tumbles In, What Then? But it helps to appreciate that sermon, if you know this little piece of information, that it was preached two weeks after Mr. Gossip's wife died.

When you know something about the preacher, it gives a little bit more insight into the sermon. When Life Tumbles In, What Then? I don't think it makes much difference if you know anything about the preacher normally, before you view a sermon.

[1 : 20] But sometimes it does. Sometimes it does. Particularly in Matthew 5 to 8. We're about to start next week the Sermon on the Mount.

And when you listen to that sermon from Jesus, I think it's very helpful that you know about the preacher. In other words, you need to know about the preacher before you listen to the sermon. You need to know something about the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. About who he is, in order to appreciate and be prepared for what he's about to say. And I think we can understand him in the second half of chapter 4 if we ask certain questions.

Four questions. Number one, what is a brilliant Messiah like you doing in such a dark place? What is a brilliant Messiah like you doing in such a dark place?

And that's from verses 12 to 16. It talks about the places where Jesus initially concentrated in his efforts. It tells us that he went to Galilee.

[2 : 21] And it talks about Nazareth. And it talks about how he left Nazareth and went to Capernaum. Which was on the northwest edge of the Sea of Galilee. And how Jesus kind of established his headquarters there.

It was in the region of the tribal territories of Zebulun and Naphtali. And Matthew tells us that Jesus going to those places fulfilled one of the prophecies, one of the predictions from Isaiah 9, verses 1 and 2.

He quotes in verse 15. Look what it says. It says, 14 it says, It was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. The land of Zebulun. And the land of Naphtali. The way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light. What was that great light? Well in that same passage in Isaiah 9 it talks about the Messiah.

The child who is born and the son who is given. And who is going to reign as king and the government will be on his shoulders. And there will be justice and righteousness forever and ever. And Matthew is saying here the king has come.

[3 : 30] The king has come and the light has already shone in the land of darkness. In the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. That's the area of Galilee. What was that?

Well that area was the place that throughout the Old Testament had always borne the brunt of Assyria's wrath. They were the people that were always the first ones to be captured.

To be taken over. It's a bit like Newport in South Wales. If you look in the street. Sometimes Newport is part of England. Sometimes it's part of Wales.

Sometimes it doesn't know where it is. But whenever England took over Wales again. Newport was the first to go. It's always infected by invasion.

And by captivity. And in the New Testament period. I said it a couple of weeks ago. That the way Galilee was viewed by the other Jews. It was viewed with suspicion.

[4 : 30] So do you remember I said. To that proverb. If you want to be wise. Come down south. To Jerusalem. That is study the law with the rabbis. If you want to get rich. Which is not preferable. Go north. Where there is Galilee.

And there is all sorts of trading. And opportunity. And corruption. Josephus. The Jewish historian. Tells us. That in Galilee. There were 240 villages.

And towns. And they had about 15,000 inhabitants. And during this time. Galilee was a thriving area. It wasn't isolated.

Like Judea in the south. It was open. He had a lot of country. A lot of foreign contacts. There were Gentiles there. Non-Jews. And pagans.

That all came to trade. There was a lot of business. There was an influx of travellers. Because of the highway connections. That went nearby. And because of that.

[5 : 28] The more strict Jews. Of Jerusalem. Looked down their nose. And they tended to think. That Galilee contained Jews. That were not quite as. Kosia. Not quite as careful.

The Jews of the north. They're not quite as strict. That was. A sort of. In rabbinical circle anyway. A sort of contempt. For Galilee.

And anything Galilean. And yet. That is precisely. Unbelievably. As it may seem. Where the Messiah. The great light for Israel.

Began to shine. Surely. No Messiah. No great hope. Would begin. And carry on. His major work. In Galilee. In the land of Zebulun.

And Naphtali. He wouldn't do that sort of thing. Surely. That's their reaction. It's the kind of reaction. That Spurgeon. Might get from it. Spurgeon was a 19th century preacher.

[6 : 26] I'm reading one of his biographies. At the moment. Spurgeon went back. Again and again. To one of his. To his deacons. To the deacons meeting. And he begged them. To take the upper panes. Of the windows.

Around the chapel out. The windows were. In iron frames. They were not made to open. And so. The room got so hot. With thousands of people. Listening to him. There was a real problem. With ventilation. And people falling asleep. And fainting. Several times. He went to his deacons. And he mentioned it. But nothing happened. Providentially. One Monday morning. Ever was a gasp.

Because almost all. Of the upper windows. Had been knocked out. It almost looked like. A professional job. And he said. That in all the consternation.

That the church was in. That they should make an offer. Of five pound. However the culprit was. And when they found him. They should give him the money. As a present. And then he said. To his students. He said. I trust that none of you.

[7 : 20] Suspect me. Or if you do. I would have to confess. That I walk with a stick. That let the oxygen. Into that stifling structure. Can you believe that? They would have thought.

Wouldn't they? The children of that church. They would have thought. Surely not. Surely not the preacher. Surely not the surgeon. Would have knocked out the windows. Surely he wouldn't do that. But if you knew him.

You wouldn't be surprised. And it's that kind of situation here. They would say. Surely not the Messiah. Coming to Galilee. No way.

No self-respecting Jewish Messiah. They would focus his attention. On Galilee. Would he? But not Jesus. He begins with those. Who are most desperate. And those who are most in darkness.

And this ought to tell you and I. Something about the preacher. Of the Sermon on the Mount. That he does not run. In the rut. Of human custom. And that is a pattern. That we've seen before.

[8 : 19] And we shouldn't be surprised. When Jesus surprises us. And that may shock you a bit. And therefore you shouldn't be surprised. That when you hear him teaching. Some of his teaching.

Is both shocking. And surprising. And it will take you aback. Second question we can ask. Is what is a new preacher. Like you doing. Proclaiming such a demanding message.

What is a new preacher. Like you doing. Proclaiming such a demanding message. And you see that message. In verse 17. Jesus began to preach. And it's the same word. Isn't it. That John the Baptist

used.

When he began to preach. And Jesus' message was. Repent. For the kingdom of heaven. Is at hand. Or the kingdom of heaven. Has drawn near. We can't agree with all of that means. But I want you to notice. Just notice. What the key note of the message is. It is repent. What is that basic idea? We've thought about it.

[9:17] Haven't we? But we need to think about it again. Repent. We often hear. Repent. Repent. It means to be sorry for our sins. To be in grief over them. And to seek forgiveness for them.

And of course. It's that obviously. Sometimes you will hear. The word repent. It means to change one's mind. That is literally the translation. And that is the truth. But that is true.

But it's not the total sense of the words. It's not just about feeling emotionally sorry. Or something like that. But what repentance involves.

Is a change of direction. It's a kind of turning. Let's say you catch a plane tomorrow morning. And you get on the plane. The plane takes off.

And the announcement comes on. And says. Your captain comes on the intercom. On the flight. And he says this. Hello. This is your captain. And we are flying at an altitude of 35,000 feet. And at a speed of 700 miles per hour.

[10:12] We've got some good news. And some bad news. The bad news is we're lost. And the good news is we're making excellent time. Now if you've got someone like that.

What do they need to do? What does that plane need to do? He needs to repent. They need to know. What direction they're going in. And they need to turn.

And go in the right direction. And that is why some would paraphrase. Repentance. As turn your lives around.

For the kingdom of heaven is drawn near. Change your route. Change the direction in which you're going. And turn to the right direction. But I want you to see that there's an implied criticism in that word.

Isn't there? When somebody says turn your life around. Or repent. Surely that's saying to you and I isn't it. I'm going in the wrong direction. It's saying I'm not fit for the kingdom of heaven the way that I am.

[11:17] If I keep going the way that I am. I will not end up in the kingdom of heaven. It's saying to you and I that there is some things wrong with you and I. That I may be in the wrong direction.

Now notice in verse 17 that Jesus at least here doesn't tell you what you need to repent of. He doesn't tell you what you need to turn from. He doesn't mention any particulars. It's a very open ended kind of thing.

Turn your lives around. Repent. Turn from what? And from whom? And I think that is deliberate. Because it is as the preacher begins to teach you in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 and 6 and 7.

That as you sit at his feet and as you listen to him teach. And as you listen to him expound and explain the Bible. That there we will see from the Lord Jesus and his teaching.

What we need to repent of. And how deeply that repentance needs to go. And how he will reveal to you and I the depths of our sin in our own thinking.

[12:23] He will say listen you hear that it was said. That the Lord meant this. But I tell you this is what it means. And he will show us attitude or actions that we have been unaware of.

And as we expose ourselves to Jesus and his word. The word ploughs deeply in our hearts. And we begin to see in more detail and in more precision.

Precisely what must be changed. That it is Jesus' word. As he explains to us God's law. We see what and to what degree we need to repent.

You might say what am I going on? What are you going on about? I am a Christian. I have been a Christian for years. And it may be that you had quite a dramatic experience of repentance. When you first came to Christ.

In your conversion. Not all people do. You might think. Are you saying that I as a Christian.

[13:23] As a believer. I need to repent. And I need to change direction. And sometimes you do. And repentance can be a continual thing. And there are some of God's people.

They have more conviction of sin. And depth of sin. After they came to Christ. Than before they came to Christ. So for example. John Edwards. The great American.

Preacher and theologian and philosopher. Of the 1700s. Made this point. He said. I have had a vastly greater sense. Of my own wickedness. And the badness of my heart. Than ever I had before my conversion.

It is affecting. To think how ignorant I was. When a young Christian. Of the bottomless depths. Of wickedness. And pride. And hypocrisy. And deceit. Left in my heart. And that can be true. Of the believer. And that is what Jesus' word. Does for us. That as we expose ourselves. To him. He exposes to us. Ourselves.

[14:25] And we see far more clearly. The depth of hypocrisy. And deceit. And the subtleness. Of sin in our lives. From which we must turn. And so we look to Jesus.

This preacher. And we place ourselves. Before him. And we realize. That as he teaches us. From his words. That will involve. Great changes.

Changes. That we might not even be aware of. That we need to make. But as we hear his word. He reveals that. By his spirit. Third question. What is an unusual rabbi. Like you doing.

Controlling my life. You see that in verses 18 to 22. What is an unusual rabbi. Like you doing. Controlling my life. It's a very familiar passage. Isn't it? He comes and calls.

He calls Peter and Andrew. The disciples. He sees them. Throwing a fishing net. In shallow water. And he calls them. They drop their nets. Immediately. They say bye to their dad.

[15:22] And they go and follow him. Same with James and John. They leave their boats. On their dad. And it's so familiar. To see the children.

Storybibles. Isn't it? Jesus calling these poor. Ignorant fishermen. Apart from that. They weren't poor. And they weren't ignorant. Galilee was rather prosperous.

It was a thriving fishing business. And it's not likely. That they were poor. I don't think they were filthy rich. Or anything like that. But they probably had a healthy. Fishing business. And in Mark chapter 1. Verse 20.

We read that. James and John. Left their father. With a hired man in the boat. Anyone who can hire employees. Is probably doing okay. In the fishing business. Don't think that these are poor.

Poverty stricken men. Don't think that they are ignorant. We know. Don't we. In Acts 4 verse 13. The priest said. That Peter and John. Were unlearned men. That means that they had not been.

[16:17] To the kosher theological colleges. They were probably. Culturally alive. They spoke Hebrew. And Aramaic. And they probably spoke Greek as well. With all the commercial interests.

Going on. In the area. And no doubt. With a bit of a Roman influence. They could get by in Latin. So they weren't. Poor. Ignorant. Fishermen. That is. Sheer sentimentalism.

And if you put the whole. New Testament accounts together. You find that at the end. Of John. Peter and Andrew. And James. And John. Had had contact with Jesus before.

He didn't just call them. Out of the blue. That we often think. They knew him. They had spent some time. With him before. But now he comes. And he calls them. Permanently. To follow him.

And that is unique. There are only ultimately. Twelve of these men. Who are called to follow Jesus. Permanently. And literally. That is to leave their daily work. And their families. And accompany him.

[17:17] And sometimes. People look at this passage. And they think. Well if only I had enough faith. To sell my house. And go and become. A full time evangelist. That is not what Jesus.

Is demanding of you. There were other disciples. In this time. That Jesus didn't call to that. These people. These men. Weren't the only disciples.

Of Jesus. They were the disciples. That became the apostles. But there were numerous. Other disciples of Jesus. And he didn't demand. That of them. It is a special.

Unique call. And you shouldn't. Feel some false guilt. That you've not done that. Because it's not demanded of you. It's absolutely unique.

Of these men. However. There is a common element. There is a sudden. Sort of transition. There did come that time. When these men. With this special call.

[18:10] Nevertheless. Had to leave their work. And follow Jesus. And what is interesting. About it. For you and I. Is that Jesus assumes. The right. To do that. Jesus has the right.

To command their obedience. And that is rather unique. Because most rabbis. At the time. In the way that Jewish people. Used to. They used to go out.

And find themselves a rabbi. Find themselves a teacher. That if they wanted. To study under a certain rabbi. They would ask that rabbi. Can I come and study under you?

Can I come and live with you? Can I accompany you? Can I be instructed to you? Can I give you my CV? Can I make an application? So that they could serve him. But the disciple.

Took the initiative. To work with the rabbi. But Jesus doesn't work like this. Jesus doesn't accept application forms. Jesus doesn't want your CV.

[19 : 09] Jesus takes the initiative. He calls. His people. He calls his own disciples. And he assumes that he has the right to do that.

He has the right to control your life. To command your obedience. And that is the constant element that we must see. That Jesus Christ really is Lord.

And even though we live in modern UK. And we have the house of lords. We don't really understand what's going on. Or how you get to be a house of lord.

And we have a queen. And she has authority. But we're not all crystal clear on what authority she has. We're not so used are we to living in the days of lords and kings. But what you have in Jesus of Nazareth is an autocrat.

And he assumes the authority. To control your life. And to command your obedience in all things. And it is very possible that you are in church this morning.

[20 : 14] And you don't like that. And that is maybe the reason why you're not a Christian. But that is who Jesus is.

That he claims the right to command your life. To be in charge. And this isn't just for people over 25. This is for Christian teenagers.

And young people. And children. And you may think. You've got choices to make about your life. But Jesus has the authority to command your life.

And to control your life. And that means. Children and young people. That as you think about your future. You must realise Jesus is the one who rules.

And reigns. And we submit every decision that we make to him. He is in control. What does that mean?

[21 : 13] Does that mean you don't talk to people in a closet? But it means you still talk to people. You get all the information you can. You make the wisest and the best decisions you can. You evaluate your desires and your gifts. But it isn't just what you want to do.

But where will Christ lead? And command and direct. And we commit all matters to him. We live our lives consciously under the lordship of Jesus Christ. And Jesus assumes that prerogative over all his people.

What is becoming a Christian? It is handing over the controls of your life. And saying Jesus. You are in charge. It's not particularly emotional is it?

It is saying Jesus. I have lived my life with me in control. But now I recognise Jesus. That you are lord and king. And I want you to rule and reign. And I really need desperately your help to do it.

The fourth question and the final question to ask the preacher is. What is a popular personality like you wasting his time preaching? That's from verses 23. If you go through chapter 5. What is a popular personality like you wasting their time preaching?

[22 : 29] Jesus is so popular. Did you spot that? Why is he wasting his time teaching? Why is he focusing there? Look at verse 23. He does three things.

As he makes his circuit through Galilee. He teaches in the synagogues. He proclaims the gospel of the kingdom. And he heals those with every sort of disease and sickness.

There's three aspects of his ministry. And the report goes out about him. Like wildfire all over the place. And the people are bringing the sick and the afflicted. The diseased.

The ill. There are people with epilepsy who have walked to him. There are paralytics who have never walked. Paraplegiates. There are the demon possessed.

And they come to him. And Jesus speaks the word. Touches them. And they are healed. And the crowds in verse 25. From all over the place. Come and follow him.

[23 : 29] And in names of the various places. This is Galilee. Decapolis. The ten cities. Jerusalem. Judea. And from beyond the Jordan. They're coming from everywhere. Like bees around honey. But do you notice the sequence?

Can you see the sequence? There's all this popularity. Verse 23. Verse 25. Great crowds followed him. From Galilee. Decapolis. And Judea. And all the area beyond the Jordan.

And seeing the crowds. Who've come to him for healing. He went up on the mountainside. When he sat down. His disciples came to him. And he began to teach them.

He sees the crowds. He goes up to the mountain. He sits down. And he teaches them. Jesus does not have any sense.

Of how to market himself. He's on this wave of popularity. He's doing something. That people are really. Really interested in. And if only he would just.

[24 : 32] Keep on with the healing. He could be a mega star. And it's almost as if. At this point. Jesus suppresses that. He says.

I will not play to the crowd. And he goes in to teach him. Why would he do that? And again. I think that's deliberate. It is not that Jesus.

Jesus doesn't have compassion. On the multitudes. Of course he does. But Jesus wants you and I. To know. There is another priority. What the crowds need to see. They need to see.

That Jesus is not so interested. In wowing them. And being popular with them. But first of all. They need to see. What kind of Messiah he is. And that he intends to be. They need to see. Not only the results.

Of the kingdom's power. But they also need to hear. The law of the kingdom. They need not only. To enjoy the delights. Of the kingdom. But they need to be placed. Under the discipline. Of the kingdom.

[25 : 29] And so he begins. In Matthew 5 to 7. He teaches his disciples. And even to a certain degree. The crowd. But do you see that sequence? Archibald Alexander.

He taught at Princeton. Samaritan. It's one of the great. Places of training. For ministers. In the 19th century. And he heard. That a revival. Was taking place.

He heard. There were. There were many. Many people. Being kind of. Refreshed. In their Christian life. And. Coming to. To know the Lord Jesus. So he went. To this place. And to hear.

The guy who was speaking. He went to the church. But it was packed. There was. There was no room. To get in. They built. On the sides. A kind of shed. That was attached.

To the church. And not through a wall. So that people could. Could see. And hear. And it was absolutely packed. He snuck into one of the seats. In the shed. And he noticed.

[26 : 26] That there were some tobacco farmers. And workers. In the corner. And that while the guy was preaching. They were. They were just. Talking. Mumbling under their breath. And they were talking about crops. And the seasons.

And the rain. And they were quietly telling each other jokes. And nudging one another. And talking about tobacco. All the while. While the preacher was going at it. The preacher moved from explaining the text.

To begin to apply it with vigour. He's a powerful preacher. And pretty soon. In that church. There was a reaction. Amongst the congregation. There was a woman.

Who cried out. There was a murmur. In the crowd. As people bowed their heads. There was a wave of emotion.

Went through the building. To where Alexander was sitting. And he noticed. That in the corner. The tobacco planters.

[27 : 26] And farmers. Were caught up in it too. And so the muscles. Began to tense up in their face. And then tears fell down their cheeks.

And Alexander says. They were caught up. In the power of the sympathy of the crowd. It carried them along. The tobacco farmers. A certain emotion. Grabbed them.

But they'd not heard one word of the sermon. Alexander explains. It was no response to truth. They were just carried along.

With the emotion. And with the enthusiasm of it all. And it's as if Jesus is saying. At the start of chapter one. Don't get carried away. Don't get carried away.

With all the emotion of this. Don't get carried away. By the enthusiasm of the crowd. I want you first of all. To hear what kind of master I am. Jesus does not want you.

[28 : 22] On his bandwagon. He wants you in his school. Jesus is not asking. For cheerleaders. And glorious.

Emotional. And enthusiastic responses. He is asking for disciples. Who are willing to sit. At his feet. And hear his word. And Jesus is not so concerned.

This morning. To thrill you with his power. He wants to teach you his word. And so if you think. You can stand at Christ like that. Can you stand at Christ.

