

40-04-02-Repentance--Faith's Forerunner  
repentance, calling, enlightenment, preaching, kingdom of God  
Mat 4:12-17

Jesus has much to teach us but teaches us very little until we repent.

### INTRODUCTION:

–Our **text** says that after John the Baptist's imprisonment, Jesus started preaching the same **message John preached**: "*Repent!*" [**repentance** is *metanoia*: "a changed mind, changed thinking"; **G.Campbell Morgan**: "Through all the messages of history, utterances of prophets, visions of seers, and songs of psalmists, the almost monotonous burden of the Divine call is, Repent, repent."]  
–Preaching is a mixture of *instructing the mind through explanation* and *inspiring the heart through exhortation*. But neither are effective without the *human will's response to the Holy Spirit's conviction*.  
–**Minds** must be changed for **lives** to be changed. That's why Christ started where John left off: **HOM.idea**. He had to begin His own preaching ministry by continuing John's, because....

**I. The Way of the Lord Was Not Fully Prepared– Mat 3:1-3.** In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" (John's voice *came* but was *silenced*.)

- A. **v.12**, When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. (When a **door closes in God's face**, He **finds an open one**.)
1. It was **in Galilee, not Judea**, that Jesus selected His 12 Apostles.
  2. **Where God isn't welcome, He doesn't abide– v.13a**, Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum. [**Questions**: Is God at home in our hearts? Do we *live in such a way* that He *always feels welcome* there?]
- B. **Ever since the Cross**, the *way of the Lord* is still being prepared:
1. Jesus **took up John's message** and **got treated like John**.
  2. **The disciples suffered persecution** for **preaching as Jesus did**.
  3. **Missionaries** have been **martyred** for this *message of repentance*.

**TRANS:** Preaching "*Repent!*" is where Jesus **began** and also where **we must begin**, whether addressing *individuals, families, cities, or nations*. *Repentance isn't the only message*, but it's the *forerunner of faith in anything else God has to say*. **Jesus has much to teach, but He teaches us very little until we repent**. Why does Jesus begin there?

**II. Repentance Is the Proper Response to God's Light– v.13-16**, ...*he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—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."*

- A. **Why did Jesus make Galilee of the Gentiles His 1<sup>st</sup> preaching circuit?**
1. This **international setting** pointed to *the Gospel's future* (**Greeks, Phoenicians, and Arabs** were *the majority*; **the Jews** a *minority*.)
  2. **Judea was closed-minded, Galilee was open to new ideas**:
    - a. **Holy Spirit conviction** is meant to give us *God's viewpoint*, not just to make us *sorry for our sins* (Where there's **no change of mind**, there's **no choice to change our ways** [from **Lewis Carroll's** "*The Walrus and the Carpenter*"– "I weep for you," the Walrus said; "I deeply sympathize." / With sobs and tears he sorted out / Those of the largest size, / Holding his pocket handkerchief / Before his streaming eyes.]
    - b. **Repentance isn't just considering God's way of thinking**, but **choosing to adopt God's attitude about sin and selfishness**.)
  3. **Judea was isolated, ingrown and self-addicted** [**Barclay** said Judea was "on the road to nowhere," Galilee was "on the road to everywhere."]
- B. **Enlightenment informs openness** (Galilee was *open*, yet still *dark*).
1. We can be *living in darkness*, if **not receptive to God's light on**:
    - a. our **origin**: living life *without knowing our significance* (only God can *tell us who we are*: **images of His Triune Deity**);
    - b. our **purpose**: adopting *popular behavior*, *without seeing our sin* (only God can *show us how to live*: **by His Word**);
    - c. our **destiny**: following *trivial pursuits*, *without finding ultimate fulfillment*: a **personal relationship with our Creator**).
  2. "*living in the land of the shadow of death*" was a double-prophecy:
    - a. **Isaiah's prophecy** had promised deliverance from Assyria at the birth of a child named *Immanuel* ["*God with us*"].
    - b. But the **second fulfillment** came when "*a light ... dawned*" in the ministry of another Immanuel– **John 8:12**, 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."
    - c. His "light of life" came in two ways– **Mat 4:23**, Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the **good news** of the kingdom, and **healing** every disease and sickness among the people. (The "good news" brought God's light; "**healing**" showed His power.)

**TRANS:** *Repentance* is our proper response to God's light shining into our lives, whether from *spiritual truth* or *miraculous healing*. When Christ's light breaks in, there's always *more where that came from*. **But** we must *repent*. **Jesus has much more to show us, but shows us little more until we live in the light of what He's already shown us.** "*Repent! Repent!*" is our Lord's cry for a final reason...

**III. The King Had Already Arrived— v.17.** From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the **kingdom** of heaven is near."

- A. Jesus was His own herald [*"to preach"* means *"to proclaim as a herald"*]:
1. He spoke with certainty (no perhaps, no maybes, no probablys)
  2. He spoke with authority (with the counsels and edicts of a King)
- B. From studying them for 30 years, He knew what sinners needed:
1. To common people He had grown up with, He cried: "*Repent!*"
  2. For passersby on the great trade-route near to Nazareth [Hebrew priests & scribes, Roman soldiers & citizens, Arab travelers & merchants, Greek philosophers & slaves] He had one word for each, "*Repent!*"
- C. God's reign was about to begin (earlier than expected)!
1. The future King of the universe *had become present in history!*
  2. We aren't prepared for this King, if God isn't first in our hearts:
    - a. Changing our ways means a radical and revolutionary change of mind about *Who's in charge of our lives—Who is King!*
    - b. Changing the mind is a decisional turning point:
      - (1) turning from our own ways, to walk only in God's ways,
      - (2) closing worldly trust accounts, to invest faith solely in God,
      - (3) reversing course by resetting our sails to catch the wind of the Holy Spirit **instead of** the *shifting winds of the world*.

### **CONCLUSION:**

—*Repentance* is faith's forerunner, faith's condition. There's **so much** God wants to teach us about *His ways*, *His Kingdom*, but **first** we must change our minds, change our directions: *repent*.

—So, the questions we must continually ask ourselves are these: *Whose wind is filling our sails?.... In whose account is our faith invested?.... To which drummer do our feet march? If God is not first in our thinking, first in our devotion, Jesus says to us, "*Repent!*"*

### **Matthew 4:12-17 (NIV)**

12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned 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 to the sea, along 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." 17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."