

**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.”

**17** From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

**18** As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. **19** “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” **20** At once they left their nets and followed him.

**21** Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, **22** and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

**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.

### **To Boldly Go**

There were a couple of TV shows that we just couldn't miss as kids. You already heard about the Three Stooges but there's still the Dukes of Hazzard, the A-Team, Mash, but the one most applicable for today is Star Trek. As a child, my Dad, brother and sister loved the original 1966 Star Trek. We imitated Shatner and emphasized random nonsense. We went on our own voyages. We had our own Spock club. We even quoted phrases such as, *“I just can't do it captain. I don't have the power.”* And most famous of them all, *“Space, the final frontier. These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise. Its 5 year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before.”*

Jesus had a similar mission when he began his ministry. He boldly went where no prophet had gone before. He went to Galilee. *“These are the voyages of the Christ. His 3 year mission: exploring strange places, to bring life to dead civilizations and to boldly go where no prophet has gone before.”* In fact, Jesus went where no one ever has been and did what no one has ever been able to do in order to bring life to a dead world.

Many love to explore. Our curiosity captivates us on our quest for knowledge and sometimes we even go on adventure simply to say, “I've done that.” At the same time we

are appropriately cautious when it comes to the unknown. We don't like to take risks and step out on a limb because sometimes they break. So to boldly go where no man has gone before may be fine for others but not always for me. We may imagine that "to boldly go" is something reserved only for the so called "super-saints" and those who can dedicate their life to mission but what about the "normal everyday run of the mill" Christian? Do they boldly go? Jesus certainly did.

Immediately after his baptism Jesus heads off into the desert to do battle with the devil. Matthew demonstrates that Jesus is qualified to go where no man has gone before. That's because he lived the perfect life. He also went where he was needed the most. *When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali*

Some translations say Jesus withdrew to Galilee. It's important to note that Jesus was not on the run. He was not hiding from Herod. Instead Jesus countered by entering his territory. Galilee was under Herod's jurisdiction. Then Jesus gained a large following as he publicly proclaimed the kingdom of God. The same exact message that John preached. The same message that put him in prison.

God's rule shows up in vulnerability and weakness. Not only are his prophets put in prison but Jesus begins in Galilee. Galilee wasn't exactly known as a cultural epicenter. It was like going out into the sticks. This wasn't much of an adventure as it was a territory that everyone knew nobody wanted. This isn't exactly a strange new world or a new civilization worth exploring. It's a war torn country. The first line of defense. The first line to fall. It was not new but it certainly was strange for the Messiah to start so far from Jerusalem, far not only physically but spiritually. Galilee was the most pagan of the Jewish provinces and this is where Jesus gathered his disciples?

Many talk about Christians being little Christ's and that they too are called to make disciples of all nations they get this idea that they have to boldly go where no man has gone before. That's terrifying. And yet many have so narrowly defined discipleship as only being on mission or going on crusade. Discipleship not just about working through well planned and carried out evangelism programs is simply living your life and being who God has called you to be as his son or daughter in his kingdom.

Discipleship is everything you do giving glory to God. That doesn't mean we can withdraw into our fortress of solitude and hide from the world. We confront the world with the light of the word (like John did). But often we're rather hide and hold out hoping no one will notice. Our excuses I'm a normal "Christian" not like you. I don't have the power. In doing so we fail to realize that the apostles were just ordinary people too. In doing so you fail to realize that I too am normal Christian. I often am afraid. I frequently don't go boldly.

If anything I give even more evidence that God's reign shows itself in weakness and vulnerability. God's reign shows how inadequate we are.

As normal as the apostles are Jesus expected them to follow. Jesus invited unqualified people to learn who he was and see what he would do for them. Jesus also calls us to follow him. He doesn't want us to go wherever we want. He leads and we follow. We bring our life in line with his word. Jesus is Lord. Jesus leads. But often we try to turn that around and dictate to God what we are willing to do or not do - what areas of our life he can control. If that's how we behave we are only fooling ourselves if we think we follow him. James warns, "*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says*" (James 1:22). Follow Jesus.

Leave behind anything that leads away from Jesus. Value the Word of God. What God's Word tells me is that what I do is of much less importance than what Jesus has done for me. Jesus boldly went to Galilee.

Why? "*To fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah.*" Matthew wants us to understand that Jesus made no mistake. Jesus came to those hopelessly lost in the dark, to these people Jesus called, "*Come, Follow me.*" The disciples dropped everything and followed Jesus. It's easy to find too much or too little significance in their response. On one hand - commentators will speak as if the disciples clearly understood at this point who Jesus was and what discipleship might mean for their lives. On the other hand we have the gospels who show how wrong they were and did not fully understand who Jesus is or what he has come to do. I don't believe they understood what following Jesus would mean and where Jesus would lead them.

Jesus was boldly going where no man had gone before: to the cross, to the throne of God. The route he would take is from the prophet Isaiah: *Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.* The route, *by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan* depict Galilee from the viewpoint of the invading nations. This is the war-path of the Assyrians and Babylonians. This is also the war-path of our Savior as he marches into this world and makes his saving assault on Galilee and Judah.

Jesus came to a land covered in the darkness of unbelief and despair. Every scholar would have looked to their northern neighbor and questioned, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" But light broke into that dark world when Jesus appeared, preaching, teaching, and calling disciples to follow him, fulfilling every prophecy, and honoring even the lowest with his presence. Jesus came to those in darkness, sitting in death. He came for those who could not help themselves. He carried a cross they could not and went to a death they could not die. Jesus graced this world not only with his presence but with his life. He then came back from the dead and announced his Kingdom has come. Inaugurated when

received his crown of thorns and ascended the throne of his cross. When he went where no man had gone before and did what no one was able to do.

Jesus then calls to us, "Follow me," Jesus not only calls to us in his word but he equips us and motivates us to go out and make more disciples. He has forgiven our every failure. He has forgiven the many times we've remained hidden. Jesus didn't wait for us to find our way out of the darkness - he entered into it.

Jesus still comes to us in his Word and Sacrament. Here he gives himself to us again. How can we ever go home the same? We are sent out. His reign extends to the final frontiers of our life. He's made his saving assault on this land and invites us once again, "Come. Follow me."

Follow Jesus. Listen to his Word. Hear his voice. You don't have to boldly go on mission you can explore the world where you are at. You can witness through your words and actions. Maybe you will go to to the most unlikely locations and those least worthy of God's grace. Thank God Jesus led the way not only into Galilee but also among us.

Jesus boldly went where no one had gone before. His purpose was not to explore and find new civilizations but because he knew how lost we were wandering in the dark and he came to bring us to the Final Frontier. Amen.