



Responses to the Coming King (4) – Follow the King

Matthew 4:1-25 (& Isaiah 8:19-9:7)

This passage in Matthew is Matthew's account of Jesus' first bit of ministry, following His temptations in the wilderness. The temptations show us Jesus being true to God and obedient to Him where humans have failed. (Compare those 40 days for Jesus with the 40 days in the wilderness for Israel).

John the Baptist is shut in prison. And Jesus steps in and continues with the same message: "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near." (John's words in Matt 3:2; Jesus' words in Matt 4:17)

On Sunday, we were thinking about – What is the Kingdom of Heaven like? We looked at how Jesus fills this role that no one else in any other kingdom has ever been able to fill. And how His Kingdom is different from any other Kingdom.

1) The Kingdom of Heaven is true hope for those living in darkness

The land of Zebulun and Naphtali were lands stuck in utter darkness. Forgotten, scorned. They had turned away from the living God and His Word. But God's word for them contained a great – the promise of light dawning in darkness. And the light was a son of God, born to be an everlasting King. (Isaiah 8:19-9:7).

2) The Kingdom of Heaven is the Best Thing Ever

We talked about how surprising the reaction of the disciples was:

1. They leave everything to follow Jesus
2. They do it straight away

And how there is only one person in history that provokes that kind of response in anyone – Jesus.

3) The Kingdom of Heaven Brings Total transformation

The healing of all these people is just a glimpse of what the Kingdom will be like. We're told in Revelation that: "He [Jesus] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Rev 21:3-4)

Here are a few questions that might get things going, feel free to ignore / adapt / add to for your group:

The Kingdom of heaven is true light for those living in darkness (v12-17)

How similar/dissimilar do you think Zebulun & Naphtali are to our world today?

Think of the image of Jesus' Kingdom coming like a dazzling sunrise, coming to bring life after centuries of darkness.

- How can you re-imagine your hope in light of this?
- How does it affect how you might hold it out as a hope to others?

The Kingdom of Heaven is the Best Thing Ever (v18-22)

How do people respond when you make decisions for the kingdom that don't make sense to the world?

How do you think about how you came to Christ? Are you ready and practiced to tell the story of how Jesus as changed your life?

The Kingdom of Heaven brings Total Transformation(v23-25)

We don't always see Jesus healing everyone – both when He was walking around and today. But complete healing for the world and the Kingdom is ultimately promised.

- How do you feel imagine this scene, or other stories of Jesus healing people?
- How does this passage encourage you in areas you would love to see healing or restoration in your own life?

Optional Extra for the adventurous:

Read Isaiah 9:2-7

Not all of this prophecy has happened yet! Reflect on the words:

- What hope do you see held out?
- What promises are there to put your hope in?
- What assurance do you see that these words will come to pass?