

GROWTH GROUPS  
**WEEK 1**  
WEEK OF SEPT 20



## Growth Group Fall 2020

### *Following*

Week 1 – September 20, 2020 - Matthew 4:12-22

**Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at a church. In this time of Corona19 and “social distancing” please don’t meet in person, but do continue to check in with each other. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at [connect@ljpres.org](mailto:connect@ljpres.org). Thank you for loving and caring for each other.**

### Setting the Context

Today we begin a 9 week sermon series around the theme of discipleship. We will be talking about following Jesus, becoming like Jesus and then acting like Jesus. Our passage this week is from the beginning of Jesus’s teaching ministry. After going through his early adulthood inconspicuously, Jesus is making his debut in religious circles, but not in the way people assumed. After John the Baptist’s arrest, Jesus picks up his ministry with similar verbiage and intention. He is continuing the ministry of the kingdom of heaven that John had begun.

The arrest of John led Jesus to retreat to Galilee. This retreat would have been viewed by the Jews in Jerusalem as a backwards step. Galilee was not only geographically far from Jerusalem, but also socially and politically distant from the ideals found there. However, this seemingly un-strategic location was chosen as the birthplace of Jesus’s ministry for a reason. Jesus chooses this place to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah that states: “On those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

The first section of this passage describes the message of Jesus: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This idea is then demonstrated in the second section when Jesus encounters 4 of his soon-to-be disciples. Jesus meets Peter and Andrew by the water and elevates their calling. Jesus speaks enabling words over them that resonate with them, but also draws them towards the kingdom of heaven. He says, “Come, follow me...and I will send you out to fish for people.”

It is important to note, that in this moment, Peter and Andrew did not come to Jesus, rather Jesus came to them. Unlike other rabbis, Jesus does not wait for students to find him. Jesus is teaching us that no one comes to the Lord by their own initiative, instead the Lord comes to us first.

This scene is repeated in the call of James and John. Jesus comes to them and calls them to leave behind all they have for the kingdom of heaven. In the case of James and John, they are not only called to leave behind their habits and property, but their very family. All four disciples are enabled, by the Word of Jesus Christ, to think beyond their circumstances and wholeheartedly follow.

Following is a daily choice. The disciples following of Jesus is not only for the sake of their own salvation, but for the sake of others’ salvation. Jesus does not say, follow me so that you can be saved and go to heaven. Rather, Jesus says follow me and show others what it looks like to follow me.



# Exploring the Text

## Read Matthew 4:12-22

*When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. <sup>13</sup> Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— <sup>14</sup> to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:*

*<sup>15</sup> “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— <sup>16</sup> 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.” <sup>17</sup> From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”*

*<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” <sup>20</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.*

*<sup>21</sup> 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, <sup>22</sup> and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.*

## Questions

*If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.*

- 1) Who is the best leader you can think of? What qualities do/did they have?
- 2) We know that Jesus moved to Capernaum to fulfill the words of Isaiah 9, but “why” do you think this was an effective place to begin his ministry? Does it make sense to you that he would call Capernaum his home, even though most religious activity took place some 80 miles away in Jerusalem?
- 3) Put yourself in the passage we just read. What would your reaction be to someone who came up to you and said, “Come, follow me”?
- 4) Can you think of a moment in your life that you experienced Jesus finding you?
- 5) We all “follow” someone or something. What are the some of things of our society that people are following? How do you respond to this idea of God sharing in our suffering? Do you find it helpful?
- 6) The verb that is used for “following”, in our text, implies an ongoing decision. We have to be intentional every day about following him. What have you found helpful in trying to daily follow Jesus? Is it an active choice?
- 7) Our relationship with Jesus is personal, but it is not private. Jesus makes it clear that we follow him in order to “fish” for other people. How often do you think about your relationship with Jesus as being “for the sake of another?” What does it look like today to “fish for other people?”
- 8) Pastor Paul ended his sermon by asking about the nets we might be holding onto? What is something in your life that you are having a hard time letting go of? Is there a “net” that Jesus keeps telling you to put down so that you can follow him?