

Together with Jesus

Week 2 – Matthew 3 and 4 – Jesus’ early ministry

Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist

The action momentarily moves away from Jesus to a strange figure named John the Baptist who is drawing massive amounts of people to receive a baptism of repentance that symbolically says that the religious traditions of the day are worthless to prepare them for the coming of God’s chosen Messiah.

- **What do you think of John the Baptist? Would you have gone to see him?**

Matthew 3:13-17

Baptism of Jesus

Surprisingly, Jesus shows up at the Jordan to be baptized. John seeks to decline, but Jesus convinces him. This is immediately followed by a rare confluence of all three persons of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- **The three persons of the Trinity also show up at the creation of the world. How is this moment like that one?**

Matthew 4:1-11

The Temptation of Jesus

Directly after His baptism, Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He is tempted three times, and each time thwarts the temptation with Scripture.

- **You are starting off on a time with Scripture. How have you been tempted, and how has the Scripture you have read helped you?**

Matthew 4:12-17

Jesus Begins Ministry

Matthew points out that where Jesus begins His ministry is significant, as it relates to Old Testament prophecy.

- **How do Jesus’ words in vs. 17 show what He has come to do?**

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Matthew 4:18-22

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

Jesus calls the first four disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Each time he calls a pair of brothers, they immediately leave what they are doing.

- **How difficult do you think it was for them to leave their boats? How difficult is it for you to leave behind things to follow Jesus?**

Matthew 4:23-25

Jesus Continues Ministry

Matthew seems to sum up quite a bit of Jesus' early ministry in these passages, noting what He was doing and how it was bringing together crowds of people that were following Him.

- **How many people do you imagine following Jesus at this point? What are their reasons for following Him?**

Imagining Yourself in the Story

Ignatius Loyola, the Roman Catholic theologian, encouraged the people in his order to read the Bible, picturing themselves as people that were there in the scene but in the background.

- How does this idea of imagining yourself as a background character help you in reading the text? What kind of person do you imagine you would be in these stories? An Israelite? A Roman? A Pharisee? A disciple?

Red Letter Challenge this week – Make a List

This week, take Jesus' words from Mark 1:15, "Repent and believe the good news" to heart. Forgiving others starts with recognizing that we have been forgiven. Make a list of your sins that have been forgiven by God, and thank Him for forgiving you.