

Lesson 4 Lecture – “Beginning the Galilean Ministry”

Good morning/good evening. Before I get started, I wanted to acknowledge we have a special Guest with us. Please allow me to introduce Him to you.

Matthew 18:20, “*For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.*” Later in Matthew 28, we learn, “*Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” Finally, Revelation 1:20 tells us, “*The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*” As you can tell by now our special “Guest” is really no guest at all – He is our abiding Savior Jesus Christ. Since there are more than two of us gathered here in His name, He is with us, and He is with us always. The seven lampstands are the seven churches of the church age – the complete church, and He holds them in His right hand. We, as His beloved church, are held **in His mighty right hand** at all times. Let’s pray and welcome Him now.

Up to this point, we’ve covered Jesus’ genealogy, His humble birth and early persecution, a glimpse of His youth, His baptism, and His temptation in the wilderness. Although admittedly simplistic, I would characterize what has been happening to that of preparing the space shuttle for a mission. The foundation of the Launchpad is the fact that Jesus qualifies as the prophesied Messiah via His genealogical roots. The construction of the shuttle is Jesus’ virgin birth and temptation. Finally, the fuel to make the shuttle take off is His baptism of the Holy Spirit. With the title of today’s lesson “Beginning the Galilean Ministry” - continuing with my analogy of the space shuttle - you could say we have lift-off!

Actually, if you will indulge me, I’m going to give the title of this lecture as “*Jesus – God in Action*”. I’ve broken out the stories covered in today’s reading into

an outline that demonstrates Jesus is a Man that is not simply wasting His life – ***He is on the move.*** The outline is:

- Jesus is discerning
- Jesus is calling
- Jesus is healing
- Jesus is delivering
- Jesus is praying

Before I get going on our outline, let's take a look at a map to help you get some geographical perspective on where we are in the land of Israel during this segment of Scripture. Nazareth is a small town in the northern part of the country. As we're going to cover in just a minute, Jesus will not stay in Nazareth – He is going to head northeast to set up a place for a good portion of His ministry – in Capernaum. As you can see, Capernaum borders the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee (also known in our reading as Lake Gennesaret). Capernaum is about 20 miles from Nazareth. Hopefully, this visual helps as I dive into the beginning of the outline.

We start with what makes Jesus a God in action is He is **discerning**. Jesus was still living in His hometown of Nazareth. He had heard his cousin John, who had recently baptized Him, had been put in prison. King Herod had put John in prison because he called out the king for marrying his brother Phillip's wife, Herodias. Jesus was no doubt disturbed by this news, so He elected to go to Capernaum. He went there for three reasons:

1) That He fulfill the prophecy noted in Isaiah 9:1-2, “*In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—the people*

walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”

2) **The Sea of Galilee is a beautiful place.** If you have not had the opportunity to go to Israel and you can find a way to afford to go, please do it. That was a life-changing trip for me – the Bible really comes alive as you visit the places Jesus walked and other Biblically significant sites. Jesus was no fool, He wanted to be in a beautiful place, and the Sea of Galilee is one of the best. This reminds me of a sermon from Pastor Jon Courson of Applegate Christian Fellowship in Jacksonville, Oregon. His message was on how to know God’s will for your life. He kept it as simple as it gets, “*To just do what is way cool.*” God knows you better than anyone else, and He wants you to get to that place where He knows you’ll be happiest. If you like hot weather and the beach, He is not going to send you to Siberia or Antarctica. Jesus knew He had a ministry to perform – why not do it in a beautiful place like the Sea of Galilee?

3) **Jesus has the power of discernment.** After returning from Galilee to Nazareth, Jesus was in the synagogue and quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 proclaiming He was the One that this section of Scripture was talking about. The people loved that part, but then He hit them between the eyes with the conviction that no prophet is accepted in His hometown. He reminded them of the story that despite *all the widows in Israel* due to the 3½-year famine, **Elijah** was only sent to minister to **one** of them. He then recounted *all the lepers in Israel* at the time of **Elisha**, yet he only healed **one** of them. Why would Elijah and Elisha only heal *just two* people amidst all the suffering? Because God is a God of discernment – He knew the people’s hearts – they had no interest in believing in Him – they just wanted His miraculous deliverance and healing. The people of Israel were familiar with Elijah and Elisha, and their pre-conceived notion of who they were would prevent them from believing what God was doing through them. If I were to go to my

unbelieving family members or my former high school classmates, they would likely not take me seriously at all as someone who teaches God's Word because they remember me as the Godless, deceptive, and goofball guy I was back then. God has done a mighty work in me – now I'm just a goofball! Praise the Lord!

My real point in saying Jesus is discerning is He sees the truth because He **is** the ***truth***. There is no point putting up a façade or not being real with God because He doesn't buy it. There are no secret sins with God, so you might as well just give up the thought you can hide anything from Him. Hebrews 4:13 offers this chilling certainty, "*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*" This may seem intimidating or even frightening, but please keep this core truth in perspective. Yes, there **is** judgment for sin, but God already knows your sin, and ***He chose*** to do something about it. He chose to send His only begotten Son to die on a cross to pay the price of the judgment of **your** sin. Your heavenly Father sees the pain and suffering your sin is causing you, and He yearns to see you made ***free of your slavery to your sin***. Jesus is discerning not to judge you, but to be your personal ***Savior***. What did He say in John 3:17, "*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*" Come to the Cross and confess your sins – He already knows them – and begin to experience the joy of the Lord in His forgiveness.

You might be thinking about the people Jesus left behind in Nazareth. Did He no longer love them? No – He still loved them, but He knew their hearts. He also knew the future and therefore knew they were not going to believe in Him. God takes no joy in the deaths of the wicked or the unforgiven. The truth is it grieves Him terribly – remember - ***He created them*** as well. Yet, Jesus had a choice – would He stay in an area where He knew He was not going to reach people, or does He go to another place where there are people whom will believe? Jesus'

power of discernment made Him recognize that though the people of His hometown held a special place in His heart, the combination of their unwillingness to believe and the hope of what was waiting for Him at the Sea of Galilee – including His disciples – made it clear He needed to move on from Nazareth.

The next segment of today's reading we see *Jesus is calling*. Because Jesus is God, He doesn't really need any help in His ministry. God can do anything and everything – remember our memory verse from Lesson 1 - "*Nothing is impossible with God*"? (Luke 1:37) However, He *chooses* to get people involved with His ministry. Why do you think that's the case? First, He loves to be with His creation – He loves *you*. Don't *you want* to be around someone you love? Secondly, He knows your giftings because *He gave them* to you, so He wants you to experience how you can bless others with those giftings and for others to be blessed by them. For those of you who don't think that you have anything to offer or gifts, I'm here to tell you that you believe a lie. Ephesians 4:7, in speaking of the *distribution* of spiritual gifts, says, "*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.*" I added the emphasis to prove that *each one of us* – no exceptions – have been given gifts to minister with.

Finally, He knows that as you minister to others with your giftings, you are ultimately going to be ministered to, yourself. That's one of the most beautiful and amazing things about ministry. While you are devoting your time and efforts to ministering to others, the experience is ministering to things in your life that need healing, restoration, and growth. You can be caught up in your fears, anxieties, and concerns in your life, but as you invest yourself in others and see the issues they are either struggling with or being strong in, God will bless you through opening your eyes to see how *their* lives are actually ministering to you. The things you are all worked up about start to become less significant or important as God reveals Himself and His power to *heal* and *gain the victory* over what concerns you.

In the stories of the calling of the disciples, we have Jesus teaching the people by the Sea of Galilee. He gets into Simon's boat, pushes out a little bit and sits down and presents the word of God. In those days, the **teachers sat** and the **people stood** when the Word of God was presented. Something went wrong because now I'm doing the standing and you all get to sit! Anyway, after Jesus is finished speaking, He tells Simon to push out to deeper waters and then tells him to let down his nets for a catch. You can kind of hear Simon's attitude in his response in Luke 5:5, "*Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.*" As always, Jesus gets the last laugh – can't you see the look on His face as Simon and the rest of the fisherman pull up such a haul that their nets are breaking and their boats are sinking? You can almost hear Jesus saying, "*Nanny, nanny goat!*" - Maybe not. By the way, this is a picture of what the boats looked like in Jesus' time.

When I first became a Christian, I didn't think all that much of Simon Peter – I thought he was a hothead and a blow-hard. However, I've come to develop a deep love for him because he was so **real**. I'm certain that was one of the things that Jesus loved about him. Recognizing what has just happened with the haul of fish, he immediately recognizes the holiness and power of Jesus. He tells him in verse 8 of Luke 5, "*Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!*" His reply is the natural response of someone who has had a **real** interaction with God. When you are fully aware that you are in the presence of God, all your **pride**, all your **pretense**, and all your **phoniness** is immediately torn down. You are laid bare before your Creator. All that is left is your sin, and that doesn't feel good in the presence of a perfect and holy God. I was recently at a meeting where there were a lot of pastors in the room. Without trying to sound judgmental (but I confess I am being judgmental), I marveled at the pride and arrogance of some of these people. I can't imagine the spiritual warfare a pastor deals with, so to stand up here in my

robe of ***totally unfounded*** self-righteousness, I confess I'm out of line in what I'm saying. My point is this – if you have had a direct encounter with the God of the Bible, I don't know how you can be walking around with much pride and arrogance. The awesomeness of God just dwarfs our puny and silly concepts of our self-worth and capabilities.

Look at Jesus' response to Simon's confession, Luke 5:10, "*Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.*" Did you ***hear*** that? Do you hear any condemnation following his confession? Do you hear any shame? As I said, He already knew Simon's sinfulness, and He already knows ***yours***. All Jesus wanted Simon to do is to let him know there's no need to be afraid of Him, and to move forward with a new life. This is the heart of our God, my friends. Simon, his brother Andrew, and the Zebedee brothers – James and John – saw the power and the love of Jesus, dropped everything, and chose to follow Him. Here's the thing, folks. As you come to know God through Jesus and His Word, you become more certain of His goodness, His love, His faithfulness, and anything else He reveals to you about Himself to be more than qualified to be your Lord and Savior. If you choose to allow the truths He reveals to you to build your faith, you can let go of the junk of your old life and by the power of the Holy Spirit Who is dwelling in you, you can experience the abundant life Jesus promises as a new creation in Him.

Another theme in today's reading is *Jesus is healing*. Of all the things that Jesus did in His ministry, the thing that appeared to get the most attention was His power to heal. Our reading showed us people flocked to Him as the word got out that Jesus had the power to heal. Question 15 of our homework makes a tremendous inquiry that I am curious to know what your answer was, "*Jesus laid hands on each one. Why do you think He chose to heal each person individually instead of healing everyone at once?*" My answer was He was proving God has a ***personal interest*** in ***each and every one*** of His creations. He knows the pain and

suffering each of us is experiencing, and His heart is to be our *personal* physician. There is no Obamacare in heaven. Question 18a also brought up a great point, “*In Mark 1:40-45, which did the leper doubt, Jesus' power or His willingness to heal?*” The leper questioned Jesus’ willingness to heal. **Do you?** Healing takes many forms. There is physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing. Jesus can do all of this healing, but do **you** believe that? Maybe you’ve been asking Him to heal you for years, yet you are still suffering. That is no doubt a reason to question God’s willingness to heal. I don’t judge you for that because I’ve asked the same questions and felt exactly the same way.

This is why our understanding of the Cross is so central to our faith. When God created the heavens and earth, there was no sickness or disease. **Everything** He made was **good**. What caused and still causes all the sickness and disease in the world? – **Sin**. Whether it is our sin, sin committed against us, or just the sin drenched world we live in, all pain and suffering is the fruit of sin. God could have just responded with an attitude of, ‘*Hey – they made their choice, and it wasn’t Me. Let them live with their choice - they’re on their own*’’. But He **didn’t**, did He? Let’s look at a couple of Scriptures at what God’s true heart is towards our sin. Isaiah 53:10a, “*Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin.*” Now let’s read Hebrews 12:2b, “**For the joy set before him** [Jesus] *he endured the cross, scorning its shame.*” God must judge sin for He is righteous and just; however, out of His love for you and desire to deliver you from that judgment, He chose to send His Son to the Cross to take that judgment on your behalf. The “*joy set before Jesus*” was His hope for your forgiveness and healing of your sin. Just think and meditate on that for a while and let God strengthen you in His faithfulness.

Before I go any farther, I want to make something **very clear**. For those of you or your loved ones who have been experiencing pro-longed illnesses and

disabilities, I am not at all taking the position that the fact you or your loved one is still in pain is due to a *lack of faith*. That is an *unbiblical* and *cruel* doctrine. From chapter 9 in John's gospel, Jesus was asked by his disciples regarding a man who had been blind since birth, "*Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" What was Jesus' response? "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned,*" said Jesus, "*but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*" (John 9:2-3) Ultimately, Jesus healed the man, so it worked out for him. What if Jesus didn't heal the blind man? Does that make Jesus any less powerful or compassionate?

I believe it is possible for one person's pain and suffering to minister to another. That may be a hard statement to hear or believe, but I'm quite certain it is true. Many of you may have heard of *Joni Eareckson Tada*. When she was a teenager, she misjudged the shallowness of the Chesapeake Bay. When she dove in she fractured her back, she became a paraplegic – paralyzed from the shoulders down. Instead of giving up on life, she has turned her pain and suffering into an incredible witness of the "*works of God that might be displayed*" in her. Not all of us can be as brave as Joni. Suffering sucks, and we just want to be healed. Why hasn't God healed you or your loved one's pain? I'm afraid I don't have an answer for that. I can tell you God's ways are higher than yours or my ways and His thoughts are higher than yours or my thoughts, *but* that may or may not be helpful to you right now. What I can tell you is if you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, *you will be healed* when you go to heaven. However, that doesn't mean God *can't* or *won't* provide at least some type of healing in your life *now*. I don't know what that looks like for you, but one of my life verses I have clung to in my times of suffering is Jeremiah 29:11, "*For I know the plans I have for you,*" *declares the LORD,* "*plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*" Jesus healed *all* the people He came across in our reading. He

will heal everyone in this room, eventually. He is willing to provide some type of healing to you now. What that looks like to you in your situation, I don't know. What I *do* know is He willingly went to the Cross, He died on the Cross, and He is alive. He's alive for a **reason** – to give you a **hope** and a **new life**. I encourage you take a leap of faith and ask Him what that means to you.

The next theme in our reading was *Jesus is delivering*. The truth of the existence of the spirit world can be a scary and a freaky thing. For me, not long after I became a Christian, I had no problem with believing in the spirit world. Not because anything God did but because of a .. donut. I was thinking here we have this inanimate object – a simple piece of food. It doesn't breath and it doesn't talk. However, I love donuts, so when I see a glazed donut, I can hear it calling out to me, "*Come to me, devour me, watch me make you loosen your belt!*" Actually, the donut leaves out that last part, but that *is* what eventually happens! The fact of the matter is there is a spirit world, but there is **nothing** to be afraid of. Satan may rule the physical world, but **God** rules the spirit world – and the spirit world is **greater than** the physical world. In our reading we learn of several examples of demon possessed people. When they came into the presence of Jesus, the demons knew exactly whom He was. What did they call Him? - The Holy One of God. More importantly, they were both afraid of Him, and they were immediately obedient to His commands.

Jesus has complete authority over Satan and his demons. In the book of Job, Satan came before the throne of God telling Him he was roaming throughout the earth – going back and forth on it. What was he telling God? He was looking for people to destroy. God offers up Job (that's a topic for another lecture in of itself), but God sets the ground rules and limitations for what Satan can do to Job. Satan obeyed God, and that is very important for us to understand. Satan is a creation of God, and **the creation is always subject to the Creator**. Satan wants you to think

he's as big and strong as God, but that is just another one of his relentless lies.

Satan is no match for God – that's not a fair fight – thankfully.

Before I move on, I want to make an important point. If you have truly confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you have received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as a down payment of the assurance of your redemption and permanent citizenship in the Kingdom of God. A true Christian cannot be demon possessed. Let me say that again – a true Christian cannot be demon possessed. Remember the verse, “*the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*” (1 John 4:4b) With the Holy Spirit – a co-equal member of the triune Godhead – dwelling in you, there is **no room** for a demon to enter you. However, that doesn't mean you are not susceptible to either a demon attack or even a target of a demonic assignment. With the Holy Spirit in you, you have the authority **in Jesus name** to rebuke any and all demonic attacks. This is an area of faith that is very real, but in the interest of time, I'm going to keep going. Just remember, you have God's surpassing power in the spiritual world – don't be afraid to use it **in Jesus name**.

Finally, we get to *Jesus is praying*. Why would Jesus need to pray? Isn't He God? The God of the Bible is a three person Trinity Being – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is a mystery, and I've heard one pastor wisely say, “*Don't try to figure out the Trinity – you'll never get it.*” What we can draw from the Trinity is there is communication going on within the Godhead. Genesis 1:26a proves this, “*Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.”*” I added the emphasis to demonstrate the discussion that is going on within the Godhead. Prayer is not a wish or a demand list. It is a blessed forum to allow you to share what is in your heart with God and for Him to share what's in His heart for you. Jesus prayed because He loves to talk to His Father and the Holy Spirit. There is perfect communication within the Holy Trinity. Do you know you don't have to always ask something from God in a

prayer? You can just tell Him you love Him or you're thankful for Him. You can ask Him what kind of God you need Him to be today. There's really no end to what you can pray about, but know that God is **ready and willing** to listen to what's on your mind and heart. He **designed** you that way.

You'll note that when Jesus prayed, He would go to a solitary or lonely place. He knew how easily it was to get distracted from His prayer time. Have you experienced that? I can't tell you how many times either I have or Vickie and I have started to pray, and our sons would come in, the phone would ring, or the dog would bark. That is not an accident my friends. The last thing Satan wants is you spending quality time with the Lord. Satan knows that meaningful prayer time with God makes you stronger and less vulnerable to his attacks. Find a place that you can be left alone – even a closet - and seek the Lord. In a conversation I had with a friend of mine about hearing from God, he was telling me He doesn't think he hears from God because he thinks his number is unlisted. While that made me laugh, I had to remind Him that God is willing and ready to hear from us in prayer. Jesus **craved the intimacy** of time with His Father. May we all learn to crave the same thing -Amen?

So we've covered the main themes of today's reading: Jesus is discerning; Jesus is calling; Jesus is healing; Jesus is delivering; and, Jesus is praying. Jesus indeed is a *God of Action*. Our reading also made some pretty clear statements that Jesus was sent for **specific purposes** – the **foundation and motivation** for His actions. Our reading offered some of these purposes:

- From Matthew 8:17, "*He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.*"
- From Mark 1:38, "*Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.*"
- From Luke 4:18-19 (which was taken from Isaiah 61:1-2), "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the*

poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

- From Luke 4:43, "*I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.*"

So Jesus' purposes for His earthly mission were for healing, preaching, freeing, and proclaiming. John 18:37b offers an additional purpose of His mission, "*For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.*" In the end, our faith is shaped and built on what we believe to be true. What shakes our faith and trust are the lies that come through the pain of our circumstances. Therefore, we must regularly remind ourselves of what we know to be a certainty – that **God's Word is absolutely true**. There is **no doubt** in God's Word because **He cannot lie**. There is only doubt in God's Word if we **choose** to succumb to the pain and suffering of our circumstances and listen to Satan's lies and deceptions about the truth of God's Word and who He truly is.

As I promised in my first lecture, I'm going to provide you my list of what Jesus teaches me about God. Our outline provides many of our entries.

- *God is a discerning God* – He sees all of your sin, but He doesn't seek to condemn you - He seeks to forgive you and restore you. Luke 4:23-27 and John 3:17
- *God is calling you to service.* Matthew 4:19
- *God is a healing God.* Matthew 4:23
- *God is a delivering God.* He has complete authority in the spiritual world. Mark 1:23-26
- *God loves prayer.* Luke 5:16
- *God always has a good purpose.* Luke 4:18-19

2 Corinthians 3:17 tells us, “*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*” My friends, you have the Holy Spirit within you. He has the full power of God to give you freedom. He does this through discerning sin and desiring to forgive you for it. He calls you to service not just to serve Him but also through your service for Him to minister to you. He is healing you and delivering you in ways you may not even know you **need** healing or delivering. He wants to hear from you in prayer because He loves you. And His purpose for your life is to make you a beautiful and powerful proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God. Isn’t God good? Let’s tell Him that now.