

## **Working With The Voice Transcript**

WWTV Episode 008

Commentary on Matthew Chapters 1-4

July 25, 2018

Hello listeners! This is Juliet Mee, the host of Working With The Voice. We've spoken in every episode about the fact that this podcast is a course to learn to communicate with the Holy Spirit. Today we are going to go into an explanation of the meaning of the material in the book of Matthew Chapters 1-4, which will be read by Tracy Biggs. Thanks Tracy! It's the longest episode so far and there's a lot to learn. I want to explain a couple things before we go into the book of Matthew.

This episode is intended to begin a foundation of knowledge about the life of Jesus, and for that understanding we have to go to the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, because that is where the information that we have about the time Jesus spent on the earth is contained. Those four books put together are called the gospels. Understanding the connection between the gospels, the life of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is important and goes back to the model of the Creator and the human self. In previous episodes, we outlined the model of the Creator as God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit with its reflection, or mirror image in the human Self that contains the body, soul and spirit. We identified that the conduit or the place that the Holy Spirit speaks to us is through the human spirit. The connection is called co-creation, and through the Daily Practice, we can strengthen that connection. We are a part of creating, part of creation, but we cannot do it on our own. How this entire "Creator/Self thing" works is frankly a mystery and that's why we have to make models. Models are not true or right, but they can give us the ability to be just a bit less wrong. Co-creation is the most mysterious and powerful force available to humans and lots of us want to have a more conscious ability to work with it. So we spend a lot of time thinking about how this happens and what we can do to get closer to the knowledge.

What does it mean to be human? This is the ultimate mystery of life, so it can't be answered flippantly or easily. I know that I have never figured it out in a way that contains every aspect of the answer, and I doubt that anyone else has either. But things changed for me once I began to understand that there was something that was speaking clearly to me, inside of me, but wasn't of me. I knew I was experiencing a mystical phenomenon that many people had identified as happening to them, but at first I had no word, no name for it. Once I could identify that the source of the communication, the phenomenon, was the Holy Spirit, I could begin looking for more answers. And almost immediately as I began speaking more directly with the Holy Spirit and learning from him, He began to talk to me about Jesus. As I have discussed before, I had no interest in Jesus. I couldn't even say the name without an involuntary lip curl. The Holy Spirit assured me that the reason I felt that way was because I didn't know what Jesus had done, and in addition, I didn't believe He had really existed. And all of that was true. I knew some of the stories but not their significance, and honestly, I felt that the bible was deeply flawed. Little did I know at that time that the Holy Spirit and Jesus are for all practical purposes, the same thing.

The Holy Spirit asked me to be willing to believe that I could be wrong, and to be willing to be taught by Him about Jesus. The Holy Spirit has been my teacher in all of this material. He has led me to other teachers who have confirmed what He taught me, and when I am reading on my own, He will give me a feeling of confirmation of ideas that are worth following up on. I have included many sources of material in the show notes and resources section of the website, so if you want more detail into the concepts, please check there for links to really great articles.

I know now that Jesus, a first century Jew, holds the key to the meaning and significance of our lives and the world in which we live today.

God is a mystery, but one that can be better understood by reading the material in the bible. When I was attempting to truly understand the bible, it was confusing to me that many times the explanation flipped back and forth between Old Testament stories I didn't know and the New Testament one I was attempting to learn about. I'll try not to do that unless I require the understanding from the Old Testament to make the New Testament story clear. I do not want to down grade the importance of the Old Testament. Its stories are important and interesting, but the scope of the information has to be contained. The intention is to help you to understand Jesus as the example of how God wants us to live, and what we can expect from God and from other people. The first stories told about Jesus are captured in the New Testament in a process that flows from what Jesus said, to eye witness accounts which became oral stories that were passed from person to person and then became written stories. This is a mix of history and theology, facts and faith, events and interpretation. There is no way of knowing what, if anything, that is contained in the gospels was written down while Jesus spoke, however, Jesus and the people around him could read and write as the Jewish teachings emphasized education. The scriptures were read at the synagogue in each community, and scribes were taught to accurately record events. The oral tradition was different than we might think of it today. Specialists in the oral tradition agree that there are strong constraints when it comes to altering the core content of oral stories. In fact, there are many people who believe that oral histories may be more reliable than written histories. Historians believe that the gospel book of Mark was written first, and the book of Matthew drew much of its material from Mark. Each gospel depicts their view to make their point and Matthew's point was that Jesus was the Messiah who brought with him the new covenant that was promised in the Old Testament.

We live in a world that has been profoundly affected by Jesus's message. There is no other figure in history that has changed the world in the way he did. We absolutely take for granted the impact of Jesus's message on the world. Although no society has yet reached the level that Jesus intends for us to live in, his revolutionary teachings about love, humility, compassion and forgiveness are a force that forever changed the social status of women, children, the disabled and the poor. To even come close to understanding the significance of what happened in Jesus's life and to comprehend the importance of his message and how it changed the world, you have to look into the influences of the place and time of his birth. In this explanation today and the commentaries that I will provide in future episodes, I hope that you will see that Jesus was no ordinary man and that his presence on earth could only be explained by the simple explanation that He was God.

Jesus was born into a world where religion and politics were deeply entangled. It has been described as a time of religious, cultural, and political darkness with misuse of power as the theme. Historically, we believe that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Israel, but we don't know the exact day or year. It was probably in 4 BC. He lived the majority of his life in Nazareth, and his ministry as recorded in the gospels has him teaching in a relatively small area. When you think of Israel, think of an area the size of Massachusetts with a diverse landscape. Mountains and grasslands, fertile land, and desert are often minutes apart. Today, you can drive the width of the country by car in about 90 minutes; and the trip from the far north to the country's southern tip takes about nine hours. Of course, all travel during Jesus's time was done by walking or riding on donkeys. A day's walk was calculated to be approximately 20 miles. Israel was strategically situated for both Greeks and Romans because it was an overland passage to Egypt and it is commonly described in three different sections. The northern part of Israel is

called Galilee. Nazareth is a small town in Galilee that is estimated to have had about 400 inhabitants when Jesus lived there. Although Jesus grew up in this small town, it doesn't mean that Jesus was completely cut off from the experience of education, culture or art. You can look online and see the archeological finds from a village called Sepphoris, which contains examples of exquisite art and sculpture from this time. Sepphoris was just two hour's walk away from Nazareth. It is quite possible that while Jesus was young, he might have worked in Sepphoris as there was a large restoration project underway. Sepphoris would have been a place of employment for many trades people, and Jesus was a person who did construction, like a carpenter or stone mason. The central area of Israel is Samaria, which today is known as Palestine. The southern area is Judea. Jerusalem is the capital of Judea and the Great Temple there was the center of Jewish life. Able bodied Jewish men were supposed to make a pilgrimage there three times a year for the feast times of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Much of Jesus's ministry and teachings would involve Jerusalem and the political and religious power structure that was situated there.

Although the majority of the people in the region were polytheistic or pagan, the Jewish people were unique due to the fact that they were monotheistic. They believe in only one supreme God who revealed himself and his will to the people through prophets. The historic writings of the Old Testament were a record of those messages. The last book of the Old Testament is Malachi and consists of the teachings of the prophet Malachi and this was the last word from God to the Jewish people from approximately 400 years before Jesus's birth. To provide a similar time frame that really isn't a good example due to the fact that technology has changed our culture so rapidly, it has been about 400 years from the pilgrims to us now. Previously, there had never been anything like 400 years of silence between prophets. Malachi identified that because the people expected blessings without obedience, God would judge them for their failure to keep the laws. Malachi also prophesied that Elijah, a Jewish prophet and a miracle worker from approximately 900 BC would arrive on earth again and then afterward God would send the Messiah. The people in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus were impatient and upset. They wanted to know when the messiah would come, and there was a lot of discussion about what he would be like, and what he would do. There were four main groups of Jews in Israel, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots, and the Jewish nation was fracturing due to the friction between these groups. Although there was social order created by Jewish law and tradition, observant Jews had no standing other than in their own communities. The order was maintained in the communities by the Greater Sanhedrin and the Lesser Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin can best be thought of as a court that oversaw the lives of Jews. The Great Sanhedrin met in Jerusalem and was composed of 71 men and there was a Lesser Sanhedrin in all major cities that was composed of 23 men. The Great Sanhedrin met every day except for festivals and Sabbath. Around the time of Jesus, the Sanhedrin had reached its pinnacle of importance, legislating all aspects of Jewish religious and political life within the parameters laid down by Biblical and Rabbinic tradition.

The people who did have power at that time outside of the Jewish community were the Romans. They ruled the area as well as the people of Israel. At the time of Jesus's birth, Herod the Great was in charge. Herod was a brutal ruler who rose to power not only by deceit but by murdering anyone he saw as his rival, even if they were in his immediate family. He was an evil and shrewd person who was named the ruler of all Jewish people and because of this, he pretended to convert to Judaism. In addition he had an aggressive plan for building up Jerusalem and he made the Temple in Jerusalem magnificent. He did this to promote the prosperity and strength of the region he ruled, however this created many political and religious tensions within the people. The Roman rule was becoming oppressive due to taxation of the Jews without representation. Part of the oppression can be seen in the reason Jesus was born in Bethlehem instead of Nazareth, which was the home of his parents. All Jewish people were required to

go to certain towns to register for a census so that the basis for their taxation could be determined. This was a considerable imposition as the distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem was 100 miles, or about 5 days journey. And the fact that Mary was pregnant and about to give birth did not exempt the family from the requirement. From birth to death, irrational and violent political and religious forces influenced Jesus and his message. When you understand the times, it's easy to see why both Jews and Romans were disappointed and frustrated by his message. The animosity towards Jesus was due to the fact that his message was a threat to the religious and political status quo. He wasn't who they wanted.

And now, I feel we can go into the Book of Matthew, the story of Jesus, who was the Messiah, the teacher of the new law, the savior of the new covenant. I think the perspective of the book of Matthew is the right way to start understanding Jesus today. He was a miracle and part of the mystery of God, and his life served an incredible purpose.

***Matthew Chapter 1 Verses 1-17: The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah***

*1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:*

*2 Abraham was the father of Isaac,*

*Isaac the father of Jacob,*

*Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,*

*3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,*

*Perez the father of Hezron,*

*Hezron the father of Ram,*

*4 Ram the father of Amminadab,*

*Amminadab the father of Nahshon,*

*Nahshon the father of Salmon,*

*5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,*

*Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,*

*Obed the father of Jesse,*

*6 and Jesse the father of King David.*

*David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,*

*7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam,*

*Rehoboam the father of Abijah,*

*Abijah the father of Asa,*

*8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,*

*Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,*

*Jehoram the father of Uzziah,*

*9 Uzziah the father of Jotham,*

*Jotham the father of Ahaz,*

*Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,*

*10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,*

*Manasseh the father of Amon,*

*Amon the father of Josiah,*

*11 and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.*

*12 After the exile to Babylon:*

*Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,*

*Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,*

*13 Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,*

*Abihud the father of Eliakim,*

*Eliakim the father of Azor,*

<sup>14</sup> *Azor the father of Zadok,  
Zadok the father of Akim,  
Akim the father of Elihud,*

<sup>15</sup> *Elihud the father of Eleazar,  
Eleazar the father of Matthan,  
Matthan the father of Jacob,*

<sup>16</sup> *and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.*

<sup>17</sup> *Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.*

When I began this work, I wished there had been a more interesting piece to start with, a real zinger of a story to get people in the front door. A great first line. But instead we get one of the “begats”, a genealogical list. The meaning of this list is more complex and interesting when you can see more than one reason for a section. Although Matthew is the first book of the New Testament, this genealogy points to back to the first book of the Old Testament, which is Genesis. Genesis talks about the history of the creation of the world; it’s the “God made the heavens and the earth” book. The book of Matthew starts with the “Genesis” of Jesus, who is the central character of the New Testament by specifying his ancestral lineage. This lineage is broken into three categories each of which are 14 generations apiece: the Abraham category, the David category, and the exile category. In the OT, Abraham is an ancestor to David. God specifically promised both Abraham and David the Messiah would be born through their blood line. There were many lines of people who did not contain both Abraham and David. But if Jesus had not been legally born into their specific lineage, the Jews would never have accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

So we understand the reason for Abraham and David to be singled out but why would the writer mention the progression of the genealogy through “the exile”? This exile was a time in Jewish history heavily referenced in the Old Testament. It occurred approximately 600 years before the birth of Jesus. The Jews were forced or “exiled” from Judah to Babylon after they were conquered by the Babylonians. Jerusalem was the capital of Judah, and Jerusalem was a very important city to the Jews. Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish religion. The movement from Jerusalem to Babylon was a distance of approximately 725 miles on foot. If, and this is a big if, IF a person could walk 20 miles a day every day, it would take them almost 40 straight days to walk this distance. This exile was an excruciating event for the Jews lasting about 100 years before they were allowed to return home. The fact that the Jewish people did not scatter apart or die out in this exile is a wonder, so to have God bring Jesus from the group of people who endured this time of hardship was a blessing and an elevation of their status.

There is another curious thing in this accounting beyond the three divisions of 14 generations. There are four women other than Mary mentioned: Tamar and Bathsheba (referred to as Solomon’s mother who had been Uriah’s wife) , Rahab and Ruth. These aren’t the women you would expect to be mentioned, the typical good women who you would like to see in Jesus’s ancestry. All four of these women were Gentiles, or non-Jews. They are interesting women whose stories are told in the Old Testament. From these stories we know Tamar and Bathsheba were adulteresses, and Rahab was a prostitute. Ruth, although she wasn’t sexually promiscuous, was not born a Jew. She was a royal foreigner who had been an idol worshiper before she converted to Judaism. Although each of these women’s stories were a bit more interesting than just boiling their reputation down to one aspect, why in the world would the writer of Matthew specifically identify women in Jesus’s line who had reasons to NOT be singled out? It certainly was not to make Jesus’s holiness seem less. It was done to foreshadow the new message of Christianity. It doesn’t matter if you have scandal in the past. It doesn’t matter who you are, male or

female, where you came from, or what you have done, you can be a blessed person in the eyes of God. All of these people were blessed to be able to be an ancestor of Jesus.

**Matthew Chapter 1 Verses 18-25: Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son**

<sup>18</sup> *This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man, and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

<sup>20</sup> *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

<sup>22</sup> *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

<sup>24</sup> *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.<sup>25</sup> But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

Mary was already promised to Joseph in marriage when she conceived by the Holy Spirit. By this time in history, people knew that having sex was definitely the cause of pregnancy. Can you imagine what she felt like when she figured out that she was pregnant and had not had sex? Mary had to know with certainty that something otherworldly had happened to her. This is our introduction to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is currently the consciousness that dwells inside the person if they believe in God through the Messiah. I say currently because previously, the Holy Spirit was mentioned differently. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is only mentioned three times and in each time he moved in nature, outside of people. In the New Testament, he is inside of people. Why is this? Because God changed in the way he was revealing himself to his people. Most biblical writers say that God never changes, and in a sense I agree with them. His nature, his goodness, his characteristics, the fact that he is dependable and ever present, always working for our good, always creating, always using whatever resources are available to him never changes but his method of revealing himself to us and his agreement about how he would treat us did change. So in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit interacted with people from outside of them, externally, but in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is interacting with people from inside of them as well as outside of them.

The story doesn't identify when Mary told Joseph but he had to be concerned about the fact that she would be showing herself to be pregnant before they were married. He considered breaking off the engagement but didn't due to a divine message. You wonder who they told about the reason for this. Who knew that they had both been told at different times but by divine messengers that she would birth the Messiah? The Old Testament prophet Daniel had predicted that the Messiah would be born during this particular place and time in history, and there were many who were watching for him. If Mary was a harlot (which it appeared she was) then by law she would be killed. The *betrothal time* was a contract for future marriage and women were supposed to be virgins at the time of their marriage. Having sex during this time with anyone, much less than with someone other than your future husband, was considered to be a much more serious sin than adultery after marriage according to the Jewish laws. Sex during the betrothal time was a sin punished in one of four ways; stoning, burning, beheading, or strangling. So Joseph actually thought about marrying Mary then divorcing her, presumably to avoid her death, but the angel told him to take her home as his wife and he did.

This shows us the spirit of love as well as the spirit of adoption. We are adopted into our relationship with God. Jesus lived with the spirit of adoption in reverse of us, or again, in a mirror image. He was the son of God, the heavenly father, and was adopted by his earthly father Joseph. We are the children of our earthly parents, adopted into God's heavenly family.

**I regularly find insights from the Matthew Henry Commentary to be very helpful. You can find a link in the show notes for a site that has the whole commentary for free. Matthew Henry has this insight for**

**us:**

*"If you want to have direction from God, you must think on things yourself and consult with yourself. God's time to come in with instruction is when a person is surprised and confused and does not know what to do, but after they have thought about things for a while. Joseph received this information in a dream, which is one of the ways the Holy Spirit speaks to us today. When we are quiet and composed we are in the best frame to receive notices of divine will. You can believe for sure that this dream was not like others; that it held something within it that let Joseph know that it was of God. It is a great mercy to be delivered from our fears and to have our doubts resolved so we can proceed in our affairs with satisfaction".*

To add a practical skill to this, in the Daily Practice, there is a section to regularly practice stilling the mind.

The angel also tells Joseph that the baby will be a boy and that they were to name him Jesus because he would save people from their sins. Matthew identifies Jesus as the one who came to save us from our sins more than any of the other writers of the gospels.

Jesus was born to a virgin which identifies a supernatural event but also one that is spiritually pure. He was not born to an empress or queen. This lack of outward royalty would end up being one of the factors that made it very hard for him to be accepted by the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders were expecting a messiah who would give them power in the world as well as riches. God's choice of Mary, the poor unmarried virgin shows that God had no intention of giving these Jewish leaders what they wanted.

Mary has the baby. This fulfills the promise she was given, and it was a boy, as she was told.

*This is another Matthew Henry insight:*

*"Our greatest happiness is when God is brought to us, and our greatest duty is to bring ourselves to be with God. What is conceived by the Holy Spirit will certainly be brought forth in its time. What is conceived in our will often does not come to fruition."*

## **Chapter 2**

### **Matthew Chapter 2 Verses 1-12: The Magi Visit the Messiah**

*2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem<sup>2</sup> and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."*

*<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:*

*<sup>6</sup> "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;*

*for out of you will come a ruler  
who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.”*

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, and of incense and of myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

This chapter introduces us to the Magi and to Herod, who ruled Jerusalem at this time. Although the Magi were kings, we do not know specifically who the Magi were or where they came from. We have been told there were three, but there may have been up to twelve of them. When the Magi came, they went directly to Jerusalem. They certainly did not come the night of Jesus’s birth, but much more likely a year or so after his birth. They had anticipated that the Messiah was going to be born for quite a while due to Jewish prophecy, and then there was something new in the sky, something they would have noticed as they were astrologers/astronomers, a star or something like a star, maybe a planet. They expected that the “powers that be” in Jerusalem would have known of the birth and that is why they went there. They brought gifts suited to give to a king. It can be assumed that the gold, frankincense and myrrh that they brought were not just one gold coin and two small vials as is depicted in many paintings. This was a visit by royals to another royal. They went first to Jerusalem to get directions. These writings say that Herod and the people in Jerusalem were disturbed by this. Herod is a guy we know a lot about not from the bible, but from other historical texts. Despite Herod being called “King of the Jews”, he was a very paranoid and blood-thirsty ruler. The Magi probably began their inquiry with the towns’ people as it shows that once Herod heard the Magi were in town, he called together the heads of the Jewish community, the chief priests and Jewish teachers who told him that prophecy identified the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, so Herod put together a plan by secretly calling the Magi to meet with him, asked them to find the child, then to return and tell him about it so he could go and worship him too. He probably thought this was really smart because if he had sent out his own people to find the baby they would have been unsuccessful. The Magi headed to Bethlehem and while they travelled, the star stayed ahead of them. They met with Mary and presented their treasures, which again, should be considered to have been a considerable gift to these poor parents. I am sure they were overwhelmed. Probably very happy but a bit overwhelmed. The Magi got information in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they didn’t.

### **Matthew Chapter 2 Verses 13-18: The Escape to Egypt**

<sup>13</sup> When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

<sup>14</sup> So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, <sup>15</sup> where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

<sup>16</sup> When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. <sup>17</sup> Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

<sup>18</sup> *"A voice is heard in Ramah,  
weeping and great mourning,  
Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more."*

So the gift of the Magi was twofold. The Magi had already left when the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to go to Egypt with Jesus and Mary. Personally, I have heard much more about the presents the Magi brought than about the information that Herod now knew about the baby. Both were important but I think it's far more important that Mary and Joseph now know that Herod knew about Jesus, knew of his approximate age, knew of his approximate location, and they could expect that Herod would be coming for the baby soon. Bethlehem was only two hours walk from Jerusalem. Second, the gifts, the gold, provided the money to get Jesus safely to Egypt before Herod could arrive. Joseph and Mary's primary job, even if they did not exactly know it, was to take care of this child and now they did not have to work to get the money to travel each day. This money would allow them to travel faster. As could be expected, when Herod found out that the Magi had not come back to tell him the location of the child, he freaked out. Herod ordered all the children of Jesus's age to be killed. Some scholars dispute that this happened, but we can know that this would fit Herod's previous behavior. Historically, if he thought someone might possibly take any of his power away from him, he just killed them. He even had one of his wives and two of his sons killed to make sure that no one from a different lineage could assume the rights of the throne. It was fitting with his personality that when he realized that the Magi had not returned with information about the Messiah, he would order all the children under two years old to be killed just to make sure that his power and influence would not be diminished. Ultimately, Herod died a painful and disgusting death later where something of his flesh rotted. It was rumored to be his genitals, and the smell around him was described in historical texts as being impossible to endure. Divine Vengeance. His death was painful and torturous.

**Matthew Henry has a couple of things to say here about this series of events:**

*"The Message here is that until you know what to do, sit and wait. When God brings the information, he will bring the means by which you are to accomplish that instruction. When you get the instruction, move on it immediately.*

*This is one of the principles: Keep yourself safe. Self-preservation is a branch of the laws of nature and is eminently a part of the law of God. When you are persecuted in one city, flee to another. Why Egypt?*

*This had been a place of persecution but is now a place of refuge. God can make the worst of places serve the best purposes. Those that would make sure work of their obedience of it must make quick work of it. Now Joseph went out not knowing where he was going. They probably had few belongings. Abundance encumbers a necessary flight. If rich people have an advantage over the poor while they possess what they have, the poor have the advantage of the rich when they are asked to part with it. When a person has a long habit of doing corrupt things. It is unlikely to change. In fact it tends to get greater if it finds obstructions in its sinful pursuit. The worse things are, the sooner they will mend."*

**Matthew Chapter 2 Verses 19-23: The Return to Nazareth**

<sup>19</sup> *After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt<sup>20</sup> and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."*

<sup>21</sup> *So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.* <sup>22</sup> *But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been*

warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee,<sup>23</sup> and went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, "He will be called a Nazarene."

An angel sends more instruction to Joseph to come back from Egypt. He decided to go to Nazareth because he felt it was safer for the family. The ruler in Nazareth was more peaceful than the ruler in Jerusalem. Waiting for further instructions is a key part of spiritual life. God reveals his mind to his people by degrees. You don't get the whole message at once. It would change how you do things if you knew the whole picture at once. Also other human's actions play into the plan. He keeps us waiting on him and expecting to hear further from him. Joseph takes the family to Galilee because the son of Herod that is ruling in other areas is much more difficult than the son, Philip, who was ruling over Galilee and Nazareth. Philip was a mild, quiet man. The fact that Jesus came from Nazareth was a problem for the Jews in the future because Nazareth was a nobody's town. They said, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" To be called a Nazarene was to be called a despicable man, a man from whom no good was to be expected and to whom no respect was to be paid.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Matthew Chapter 3 Verses 1-12: John the Baptist Prepares the Way**

*3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea<sup>2</sup> and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."<sup>3</sup> This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:*

*"A voice of one calling in the desert,*

*'Prepare the way for the Lord,*

*make straight paths for him."<sup>4</sup>*

*<sup>4</sup> John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup> Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.*

*<sup>7</sup> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? <sup>8</sup> Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup> And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup> The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.*

*<sup>11</sup> "I will baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. <sup>12</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

So now the storyline changes and we have moved about 30 years ahead. In this section we are introduced to one of the most important people in the bible, John the Baptist, or John, the Baptizer. John was a preacher, and a prophet. A prophet is a person who claims to have been contacted by the divine and now can speak for them, serving as an intermediary for humanity. The coming of the Messiah was being preached by John the Baptist prior to Jesus's announcement to the world that he was the Messiah, and Jesus's ministry was deeply connected to John's ministry. John the Baptist was the person who Malachi had identified would come before the Messiah, he was like Elijah of the Old Testament.

John was preaching in the wilderness. Some versions of the bible say "the desert". It might be like what we call "out in the country". John's ministry was based upon the message that the Messiah was coming soon, and that it was time for changing your life because there was a divine judgement that would accompany the full coming of God's kingdom. He saw water baptism as an outward sign that you were willing to turn your life around, which he called repentance. Lots of people believed in John and he was

a well-known preacher. He was highly respected, and people went “into the wilderness” to hear him. He had “believers” be baptized in the Jordan. The believers’ baptism would signify that they believed that they needed to change their minds, and also to show their belief that the Messiah was coming. This baptism was a symbolic washing that made them internally clean. Jewish laws of the time dealt with many different types of unclean, and there were lots of rules about washings and bathings to become ritually clean. Baptism was different. It was an outward rite to show that they were now clean and would live differently in the future, that they would repent.

The word “repentance” makes me pretty uncomfortable still to this day. It is a word that pushes my emotional memory buttons. I’ve usually heard it used by angry people, and used in a way that means that you should prepare to be punished because you are bad. I’d like to make a case that it doesn’t mean that at all, and that self-serving people have used it improperly. Repentance means to rethink, to come into a new way of thinking. It’s an important concept and it is called rethinking in the Daily Practice process. There can definitely be a sense of remorse that is linked to rethinking, because things that we do when we aren’t thinking properly usually have results that are less than optimal. Repentance is something that should be done regularly, and it’s linked with forgiveness of others and asking for forgiveness. The cure for the condition is simple. If you have done something wrong, say you are sorry, and then don’t do it that way again. The ability to think and act this way leads to a transformation in who you are becoming, a metamorphosis. The Latin translation of “repentance” specifically does mean penance, and penance is a self-punishment for having done wrong, but the Greek translation means something more like a conversion and is represented in the concept of Metanoia which means metamorphosis; a change in the mind that opens a new future. Repentance, metamorphosis, is the essence of the gospels and is practical because changing the mind in a way that produces a change in action which ultimately changes the result of those actions is the goal. Repentance is the beginning of the explanation of what to do when presented with a challenge in life, and through repentance, guided by the Holy Spirit, you can come to a different result.

This understanding completely changes the feeling I get from the statement, “Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand!”.

John was an ascetic, which means he practiced severe self-discipline and abstained from all forms of indulgence. His attire is identified here as being very plain. This should have been a precursor to what people could expect of the coming Messiah. However, the people expected the Messiah to come dressed as royalty, looking like royalty, and have the power of royalty. John was not a person who cared what people thought of him. He wasn’t interested in gaining riches or power in this world and he had a problem with the people who were in power. He felt they were hypocrites, abused their power, and focused on the traditions of the elders and commandments of men instead of the words of God. The main people in power in Judaism at that time, the Pharisees and Sadducees, tended to be very proud of their privileges and confident that they were righteous. It is identified that they came to see him, and although it’s possible that the Pharisees and Sadducees came to be taught by John, it’s more likely they came to hear in person what he was saying about them or to satisfy a curiosity about his great appeal with the people. John doesn’t address them as rabbis. He calls them vipers which would have meant he was saying they were related to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, that they were evil. This shows that John was not afraid of them. He was basically baiting them, and telling them that their power was going to be taken away if they did not “repent”. He saw them as people in power who were cheating the common people. It is said that these Jews “justified” themselves. John basically says, “Get your act together quickly because now is the time.” He warns them that God is ready to cut down unfruitful trees at the roots and use them for firewood. If a tree can’t produce fruit, it can be used for fuel.

Many times we think a lot of ourselves, and we decide that we are “right” without that information coming from the Holy Spirit. If we are the type of person who does this, humbling will come as part of our metamorphosis. I was this type of person and sometimes still am. I have gone through many humbling experiences and most all the people who done great things have identified to me that they lived through at least one major humbling experience. Not a humiliating one, even though that sometimes is our response. The humbling process of the Holy Spirit is necessary, especially for people who are intellectuals or who give themselves credit for their achievements, rather than acknowledging other people or God. Theoretically you can get to where you are going without this external humbling, but most of us will not appropriately humble ourselves voluntarily because we don’t realize that we need to. Many times we can see where other people need to repent, or be humbled. In fact we often have a great desire that a humbling experience will happen to them! This is inauthentic Christianity and people can see through it. When you want other people to see you as holy, and pure, and also want God to punish people who don’t believe like you do, you show up as being an inauthentic Christian. It was happening then, and it happens now in the exact same way.

John identifies that he will baptize with water, which is the best he can do. But he identifies that the Messiah will come and he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. It seems clear that although John knows Jesus, he doesn’t know he is the Messiah who will come soon, and he identifies that the Messiah is so much greater than John that John says he isn’t fit to carry his sandals. John says that the Messiah will make a distinction between people who act correctly and the people who are truly thinking correctly. At this time, the wheat and chaff are mixed together. In the future, they will be separated. True believers are like wheat, substantial, useful, valuable. Hypocrites are like chaff, light & empty, useless, worthless and carried about by the wind.

### **Matthew Chapter 3 Verses 13-17: The Baptism of Jesus**

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.<sup>14</sup> But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

<sup>15</sup> Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

<sup>16</sup> As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.<sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

This event is of paramount importance as it begins Jesus’s ministry, and assures us of his position as the Messiah. Jesus’s divinity isn’t revealed at the place of power, the Jerusalem temple. It could have been easily done there as he would have visited the temple many times through his life. The time has come for him to enter his position as a prophet and the Messiah. Jesus’s message was one of humility. He traveled to where John was, he didn’t require John to come to him. This was to show his respect to John and a return of the service given to him. Jesus would have known of John’s teaching, and would have known that it was he who was John’s subject. Jesus is designed for the highest honors, but his first step is to bring himself low. This shows the pattern of the wisdom of humbling that we spoke about earlier.

### **Matthew Henry says,**

*“Those who would rise high must begin low. Before honor is humility. Those that honor God, he will honor. God has further honors in reserve for those whose spirits continue low when their reputation rises.”*

John and everyone in attendance was shown that day that Jesus was the Messiah, and because of this John objected to baptizing Jesus because he knew that Jesus was higher in spiritual stature than he was.

John thinks he should be baptized by Jesus. Jesus accepted John's humility but not his refusal to do the baptism. John illustrates that if you want to be of service to God, then you have to be prepared to do FOR him what he wants you to do, even if it seems like there should be someone better available to do it. There can't be any pretense of humility that makes us decline our duty. Jesus says, "Do this now." He doesn't disagree with John that John needs to be baptized by him. Jesus up until this time had lived a life of no reputation. He was not known to be the Messiah by people outside of his parents as far as the gospels show. I imagine that John had no idea that Jesus would show up that day, but he was prepared. He knew how to baptize, and he did it. Jesus identified that the moment was NOW because it was time for Jesus to begin appearing in public. Jesus was also performing an instruction to us. He was showing that it was wise of God to send John to tell people that Jesus was coming and that the instructions that John was giving to repent and be baptized were the correct pattern to beginning the life in holy righteousness.

When Jesus came out of the water, he changed the relationship between heaven, earth and humans. This was signified by the dove. To this day, the dove is the representation of the Holy Spirit. The heavens were opened and God's new covenant was fully ready to be revealed. The demonstration of the descent of the dove onto Jesus was the fulfillment of the promise that when we do what we are told to do by God, then we may expect communication with him and communications from him. Christ saw the dove, and John saw the dove. Probably everyone present saw it too because this was intended to be an inauguration, a formal ceremony to bring an official into office. To explain and to complete the ceremony, God speaks out loud to claim his son. This was most likely heard by everyone too. The wording was plain and complete. "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." In the last communication in the book of Malachi, God hadn't been too pleased with people, but now his anger is gone, replaced with love. Jesus, the son of God, brings the message of peace from the creator, to his creation.

#### **Chapter 4**

##### **Chapter 4 Verses 1-12: Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness**

*4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*

*<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

*<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup> "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:*

*"He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*

*<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

*<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup> "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."*

*<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"*

*<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.*

*<sup>12</sup> When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee.*

This story is the temptation of Christ, and it's fascinating, so fascinating that it is impossible to cover in today's episode. We will only be touching upon it lightly because it will be the focus of the entire next

episode, the concept of internal evil, external evil and temptation. This first part of Matthew 4 discusses the concept of temptation, and the process under which it occurs. First, the word *tempt* means to “entice someone to do or acquire something that they find attractive but know to be wrong or not beneficial”. Temptations are things that when we give in to them cause hardship and suffering.

Jesus had just been brought into his ministry and he had holy work to do. Instead of stepping out of his inauguration and getting into action, he is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to fast for 40 days, not to Jerusalem to tell every one of the glories that had been put upon him. After communion with God it's good to be private for a while or we can easily lose what we have received. This time can give you an advantage; however there is another truth that is that people who want to speak of the things of God need to have thought long and hard about them in private by themselves, with God and their own heart. Jesus's time alone gave an advantage to the evil tempter because although time alone can be restorative, when you are alone, you are easier tempted. Think of how many temptations you have given in to that you would not have if someone else was there. Think of how many times you have allowed yourself to give into a temptation offered from another person when it was just the two of you. Just because you are alone you are not out of reach of your personal spiritual enemies. We must pray to be kept out of harm's way and to not be led into temptation because, although Jesus had nothing bad in him, we do. We must repent by looking at ourselves, and where we do wrong. Our metamorphosis is never complete in this world. So specifically, this is symbolic of a combat between the two sides of our being, good and evil. Jesus did not willfully bring himself to this combat like some kind of warrior. The bible says he was led to it by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus's example in this story is to show us that we may be tempted and those temptations may be for the physical comforts as represented by the bread, spiritual mistakes as being told to “throw himself down” or by the ego that wants recognition in the world as represented by the kingdoms. These desires within us are tempters all by their selves even though some people believe that it is Satan tempting them. We can tempt ourselves in a way that looks otherworldly.

It's identified that Jesus didn't take the bait, and that after the evil one left, angels came and attended him. The next thing we know is that John the Baptist has been put in prison, and Jesus returns to Galilee to begin his ministry.

#### **Matthew Chapter 4 Verses 13-17: Jesus Begins to Preach**

<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 is near.”*

Now Jesus moves into the world of his ministry, his preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. We know that John the Baptist had been put in prison. What? Why? It will be explained much later in Matthew. But for this story, Jesus knows that John the Baptist has been put in prison so he goes to where John had been preaching and teaches John's disciples. John the Baptist had many people following him and

learning from him, and the message he had originally been teaching was, “The Messiah is coming so repent.” Now, John has baptized Jesus and he knows that the Messiah is here. We have no records saying that John and Jesus preached together. So what we can imagine is that John goes to jail, and Jesus goes to John’s disciples and teaches them directly. At that time, a person’s relationship with their teacher was important. The decision to become a disciple and receive training from a teacher was not a decision that was taken lightly. The teacher would look after them and take a personal interest in his disciples. Jesus goes to the people but not until he hears John has been put in jail. This made it so there was no competition with the people between who they should be loyal to, John or Jesus. Creating any rivalry between John and Jesus, even if it was only imagined in the minds of their followers, would have been really dysfunctional at this time for the ministry; so when John was placed through no fault of Jesus, in prison and Jesus came to John’s people to serve them in John’s place. This honors the work that John was doing and shows John’s people that Jesus understood that they believed in him before his work began. They were people capable of faith. In addition, it shows that when one valuable person in a situation is removed, God can bring in another.

Galilee was a country place. It was a place where the people were known to be physically strong hearty people, but not a place where scholars were known to come from. It’s my understanding that they have a manner of speaking, basically an accent, that identifies them as from the country. Just like us in America. We can get an idea where people are from by the way they look and speak. Jesus didn’t start his preaching in Nazareth, where he was from. We will learn in future stories that the people of Nazareth didn’t receive his message well either. Jesus goes where he is welcome and he was welcome in the cities of Galilee. This section of Matthew specifically identifies that these people were living in spiritual darkness, some translations of the bible say “sitting in darkness”. Jesus comes like a great and beautiful light, not the light of a candle, the light of the sun. This is where one of the great promises that we can rely upon comes from. When you have been in darkness, Jesus can come to you and when he comes to you, it is a very good thing.

#### **Matthew Chapter 4 Verses 18-22: Jesus Calls His First Disciples**

<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 make you fishers of men.” <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.

This section deals with how Jesus set up his organization and shows us how Jesus called the first people to help him in his ministry. Jesus was out for a contemplative walk by the sea when he finds the critical first workers. What does this show us that we can put into practice?

Jesus chose people who were all employed as common workers, fishers, people who know how to work and are willing to do what it takes. Fishing is hard work and they were not out buying new nets, they were mending the nets they had and preparing the boats for fishing. They were doing the basics of the profession. We can also know that Jesus had the ability and connections to call more polished people as his first disciples, but he called people who he could see that were willing to do the work. How do we know if people are willing to do the work necessary? See what they have done in the past. This is how God still calls us. If we have been lazy in life, never really had any trials, then we have to start low on the totem pole. We don’t get called to the highest position first, and usually we are required to go back to the basics regularly.

There is a saying:

"Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water."

They were poor men. If they had estates or money, they wouldn't have made fishing their trade back then. They might have fished as a recreation, but not as an occupation. These were not men who had gone to extended schooling. This does not mean that ignorant and unqualified people get to do big works without gaining the required skills and knowledge. It means that there are skills other than book learning that God can use. So did these four men know that when they were learning to be competent fishermen that they were gaining the skills that would make them part of the twelve most influential men ever in history? NO! The required abilities were gained in an ordinary way. Do you think that when Jesus said, "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of people" that they knew what that meant? NO! If you feel that you have only had ordinary experiences but are pretty competent in them, know that this could be a sign that those competencies may be extrapolated to another part of the calling. If you have been idle or lazy most of your life, have never had any hardships, and don't know how to work with other people, then you will probably have some learning to do before you can perform your mission. But if you have experienced and know how to be patient through hardship, are efficient and can work competently and diligently on *anything*, and are a person who can be called on to do work, you may be ready to come into your mission. Don't expect to understand it all when you get the call. If these brothers had known what was in store for them from the first, that knowledge would have changed what happened for them because it would have changed what they did in the process. So God called, and they went on faith. There is no record of them asking what they were going to get before they said yes.

We know from other references in the bible that the first four disciples that are mentioned were disciples of John the Baptist, so they knew the message and already believed that Jesus was the Messiah. This is another symbol:

God brings people closer to him by degrees. Now although I have heard many ways of receiving your duty, mission, calling, it would be bizarre to get your mission in life at exactly the first time you ever heard of Jesus or the Holy Spirit. But people do expect that. They expect to not know anything about how God works and what the real message is, and to also get their life's calling that would serve God. It is understandable, but you also need to read the instructions then work with it a little while.

*A major premise of this whole podcast is that the gospels are an instruction book to understand how to perform your mission, your greatest desire of what you want to accomplish in life.*

We know that both sets of people identified were brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John. This is a simple truth. Assuming that this is a good family relationship, it is an incredible blessing when your family members are doing the same work as you are doing. I have had the great pleasure to work with my sister. There is a trust in good families that many times is not replicated outside. We can also adopt one another as family, and that is important to distinguish between truly, "just friends" and people we call "family". Christianity is not a normal relationship; we are members of a family, with God as our father, and all of humanity as our siblings.

You may have been called to your occupation and then once you are ready, God calls you to a different one. I had a very difficult time with this in my own life and it took me quite a while to understand. I had worked passionately first as a massage therapist then built a very nice business as a massage therapy school owner. I had more money than I needed, respect in the community, work I loved, people I loved working with and students I loved working for. I have told a fuller story of my experience. Basically, after

having achieved a comfortable life, it was taken away. I learned hardship. I had no idea until I was through it that my calling had been broken open. I read the gospels and saw the patterns and principles of what I had just experienced and it was laid out like an instruction book. I had to find a way to show this to other people. So just like Jesus said to these fishermen, "You have been working as fishers and now I will make you fishers of men" I was called from being a teacher of massage therapists to being a teacher of humanity; a smaller work to a greater work. I have to admit that it sounds a little hokey, but it's my truth. I am and was a skeptical, cynical person and I had to work through my own process in understanding and accepting my calling. It's my nature to say even to me, "Who do you think you are?" In the moment that I am working on this many of my friends have no idea that I am doing this. It is my work held dear. See, I am not proud of this. I am just a willing teacher and scribe. I am still a bit afraid of the new work that has been cut out for me. But it is common for Jesus to use common people and common occupations to bring people into unusual circumstances. It is God who qualifies people for their work, calls them to it, gives them authority to do it, gives them instruction how to do it, and the wisdom to understand what they are doing. When you have been called, there is something inside of you that you just know you know.

So this is the scary part, or at least one of the parts that really freaks me out about the concept of having been called by God to do something. This story says they all four left their occupation, and James and John left their father to follow Jesus. It says they did this *immediately*. Now, it is one of my downfalls that I don't do many things *immediately* except go get something to eat if I'm hungry. When it's of the flesh or most of my bodily desires or anything that makes me physically uncomfortable, I am on it *immediately*. When someone that I love needs me, I am on it *immediately*. However, in things that are choices that are not immediately, I can think about things for a very long time because I have "responsibilities" "people I love" and other things in life to attend to, as everyone of substance does. However, the concept in business that if you really want to get ahead, you must work on the important, not necessarily the momentary things that aren't important but seem like they are. So back to the story. These four guys got called to work with Jesus, the man who would change the world. They could not have known what they were in for or how important they would be in this change. This part of the message is one that I think will hold most people up the longest, and I think that there is not much more to say about it except that the first four disciples give us an example of the pattern of the "best" behavior when we are called to our duty. Leave everything else immediately. The power that you are giving in to will help you work out all the details for the best. This is faith in a power that is higher than you, that wants what you want, and that loves you and would never hurt you. In my case I had to work for a while with the idea that I actually had been called, that I had the ability to do the work or would be provided with the skills and help to do the things I didn't know how to do, and that ultimately, my responsibilities of people and things would be taken care of not only as well as I had been taking care of them, but better. I had to convince myself that I would not suffer and that I would not cause others to suffer.

#### **Matthew Chapter 4 Verses 23-25: Jesus Heals the Sick**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. <sup>24</sup> News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. <sup>25</sup> Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

So let's focus on the passage. This section identifies that Jesus went around to the synagogues in Galilee proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, which was that God changed. The rules were different, and

he was the direct messenger sent to explain the new rules to the Jews. He could have planted himself in one place and said, "Everyone should come where I am if they want to hear my message" but that's not what he did. He went to where they were. And then along with the good things he taught them, he did the best things for them. It doesn't say that he gave them all money, it says that he healed their all their diseases and sicknesses. Specifically mentioned are severe pain, demon-possessed, people with seizures, and the paralyzed. These are conditions that are currently hard to treat and we have yet to completely conquer. So with everything we have in modern medicine and the implementation of appliances and adaptations that can soften the impact on a person of these problems, imagine what they didn't have 2000 years ago! So first, suffering is caused by physical problems. Jesus absolutely wanted to heal people because he wanted their suffering to end. That was a big part of the good news he brought; you don't have to suffer any more. But think about the mechanism of instantaneous healing. If someone with chronic pain or seizures or paralysis was healed by this guy teaching at a synagogue, think of how many conversations that would spark. There is nothing that Jesus could have done that I can think of that would have a greater impact on people's talking and spreading of information than to heal people. So remember how in the last section we discussed what would make you do something *immediately*? Any discomfort makes me do things *immediately*. Even the feeling of needing to brush my teeth. You can tell me that the pope himself is delivering a message across the street and I might not go, but if I am in pain and I have visual proof that someone I know was healed completely and instantly by a mystical healer and he is coming to town, you can bet I will be cancelling plans to get there. *Immediately*. The examples given of Jesus's constant and complete healings of any and every physical condition make up a bulk of the four books of the bible. Jesus's ministry was a healing ministry. He heals the body and the mind, but it the healing of the body that we can see and attest to. This is the reason given throughout the bible why so many people came to him. This is why his fame spread so widely and quickly. Jesus taught and healed. Those who came for cures learned about things that would give them peace, heal their worried minds. Many became converts through this process. They were looking for health for their body but received healing of their soul. How many people do you know that have "found God" when they got sick? Now, what is interesting to me is how many of us thank him for healing us and forget about what he is teaching us. It creates a stop and start process that doesn't get very much momentum. So let's look at Jesus's healings through the lens of miracle, the lens of mercy and the lens of mystery. Then we will discuss the process of healing that is alive and well today.

*The miracle of them:* These healings were done in such a way that it was immediately seen that they were products of a divine and supernatural power. These were diseases that physicians of that time did not know how to heal. The cures happened openly. Many people saw them. The cures were immediate, not gradual, and they were perfect cures, complete.

*The mercy of them.* The definition of mercy is not just goodness. It means compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within their power to punish or harm. Moses performed miracles in the Old Testament but most of them were plagues and judgments. The miracles that Jesus worked were all (except for one) blessings and favors. Again, this is new, this is different. In all of us, we have a picture of one form or another of a loving and kind God. Before Jesus, people had no picture of a loving god who would heal them but they sure had a picture of one who would punish them. Jesus's truth is built on love, grace, and mercy and the methods to be used are not to scare us into obeying, but to allure us to want to obey. These were not only great works, but good works. He showed us the new improved God. This is the good news, the gospel, the message. God is kind and good and wants us to know that.

*The mystery of them.* Christ, by curing the body of disease meant to show that his great duty, the reason he came down to earth, was to cure spiritual maladies. He was the great physician of the soul. Although the bible does not go into all of the healings Jesus performed the bible will go into specific healings that

Jesus performed. These specifically mentioned healings are very much intended to reveal to us spiritual things and to show us how Jesus deals with our souls.

I hope you have enjoyed this commentary and that it has taught you some new things. I'll have a bunch of resources in the show notes on many subjects related to this episode, so go to [workingwiththevoice.com](http://workingwiththevoice.com) and remember to sign up for the weekly email. I'll be releasing new material that may not be mentioned in the podcast through the email list.

Next week, we are going into a deep concept, the concept of evil and temptation. It's an important subject, and I think you will be interested in some of concepts from Jungian psychology that we will go into through some recordings I found that were made in the 1990's by Robert Moore, PhD. It provides a new and compelling look at the subject of evil, the evil within ourselves, and the evil that is from another source.

Many thanks to Tracy Biggs for reading the scriptures for today's episode. Again, thank you so much for listening. I'm Juliet Mee, and this is Working With The Voice.