

12 Hearing that John had been arrested Jesus went back to Galilee, **13** and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. **14** In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled: **15** 'Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali! Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan, Galilee of the nations! **16** The people that lived in darkness has seen a great light; on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death a light has dawned.'

17 From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'

18 As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. **19** And he said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' **20** And they left their nets at once and followed him.

21 Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. **22** At once, leaving the boat and their father, they followed him.

23 He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

Other readings: Isaiah 8:23-9:3 Psalm 26 (27) 1 Corinthians 1:10-13,17

Today we begin our reading of the story of the ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, which will take us until the end of the liturgical year. We hear the evangelist's summary of Jesus' message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' Matthew precedes this with a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures, which he declares to be fulfilled. Jesus brings light not only to Israel but to the nations too, to all those who 'live in darkness'.

From the very start he calls disciples. They leave everything at once to follow Jesus. The message of Jesus and his very personality invite them to take this risk. They accompanied him as he 'went round the whole of Galilee'. This is the first location for the preaching of the good news and for the healings of Jesus, the place where the gospel is warmly welcomed. We will hear more about these activities in the weeks to come.

Have I allowed Jesus to transform the darkness of my life?

Am I willing to leave everything and follow him?

We pray for a renewed openness to hearing the gospel.

We pray for all disciples of the Lord.