

Introductory

This text has parallels in Mark (1:14,15), Luke (4:14,15), and John (4:43-45), all very short summaries of what Matthew talks about here. None of those texts appear in the TLH one-year lectionary. Matthew 4: 12-23 (not 24 and 25) is the reading for Epiphany 3A in LW, while this reading from LSB includes those two verses.

What LW leaves out and LSB includes (vv. 24, 25) is the summary about Jesus becoming well-known in Syria and beyond, and people travelling great distances seeking healing from Him. The parallel and additional material found in Mark 1: 14-20 is the reading for Epiphany 3B and in Luke 4: 14-21 for Epiphany 3C in LW and LSB (Luke 4: 16-30).

Two weeks ago, we looked at Matthew 3, the interaction of John the Baptizer and Jesus culminating in Jesus being baptized by John. Then comes the first part of chapter 4 (1-11), Temptation in the wilderness, the text for Lent 1. Now we have this week's pericope, which begins with Jesus receiving word that John the Baptizer had been arrested.

The true story of John B unfolds over several chapters in Matthew's gospel. We first meet him in chapter three, the popular preacher who comes as the voice prophesied to proclaim the Messiah. Here, Matthew notes that John has been arrested, but he does not tell us why or give us any details, but only says that Jesus heard about it and then "withdrew."

In chapter eleven, we have the forlorn plea from the imprisoned John to Jesus, by way of his disciples, to assure him that Jesus, is the one whom he, John, thought He was and had proclaimed. Finally (14), we hear of John's death and of the circumstances surrounding that death. Hearing of that death, Jesus withdrew to "a lonely place apart" (14:13)

We are also for the first time told why John had been arrested in the first place; he had called out Herod Antipas for marrying his brother Phillip's wife Herodias. Jesus will grieve that death, and He will remind His followers that violent men to seek to snatch away the Kingdom from the Christians, and indeed they did, and indeed they do.

During the Epiphany Season, we ask the weekly question; what is here being revealed or made manifest about Jesus? This week we see a very human Jesus who is shaken by the arrest of John. We see the fulfillment of OT prophecy in Him. We see that He chose Apostles, and that they did not choose Him.

In this text, we observe The Word of God preaching and teaching The Word of God. We see a very divine Jesus doing divine things; miracles. In seeing those things, we see that Jesus is indeed God, and we get a glimpse of what heaven is going to be like, and we note the same thing in modern-day miracles; the Word and Sacraments.

Textual Notes

12. The arrest of John is here stated to be the thing that caused Jesus to flee from there to a safer place. Matthew tells us that “Ἀκούσας δὲ ὅτι Ἰωάννης παρεδόθη ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν – hearing that John had been handed over, He withdrew into Galilee.” The translations have John being “arrested” or “put into prison” and the like.

The verb παραδίδωμι means to be handed over and most of the time it involves betrayal. Here the verb is in the passive voice, meaning that an unnamed and perhaps unknown person or persons had actively ratted John out. This likely took the form of somebody reporting to Herod that John was speaking out against Herod’s marriage to Salome.

The Bill of Rights of 1689 – sometimes called the Declaration of the Rights of Man – proclaimed freedom of speech to be one of those rights – in Parliament. When the Americans wrote their Bill of Rights in 1789 (Ratified in 1791), we said that freedom of speech is a basic human right, given to us by our Creator, and it is – for now.

That concept is new and western and unusual in human history. For Herod to hear – he had people – that John was bad-mouthing his marriage and to respond to that by throwing him in jail would have been business as usual for him and historically for most people in positions of power. Ditto for the way he will later deal with the head of the Baptizer.

The verb ἀναχωρέω – to flee is used five other times by Matthew, each time to describe somebody fleeing from danger. In 2:14, Joseph, Guardian of Jesus, took the Holy Family to Egypt because of Herod’s murderous rampage that resulted in the murder of the The Holy Innocents, and the word is used (22) when Joseph takes The Family back to Galilee

That location of Galilee – out in the boondocks, is chosen because of fear of Archelaus, successor to Herod. In 12:14, Matthew tells us that the Pharisees were plotting to kill Him, and in 12:15 Jesus is said to know about their plotting, and so He “fled” there. In 14:13, right after John is beheaded, He fled “to a desolate place apart.”

Later on, in 15:21, right after He verbally laid out the Pharisees, who had come with Scribes from Jerusalem, who had been plotting to kill Him, He flees all the way to Tyre and Sidon. In 27:5 Judas – the antithesis of Jesus – right after he throws down the silver, trying to run from his sin, flees the Temple and goes out and hangs himself.

If we detect in Jesus fear, then we note that fear is a human emotion, and to say that Jesus feared is to say that He was a human. To choose flight in a “fight or flight” moment is also a very human – as well as animal – response to fear, and self-preservation is at or near the top of anybody’s hierarchy of needs. Living things want to stay alive.

These things make Jesus human, but they do not make Him a coward, no more than my driving safely, practicing gun safety, and refusing to ride in small planes make me a coward. Having said all that, perhaps fear is the wrong word. Perhaps a word like “caution” or “common sense” best describes the way I feel about small planes, et al.

Intelligence is also a human trait, and working smarter, not harder is generally not a bad thing. The desire for self-preservation is certainly not a sin. Living things want to stay alive. We noted a couple of weeks ago, when the Holy Family went into exile, that God is preserving the Messianic seed from being snuffed at the hand Herod the Great.

We noted as well how preserving that Seed was something that God had been doing for the entire time of the OT. If Jesus went to Nazareth because it offered security, then He should be commended for it. One day, Jesus will in fact die, but it will be in God’s time and place and not now and not at the hand of any of the Herod clan.

Joseph’s withdrawal to Galilee, then to Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, is here repeated by Jesus. Why did Joseph choose to settle in Nazareth? Because it was a small town at the end of the road. If somebody is in Sherrard, east of me, it’s because they have chosen to go to Sherrard, which is not on the way to anything. Nazareth was like that.

If a guy wanted to disappear in that time and place, Nazareth would have been a good place to have done that. When Pretty Boy Floyd wanted to disappear in the early 1930s, he went into the hills of northeastern Oklahoma, hills inhabited by friends and family who helped him to disappear. In a similar way, Jesus disappeared into the hills of Nazareth.

He knew that He and John were joined at the hip, and that they had been from early on. How early? When John first met Jesus, when they were inhabiting the respective wombs of their respective mothers, John “leaped for joy” at being in the presence of Jesus. Then there’s the kinship, and what John had said about Him, there’s that.

John had proclaimed Jesus the Lamb of God, but more to the point, he had talked about Him as one greater than himself, as one who was before him – John was older than Jesus – whose sandal straps he was unworthy to untie. If John had been betrayed and taken by Herod, the logical conclusion reached by Jesus was that He also is in danger.

Besides that, there’s the slaughter of the Holy Innocents thirty years previous. That was a different Herod, but a Herod was a Herod, and an event like that would have been widely remembered. If that Herod had sought to kill the King of the Jews, who is to say that this Herod would not have connected the dots and come to the same conclusion.

Today, fueled almost entirely by the tourist trade, Nazareth is a town of over eighty-one thousand people. In the day of Jesus, it was a good place to get lost, and besides that, the Christ was to be called a “Nazarene.” Now Jesus goes there for the same reasons, and also because it’s home, and home is where you go in times like this.

13. In order to “leave” Nazareth, Jesus had to go to be in Nazareth, and then after that “καταλιπὼν τὴν Ναζαρέτ ἐλθὼν κατόκησεν εἰς Καφαρναούμ – leaving Nazareth, He lived in Capernaum.” The verb occurs forty-five times in the NT, enough for us to see that he moved there and lived there, and happily most of the translations say that.

See Capernaum on the map up there on the north shore of the Sea. The city is said to be “τὴν παραθαλασσίαν ἐν ὁρίοις Ζαβουλὼν καὶ Νεφθαλείμ – in the region of Zebulun and Naphthali,” just out of the reach of murderous Herod. It is also home base for four fishermen and two involved in the fishing business who will become Tier One Apostles.

The city has been excavated and is no longer inhabited, as can be seen by looking at the satellite view of it on Google maps. WIK says that at the time of Jesus it had about 1,500 residents, and the Jewish Encyclopedia agrees with WIK that there was one or more synagogues there, indicating a Jewish presence, a part of the growing Diaspora.

14 - 16. He went there also as the fulfillment of a Messianic Prophecy from Isaiah, of more interest to Matthew’s hearers, of less interest to yours.

17. Matthew tells us that “Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς κηρύσσειν – from that time Jesus began to preach.” Baptism, Temptation, withdrawal first to Nazareth and then to Capernaum, and those are the series of events that makes that place the place where He then begins to publicly proclaim the Word. And John’s preaching was severely curtailed.

Matthew then goes on to tell us the content of the preaching of Jesus “Μετανοεῖτε, ἥγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν– Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven draws near.” Those are the exact words used in by Matthew 3:2 to describe the preaching of John. Once again, we see Jesus and John joined at the hip on account of the content of their preaching.

John, the first prophet since Malachi, had been preaching, but now he has been arrested. He is in prison, a condition that severely hampered his ability to publicly proclaim what he had been publicly proclaiming. It is at this point, when the arrest of John has effectively silenced him, that Jesus goes to Galilee and picks up the mantle from John.

As things play out, Jesus makes provision for this work to continue after His own departure by choosing and appointing Apostles to carry on this work of proclaiming after He is gone. The work continues after their departure through Pastors. That work continues to this day, and it will continue until the culmination of all things.

18. We now see Jesus walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and He sees two people whom He probably recognizes from last week; Simon, called Peter and Andrew. They are identified as brothers and as fishermen, and they were casting a large net into the sea, which is what fishermen do. Jesus seems to like people involved in that industry.

Fishermen seem to be disproportionately represented in the First Tier. Of the Twelve, besides these two brothers, James and John – He’s about to choose them – are fishermen, and Nathaniel and Philip seem to be involved in fishing. He also chooses a revolutionary, a tax collector, and men from various and sundry other vocations, but at least half fishers.

I think of fishermen at the time of Jesus like I think of farmers in eastern Iowa; there are a lot of them. It will come as no surprise that Iowans farm more than – say New Yorkers or Alaskans and even Illinois. The Des Moines Sunday Register has the numbers,

Nearly a quarter of Iowa adults are actively farming now or have done so at some point in their lives, and nearly half of Iowa adults have lived on a farm, the poll found. Two-thirds have close relatives who have farmed now or in the past. Just 6 percent of Iowans have never stepped foot on a farm.

Fishers in the time of Jesus were like that. Whereas our main proteins come from cows, pigs, and chickens – add lamb if you’re a Brit – and fish? Growing up, we ate and perhaps even rather enjoyed fish sticks as a nice change-up. We eat more fish than we used to; Salmon, Tuna, Cod, Tilapia and the like are widely available, and we eat more fish.

But for most Americans, fish is the oddity, but for those people at that time and place fish was the staple protein, and our favorite meats would have been for them a treat. And of course, the Jews did not eat pigs, which eliminates bacon, and we have Jesus to thank for bacon. He invented it, and He took it off the list of foods we can’t eat. And ham.

I suppose you could make the case that fishermen would have a better idea of what to expect when preaching the Gospel; some people will believe and become Christians, and other people will hear the same Gospel and reject it. A lot like fishing. And in neither case do you just willy-nilly do what you do, but in both cases you don’t really know.

The Twelve are, after all, more missionary than Pastor, and their task is to move about, like Jesus moves about, preaching the Gospel. Why did Christianity take in Europe and Syria, but not in China and India? Why is that same religion now taking in China and other parts of Asia, but places like Korea and Japan not so much? It’s a lot like fishing.

19. At this point these men are not actually Apostles. That will happen later, in chapter ten. Here He chooses them, saying, “Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου – come here, behind me,” which has come down to us in every translation as “come, follow me,” which is what one does when one comes behind another, but it loses some of the nuance of “behind” or “after.”

Using an object that is already there, one with which these two men are familiar, He then famously rocks the metaphor, “καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς ἁλεῖς ἀνθρώπων and I will make you fishers of men.” He is the active subject, and they are the passive recipients, and in three years He will take this raw material and mold it into what it becomes’ The Twelve.

You have heard from everybody except me that you should bring objects from home with you and do “object lessons” for the youngsters, which are often understood by the adults, but seldom understood by the children. I looked it up once, and I discovered that indeed Jesus never brings objects from home to do “object lessons” for anybody.

However, He does quite often use objects that are already there to create metaphors. He also uses things that are not in the building, but are familiar to people; fields, trees, sheep, landowners, et al, to do the same. This country parson uses a lot of metaphors from the word of agriculture; tractors, combines, animals, fields, and the like in my preaching.

I am of the opinion that the collective body of work on what bait to use, fishing in the right spot, what kind of fish to shoot for, yada yada yada should be considered to have been completed, and we don’t have to add any more to it. Then we can start to systematically purge the Internet of all that. It’s going to take a while, but it is necessary.

Anybody who has ever been fishing knows that it’s largely a crap shoot. You can use the right bait and be in the right place, but the fish always liked my children’s hooks better than they liked mine. All that Jesus is saying here is that these men will be changing vocations. They will no longer be fishing for fish, but they will be fishing for men.

20. When Jesus told them to do that, they did that, and they did that without hesitation; “οἱ δὲ εὐθέως ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ - they immediately let go of their nets and followed Him.” The first verb is the common word for “to forgive” and the second verb is used when one or more is accompanying another or more on a journey.

Let us review. John B baptized Jesus, and then (in John) pointed Him out to his disciple Andrew as “the Lamb of God.” Andrew then told his brother, Peter, that he has found the Christ, and then took Peter to meet Him. So, the invitation to follow and their following did not occur in a vacuum; they already knew about Jesus, and the identity of Him.

21. Likely the fishermen of Capernaum were in the same area; to state the obvious, their boats were all on the sea. As far as I know, they didn’t have docks as we know docks, but would have dragged their boats up out of the water onto the beach when they were done fishing for the day, no mean task; the “Jesus Boat” measures 27 x 7.5 feet.

Moving down the shoreline, He encounters another set of brothers; James and John, who are further identified as sons of Zebedee, and are said to be in a boat with their father

mending their nets. These twins – they will earn the moniker “Sons of Thunder” –will make several prominent appearances, often with speaking parts, in the chapters to come.

Matthew tells us that Jesus “ἐκάλεσεν αὐτούς – He called them.” The verb καλέω is often used to refer to a proper name, but here it means a shout of invitation. We picture Jesus in Capernaum, Peter and Andrew now in tow, calling out to James and John using words not specified by Matthew, but probably the same words spoken to Peter and Andrew.

The response of James and John was almost identical to that of the first set of brothers; “οἱ δὲ εὐθέως ἀφέντες τὸ πλοῖον καὶ τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ - Immediately they let go of their boat and their father and followed Him.” What is different is that these are said to let go not just of their nets, but also “their boat and their father” to follow Jesus.

These two were engaged in a family business with their father. The family owned at least one boat, which implies a certain measure of wealth. In his book, *Pontius Pilate*, Paul Maier makes the case that this family was very wealthy, and he thinks that they may even have been the royal fishmongers for the family of Caiaphas.

It’s not much of a leap at all to think that Andrew had talked to James and John about his great discovery from last week; “We have found the Christ.” In fact, to think otherwise, to think that James and John knew nothing at all about Jesus, and when He called to them, they willy-nilly left all behind to follow Him, pushes the borders of credulity.

Besides that, if you believe that Salome, the wife of Zebedee and the mother of the The Twins, was the sister of Mary, then these two would have been first cousins to Jesus. I do believe that Salome was the sister of Mary, that the two of them were particularly close, and that their boys would have spent a lot of time together growing up.

22. Fishermen in tow, He now goes “ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ - into all Galilee.” In Galilee, we find Him doing three things, all present participles; teaching, proclaiming, and healing. If you had to summarize what Jesus does all day, you would say that He does a lot of miracle working, and you would say that He talks a lot about God to people.

As famously noted by Quintilian, almost unnoticed by Robert Preus, and also by me, the elements of good preaching and good teaching are very similar, if not the same. As we have noted in these notes, we should teach as well as proclaim from the pulpit, and we should proclaim as well as teach in the classroom, just like Jesus did.

Jesus is “διδάσκων ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν – teaching in their synagogues.” Judaism had for several hundreds of years been moving from a religion centered on Temple and the things that went on in that building to a religion centered on the Word. Both cause and result of the Diaspora, the synagogue came to be, including one in Capernaum.

Included in this shift from building to book was an increasing awareness of the need for religious instruction for the young people who did not have easy access to Temple. In the familiar account of the twelve-year-old Jesus, we note that instruction was going on at Temple. We further note that later on in life He Himself would be teaching in that venue.

Outside of Jerusalem such education came to be connected to synagogue. The synagogue school may be seen as the precursor to the Christian Day School. From kindergarten age up, youngsters from the surrounding area went to school at synagogue to study theology. One forum for the teaching of Jesus may well have been those synagogue schools.

Another would have been in the place in the service where a learned man would explain the OT reading for the day. We find Jesus teaching in the fields, on a boat, on a mountain, et al. As time goes on, He will find that He is no longer welcome in “their synagogues,” and Luke tells us about an appearance at the one in his hometown; it was nearly fatal.

If you are a teacher and a preacher, then you know that you are in a sense *always* preaching and teaching, and the same could also be said of Jesus. Any opportunity He got, formal and otherwise, He took. We are not told how many places Jesus visited or for how long He stayed, but we do know that John tells us at the end of his Gospel what he tells us.

He is “κηρύσσω τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας – proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom,” presumably in those same forums. As we observe the content of the preaching of Jesus, we conclude that Matthew is using the word “Gospel” in the wider sense; meaning both Law and Gospel, i.e. “good news.” Yes, I’m saying that Jesus was a good Lutheran.

Finally, Matthew says that He is “θεραπεύων πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν ἐν τῷ λαῷ – healing every sickness and disease in the people.” Those two nouns seem to be general words for various ailments, some acute, and others chronic. We know from other places that Jesus can and often does heal all comers with all diseases, with no limitations.

What that means is that Jesus never met a disease that He was unable to cure. He never met a storm that He was unable to quell, never met hunger that He couldn’t assuage, never met a sea upon which He could not walk. Never did He fail to do a supernatural thing and excuse His failure by appealing to the lack of faith of somebody else, and the like.

Given the state of medical knowledge in that time and place, those catch-all words probably sufficed to describe what we would identify more precisely. Then again, if Jesus is healing each and every comer – one time he assembly line healed through the night, until daybreak – general words like these are the most appropriate to describe His work.

If there's one thing that I want people to know by the end of the Epiphany Season, it is exactly what miracles reveal to us about Jesus. The first thing that miracles reveal is that Jesus is God. Only a very select few in the Bible are able to do miracles. If we get the idea that miracles are commonplace in either testament, then we need to rethink that.

In his book, *First Christians*, Maier compares legitimate miracles with the alleged miracles of modern miracle workers. Miracles, by definition, are not commonplace. I may during a sermon ask the rhetorical question, "can you do miracles?" and then make the rhetorical point that Jesus can, and He does, and He does it a lot, because He is God.

As we read through the Gospels, we note that miracles do not cause people who do not believe to then – having seen a miracle – believe in Jesus. They *do* confirm in believers their belief that He is God. You could say the same thing about the miracle that happens in the Sacraments. Unbelief thinks we're crazy to attribute such things to such elements.

Protestants also mock us for thinking something is actually going on in Baptism, but they save their most virulent language to condemn what the Bible teaches about the Sacrament of the Altar. Believers understand that the God Who always has done miracles continues to do miracles, and He continues to be present among us in Word and Sacrament.

The second thing the miracles of Jesus reveal is to give us a preview of what heaven will be like; paradise restored only better. There's that familiar apocryphal story about how Joseph once cut a board short and Jesus, rather than admonishing Joseph to "measure twice, cut once," just went ahead and miraculously made the board to be the right length.

If you hear that, and you think that that doesn't sound like something Jesus would do, then you are correct. Such an alleged act borders on the trivial, it is beneath Jesus, and more to the point, it teaches us nothing about heaven. It's not that Jesus would have been unable to do that. It is that – like we ought to be – He doesn't do pointless or meaningless things.

The One who here shows Himself to have power over disease and demons reminds us that these things were not there in paradise before the fall, that they are the result of sin, and that they will not be there in paradise restored (and then some) of heaven. Satan and his minions who so grieve us now will be completely out of the picture there.

Go ahead at this point and talk about the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. If they don't know what those terms mean, then tell them. As we move through Matthew's gospel, we see that neither will poverty, destructive and often fatal storms, hunger, thirst, sin, blindness, deafness, or temptation to sin be a part of the heavenly bliss.

24. If you look at a political map or globe of the world today, you will find Syria to the north and east of Israel. The Roman Province of Syria had some overlap with modern

Syria, but it was much smaller and to the north of Judea, along the coast and inland. The three Roman Syrian provinces contained the geographical area of Galilee and north.

It does not say that Jesus actually went to Syria. It says the “ἀπῆλθεν ἡ ἀκοή αὐτοῦ εἰς ὅλην τὴν Συρίαν – the news of Him went out into all Syria,” which, as noted, would have included Galilee, but more than just Galilee. The noun “ἀκοή” means “hearing,” and here it means that people there heard about Jesus, and just what did they hear about Him?

Sounds like the people in Syria heard that Jesus could help them with whatever ailed them; “καὶ προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ πάντα τοὺς κακῶς – and they brought to Him all the sick,” people with a variety of problems “ἔχοντας ποικίλαις νόσοις – having various diseases,” including: sickness, pain, torture, demon possession, mental problems, and paralysis.

The word “βασάνοις – torture” was often used to describe severe and painful illness, and we get that. The word “σεληνιαζομένους – mental problems” occurs in the NT only here and in 17:5, where the cause of the boy’s odd behavior is a demon. All the English translations that render this “epilepsy” or even “seizure” are wrong and making things up.

While there were synagogues and Jewish people in these regions, they would not have been considered to be Jewish areas. The Upper Midwest would generally be considered to be the heart of Lutheranism, with Chicago and St. Louis seen as geographical centers, so Judea was the heart of Judaism and Jerusalem her geographical center.

You already know that Jesus found His best reception in these outlying areas and not so much in Jerusalem. That’s the nature of the thing, as noted by Martin Luther.

Let us remember our former misery, and the darkness in which we dwelt. Germany, I am sure, has never before heard so much of God’s word as it is hearing today; certainly, we read nothing of it in history. If we let it just slip by without thanks and honor, I fear we shall suffer a still more dreadful darkness and plague. O my beloved Germans, buy while the market is at your door; gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; make use of God’s grace and word while it is there! For you should know that God’s word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been. WA 15:32,7

The Early Church found a lot of Jewish people in their number, but as time went by, we find the tables turned early and the Gentiles were found to be a more fertile field. Europe was the beating heart of the Church for hundreds of years, and our ancestors brought it to America. Now the shower of rain seems to hover mostly above Asia and Africa.

What an interesting and exciting time to be a Christian! Due largely to Matthew Harrison, we are sending out boatloads of missionaries to the farthest corners of the world.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, boatloads of people are headed this way, to a city near you, where we can proclaim the Gospel to them and then go home at night.

25. When people came and saw these miracles, many of them stayed with Him. How many? Matthew tells us that “ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοὶ - great crowds followed Him.” These people are said to come from the following places; Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and “πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου – beyond the Jordan,” John’s bailiwick.

We know about the regions of Galilee and Judea, and we know about the city Jerusalem. Decapolis means “ten cities,” and it is an area located to the east of the Sea of Galilee, mostly north of the River Jabbok. The cities located there are of substantial population, and they would have included people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

The term “Beyond the Jordan” comes from the OT, is the area known these days as “Transjordan,” and denotes an area east of the Jordan, more south than Decapolis, with a great deal of overlap between the two. Very quickly, we see lots of people from lots of different places flocking to the side of this preacher, teacher, and miracle worker.

That area “beyond the Jordan” is significant because it had been John’s territory, but John is no longer able to cover that area because of being imprisoned. John’s constituents, who previously had access to his preaching and his baptism, no longer have that access, so they travel to Jesus, whose message is identical to John’s, and He does miracles!

Law/Gospel

Change/Change – Like John before Him, Jesus preached repentance. Especially since that word is so abused by the protestants, we have to keep on explaining what it means. It means change, and on a fundamental level it means to change from trusting self, which the natural man does, to trusting God for salvation and all other good things.

Silence/Revelation – The natural man has a natural knowledge of God and is religious. He knows that he has offended God, and that he deserves the wrath of God, so he tries to appease God by praying to trees and stones and offering to him infants (Molech) and young virgins (Druids). They are to be pitied. God has revealed Himself to us in Jesus, the Word become flesh. Jesus, the Word become flesh, is now revealed to us in Word and Sacrament, so we no longer have to pray to those inanimate objects and kill our children. He has been appeased by the blood of His own Son.

Belonging/Belonging – Without God we belong to sin, death, and Satan. With God we belong to holiness, life, and Him because of the work of Jesus. To be chosen by Jesus to belong to Him is a good thing. To be called by Him to the Apostolic office is just icing on the cake.

Sermon Titles

Here, Behind Me

Zebedee and Sons – Fishmongers

You Belong to Me

Remembering Forrest Gump

Hymns

Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spake – LSB 688

God of the Prophets, Bless the Prophets' Sons – LSB 682

If you do a mission emphasis, there are good hymns in the “Missions” section.

Epiphany hymns are always appropriate during the Epiphany Season.

Rev. Steven L. Anderson, Pastor
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Grand Mound, Iowa