

Invitation  
December 14, 2025  
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Matthew 4:12-25

Opening: Imagine arriving for a medical procedure and they say, “*Sorry, our power is out, but we have a few flashlights, and we will move ahead with those.*” Ah, no thanks! To see what is wrong and fix it requires light and in some cases magnification.

The word "light" appears 263 times in the ESV Bible including our text today. Most importantly, Jesus said of himself in **John 8:12 (ESV) — 12 ...“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** Light dispels the darkness; you can’t fix things unless there is light to see what needs to be fixed. Jesus came to fix humanity’s sin problem so we don’t have to live in darkness.

**(ESV) — 12** Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. **13** And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, **14** so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: **15** “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— **16** the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” **17** From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” **18** While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. **19** And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” **20** Immediately they left their nets and followed him. **21** And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. **22** Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. **23** And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. **24** So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. **25** And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

- Some context – Verse 12 suggests little time between Jesus' baptism and John's arrest, but John's Gospel inserts a wedding, Passover, and Judean ministry, leading scholars to estimate several months to a year had passed.
- Matthew gave us a lot in fourteen verses; in the short time we have I'm focusing on verses 15 through 17.
- Jesus' move to Capernaum fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy that the light of the Messiah would come to Galilee (of the Gentiles).
- He came to dispel spiritual darkness for both Jews and Gentiles.

- Verse 16 quotes **Isaiah 9:2 (ESV)** — **2** The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. [Later in Isaiah 9:6 – “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*”]
- Verse 17 gives us Jesus’ core message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” That message is repeated throughout the gospels in Paul’s writings.<sup>i</sup>
- “Repent” (in Greek, *metanoia*) means to change one’s mind and attitude. It is a decision which changes the total direction of one’s life.<sup>ii</sup>
- Bob Utley: “*Repentance is a willingness to change from one’s self-centered existence to a life informed and directed by God.*”<sup>iii</sup>
- The “kingdom of Heaven (or God)” was (is) not geographical but spiritual.
- Jesus said, “*My kingdom is not of this world...*”<sup>iv</sup>
- **Luke 17:20–21** tells us, **(ESV)** — **20** Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, **21** nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”
- Another commentator said, “*Jesus was inaugurating the kingdom as He changed the hearts of men, one at a time.*” For now, the kingdom of God exists as He rules the hearts of His followers. One day He will return to rule the world.<sup>v</sup>
- How can we apply this to people today?
- First, let’s acknowledge the reality that humanity is “wired” for the darkness of sin.
- Jesus said in **John 3:19–20 (ESV)** — **19** And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. **20** For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.
- So, how does the light of Jesus work in the hearts of those in darkness?
- Early in the twentieth century cartoons began to show a light bulb over the head of a character signaling an idea. We use the expression, “*Then the light came on*” to describe a sudden insight or flash of clarity about a situation.
- For the unsaved, the light of the Holy Spirit shines on the heart to reveal we are all sinners in need of a Savior. The light points them to Jesus’ command to repent (sorrow for sin and a change of mind about it.) [Paul on the Damascus Road.]
- Jesus’ light also shows us how to be “subjects” in His Kingdom now and forever.
- For those of us who are followers of Christ, His light directs us toward repentance in a different way. [Illustration: the magnifier app on your mobile device.]
- The convicting light of the Holy Spirit shines on our hearts to reveal any sin that is hindering our relationship with Him, so we can confess it.
- For the unsaved, the “light of life” is about salvation. For the saved, sanctification.
- Important point: Sanctification (becoming more like Christ) is not just about doing, first it is about BEING.
- Anyone can carry a Bible, attend church, quote scripture, do good deeds. The reality is you don’t have to be saved to do those things. Sadly, some are deceived that they ARE saved BECAUSE they do those things.
- For a Christ-follower, DOING is crucial but BEING is fundamental.

**Ephesians 5:8–11 (ESV)** — **8** for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light **9** (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), **10** and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. **11** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

- What does BEING more and more like Christ look like? (Here's an AI summary)
  - Humbly depending on the Father instead of relying on self.
  - Letting the Beatitudes shape our inner posture and relationships.
  - Obeying Jesus at the level of the heart, not just outward behavior.
  - Loving enemies and entrusting justice to God.
  - Practicing unseen righteousness for the Father's approval alone.
  - Seeking His kingdom instead of living in anxiety about security or success.
  - Speaking with simple, honest integrity.
  - Examining your own heart before correcting others (log in the eye).
  - Walking by the Spirit, bearing His fruit in character and reactions.
  - Loving others through sacrificial, practical service.
  - Confessing sin quickly and extending the same grace received.
  - Abiding in Christ through Scripture, prayer, and obedience so His life shapes each day.
- You must always verify "AI", but it came up with a biblically accurate list!
- The point we must not miss: We can't BE those things apart from the work of His Holy Spirit directing us.

So, What's the Takeaway?

The Apostle John wrote about this in his first letter. I'm going to take the liberty of reading his famous words in reverse (you'll see why.)

**1 John 1:8–10 (ESV)** — **8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

**1 John 1:5–7 (ESV)** — **5** This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

- Jesus came into the world as the "light" that brings salvation in darkness.
- When we follow Him as Savior and surrender to Him as Lord, He comes into our hearts as the light that reveals our need for a Savior and for repentance.
- As we grow in our relationship with Him, His light will show us the places where we need to adjust not only our DOING but also our BEING.
- The point: If I have surrendered to the "great I am," He will change who "I AM" AND what I do. Doing is required, but BEING is fundamental.
- That requires allowing His light to magnify the dark places for anything un-Christlike, repenting of those sins, and asking Him to help me BE more like Him.

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<sup>i</sup> It appears repeatedly in the Gospels on the lips of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2), Jesus (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15), and in summary descriptions of apostolic preaching (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30), making it one of the central, recurring themes of New Testament proclamation.

<sup>ii</sup> Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher's commentary* (p. 531). Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> Utley, R. J. (2000). *The First Christian Primer: Matthew: Vol. Volume 9* (p. 30). Bible Lessons International.

<sup>iv</sup> **John 18:36 (ESV) — 36** Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.”

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/kingdom-of-God-within-you.html> For the time being, Christ's kingdom is not of this world ([John 18:36](#)). One day, however, the [kingdom of God](#) will be manifest on the earth ([Isaiah 35:1](#)), and Jesus Christ will rule a physical kingdom from David's throne ([Isaiah 9:7](#)) with Jerusalem as His capital ([Zechariah 8:3](#)).