

## HOME GROUP & DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

*“Just Mercy” – Jacqui Rivas – 24.10.2021*

Sermon link:



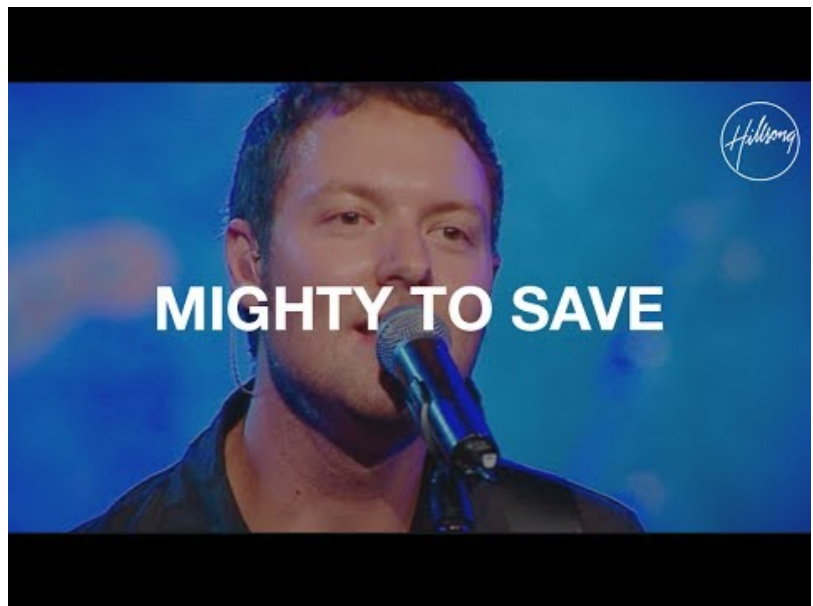
### Scripture

Matthew 4:12-23

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God’s word to you.

### Observation

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested He took decisive action. Barclay describes Jesus’ move from Nazareth to Capernaum as having ‘a kind of symbolic finality’. It was as if He closed the door on the place where He had grown up, and opened the door to all that lay ahead of Him. He moved into Galilee in the north of Israel. Galilee was a small (about 260 kms<sup>2</sup>), fertile area of the land. It was farmed everywhere and produced thriving crops. As a result it was heavily populated.



Spend some time in worship.

Jesus moved into the crowded area to pass on His message to the greatest number of people possible. The people in this part of the land were open to new ideas and innovations. The area was surrounded by Gentile territories – the Phoenicians to the west, the Syrians to the north and east, and the Samaritans to the south. It was more in touch with non-Jewish ideas than any other part of Israel. It was criss-crossed by trade routes, thus exposing its people to yet more new ideas from passing traders. It had been conquered more than once and its population had often mixed and intermarried with other peoples. Capernaum’s situation is uncertain, but its most likely position was on the north west shore of the Sea of Galilee.

It was here, in this region, with its mix of influences and ideas that Jesus chose to spread His own new message, for it was here that what He taught had a chance to take root and grow.

Matthew uses the Greek word *kērussein* to describe what Jesus did here. This has been translated as ‘preach’ in many versions of Scripture, but a more direct translation describes a proclamation from a king, made by a herald.

As He proclaimed His news, Jesus spoke with conviction – there was no doubt about His message; He had authority – speaking on behalf of the King; His message came from beyond Himself – from the King of kings. ‘Repent!’ Jesus said. He urged the people to stop their ways, to look up to heaven and turn back to God – and to do it now.

The Sea of Galilee, at the time of Jesus, swarmed with fishing boats. Jesus was walking along the shore of the Lake and saw Peter and Andrew, James and John, working on their nets. They were not wealthy nor well educated, yet not poor or begging either. They were just simple fishermen, going about their business, earning their living. As such they would have been patient men for it takes time to catch fish; they would have been persistent and courageous, ready to take risks on an unpredictable sea. They needed to know when to take action, and when to be silent; and what sort of bait would attract what sort of fish. In addition they needed to know when to keep out of sight for even their shadow could frighten the fish away.

‘I will make you fishers of men’, Jesus said. They would need all their characteristics as fishermen to attract people to Jesus, stepping aside themselves as they delivered their message and pointing always to the Christ.

#### *Icebreaker:*

When your mother called you when you were young did you obey immediately or did you know you could delay for a while? What made the difference when you knew you had to obey and do as she asked? Perhaps there may even have just been ‘a look’. Briefly describe that look and share how it made you feel.

#### **Application**

- How have you heard the call of Jesus on your life? How did you respond?
- How has that call altered during the pandemic months, if at all? How do you feel about the change?
- What challenges are you facing as a result of Jesus’ call on your life?
- Are you dealing with opposition from those you love/know in regard to fulfilling this call? How do you feel about this? How is it affecting your relationships with the people opposing you?
- How different would your life have been if you had not followed Jesus’ call?
- What makes you different in your world? How do people know they can trust you? How do you spread hope?
- Do you go it alone in following Jesus or does your community play a role? How important are other believers to you? How do you feel about returning to church and worshipping with others in the same place? What difference has it made to you?

- When did you last feel you came face to face with Jesus? What happened? What is happening as a result of that meeting?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

**Prayer**

Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and in regard to other needs of the group.

**Service**

Look for opportunities to offer hope to others this week. Share what happened with the group when you next get together

**Bibliography**

Barclay, William. The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew: Volume 1. The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh. 1991