

# Readings

## Scripture

<sup>4:23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. <sup>25</sup> And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

<sup>5:1</sup> Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

- Matthew 4:23-5:1 (*English Standard Version*)

## Reflection

Through the call of Jesus men become individuals. Willy-nilly, they are compelled to decide, and that decision can only be made by themselves. It is no choice of their own that makes them individuals: it is Christ who makes them individuals by calling them. Every man is called separately, and must follow alone. But men are frightened of solitude, and they try to protect themselves from it by merging themselves in the society of their fellow-men and in their material environment. They become suddenly aware of their responsibilities and duties, and are loath to part with them. But all this is only a cloak to protect them from having to make a decision. They are unwilling to stand alone before Jesus and to be compelled to decide with their eyes fixed on him alone. Yet neither father nor mother, neither wife nor child, neither nationality nor tradition, can protect a man at the moment of his call. It is Christ's will that he should be thus isolated, and that he should fix his eyes solely upon him.

At the very moment of their call, men find that they have already broken with all the natural ties of life. This is not their own doing, but his who calls them. For Christ has delivered them from immediacy with the world, and brought them into immediacy with himself. We cannot follow Christ unless we are prepared to accept and affirm that breach as a *fait accompli*. It is no arbitrary choice on the disciple's part, but Christ himself, who compels him thus to break with his past.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (p. 94-95)

# Sermon Outline

**And Great Crowds Followed Him...**  
Matthew 4:23-5:1

*His Disciples Came to Him*  
Brad Anderson

*Jesus came to save his people from their sins...*  
(Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:11; Acts 3:26, 4:12, 5:31, 13:23, 38-39)

## What does this mean?

**It means a clear announcement about the good news of God's kingdom...**

(Matthew 4:23)

- Teaching
  - Preaching
  - Healing
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**It means a total reversal of sin's curse...** (Matthew 4:24)

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**It means a comprehensive call to discipleship in Jesus Christ...** (Matthew 4:25, 5:1)

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## Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Describe the largest crowd you have been part of? Where was it? What was the event? How did you experience it? What types of people were there in attendance? Were all the people attending the same event, or were there "passers by"? How were people reacting? Did they want to be there or was it like a traffic jam that no one wanted to be part of?
- Read Matthew 5-7 in one sitting. What is your sense of these chapters? How would you hear Jesus' words if you were a disciple? How would you hear Jesus' words if you were simply part of the crowd or a passer by? Are you struck by the possibility or the impossibility in these words? Why? Or why not?
- Read Matthew 4:23-25 as you use a map of the Bible to locate the places described. Where is Jesus? What is Jesus doing and teaching that seems to draw such a large following?
- With no hospitals and limited care options as would be known today, how desperate do you think the needs were physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually?
- Matthew says, "Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him." It is likely that part of the reason Jesus went up on the mountain was to escape the crowds by heading to a desolate place. What do you know about Jesus and his relationship with desolate places? Why does he typically go to such locations?