

Wednesday Reflection

Title: The Starting Point

Date: January 25, 2026

ID: 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Scripture: Matthew 4:12-17

I use W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison's *The Gospel According to Matthew* vol. 1. T & T Clark, Ltd. And R. T. France's *The Gospel of Matthew*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. FFS is my book, *For Us and For Our Salvation*.

All biblical references are from the *New American Bible (revised edition)* NABre.

Text: Sunday's Gospel communicates the nature of the place where Jesus ministered and the Lord's desire for community.

Danger was in the air. The Baptist was arrested. Danger had accompanied Jesus from his birth. King Herod wanted Jesus dead (2:13-18). His family fled to Egypt. When they returned, they went to Galilee, away from the political and religious authorities (4:22/23). As a young man, Jesus went south to Judea to join John's movement (3:1). When Archelaus arrested John, Jesus "withdrew" (4:12) to Galilee.

In those days, Galilee was a strange place for a religious leader. It was in northern Israel, the first part of Israel to experience foreign invasions, first the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Some invaders settled in Galilee. It was called *pagan Galilee* or *Galilee of the Gentiles* (4:15)—a place of darkness (4:16). Galilee was diverse when Jewish people maintained strong social boundaries. Some Rabbis discouraged any contact with others. Matthew thought the mix created the right place for the Messiah. He told of the Magi from the East visiting the infant Jesus. Matthew wrote that John the Baptist said God could raise up children of Abraham from stones (3:9). And recall how the Lord's genealogy implied that those who live in Christ become adoptees in the Lord's family.

At first, Jesus preached what John had preached (compare 3:2 and 4:17). The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven is neither a bloodline, tribe, race, or people, nor is it a place, nation, or land. The Kingdom is "the transformation of the world, the restoration of an idyllic, paradisial state in which God's will would be perfectly realized" (Davis and Allison, vol. 1, p. 389). The Kingdom is a state of mind, of spirit, and heart. To enter, one must repent, changing one's life, perspective, and vision. Jesus proclaimed it is near, at hand, open to anyone with a change of heart.

Jesus began to gather His community, Peter and Andrew, James and John. From this point until Jesus's arrest at Gethsemane (26:56), Jesus was always with His community (French p. 145). The new disciples changed their lives. Peter and Andrew "left their nets and followed him" (4:20). James and John "left their boat and their father and followed him" (4:22). The point is sacrificial obedience, not giving up material things. Leaving their father may signal that Jesus's community excluded the family structure that posits absolute male domination of a household (see FFS p. 65/66). If this is a correct interpretation, setting aside patriarchy implies the Lord's inclusive nature; Jesus counts in women and children.

Jesus had just begun his ministry. The disciple's attraction resulted only from the Lord's call. Why join the new movement? They may have changed their lives because of hope: hope for a new type of person, new social interaction, a new community.