

**Jesus Preaches in Galilee**  
**Matthew 4:12-17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:14-15**

Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – 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.” From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (English Standard Version – ESV)

**Background:**

- Nazareth was a small agricultural village and suburb of the old Galilean capital, Sepphoris. Capernaum was a larger fishing town on the northwest edge of the Sea of Galilee. The trade routes brought Gentiles through those parts. Capernaum lay in the borders of Naphtali, but not Zebulun. Matthew mentions the latter, because they are named together in Isaiah 9:1.

- Citing Isaiah 9:1-2, of which Matthew surely knows the context, the light to which it refers is that of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6-7). Many non-Jews in Galilee had been forcibly converted to Judaism in the second century B.C. They had previously been aligned with Judea’s Phoenician enemies (1 Maccabees 5:15). Subsequently, however, many Judeans settled in Galilee, so the inhabitants were ethnically and religiously Jewish. Capernaum, like Sepphoris and Nazareth, was situated along a major trade route of Palestine, later called “the way of the sea.”

- The message of Jesus, like that of John the Baptist (3:2), is summarized as repentance to be ready for the kingdom. First-century Jewish hearers would have heard in this proclamation a warning of the imminent Day of Judgment.

**Questions:**

- + Luke 4:14 says that Jesus returned “in the power of the Spirit.” What does this mean? How can one experience the power of God’s Spirit? Have you experienced such power?
- + Based on the text, what is a possible reason why Jesus based his ministry in Capernaum? Where would Jesus have you base your ministry for him, and what is one reason why?
- + What is most significant about the passage Matthew quotes from Isaiah 9:1-2, and why? How does the phrase “a light has dawned” apply, if at all, to your experience with Jesus?
- + In Mark 1:14, what does Jesus mean by “the gospel of God?” How does it apply to you? In Mark 1:15, what does Jesus mean by “the kingdom of God?” How does it apply to you? How does the word “repent” relate to the gospel? What would God have you repent of now?