

It is Not About Me: Centering Ministry on Christ and His Kingdom

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January 25, 2026

Matthew 4:17-25 ¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ¹⁸ And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ They immediately left *their* nets and followed Him. ²¹ 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. He called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. ²³ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. ²⁴ Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. ²⁵ Great multitudes followed Him-- from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

How close are we to God and his kingdom? Luke often uses the phrase "The kingdom of God is near," but Matthew is more specific. "It is at hand." That is, it is close enough to easily reach out your hand and take hold. And yet it is also a million miles away. The one thing we are called to do, repent, is the one thing which normally we will not do under any circumstances. As Jesus himself said, "the Father has to drag us."

None of us wants to repent and admit that I am wrong. The prisons of America are full of people who will not admit what they did wrong. Their refusal to take personal responsibility for their actions has led them from one sin to another until they were finally caught. But just because we are not in prison does not make us any better. We also prefer to focus on what everyone else has done wrong.

Repentance means setting aside what others have done and admitting what I have done. Repentance means letting go of me and holding on to Christ.

Just as Christ has called us to repentance, he has also called us to share the message of repentance, and just as repentance means keep the focus on Jesus so also the preaching of repentance needs to keep the focus on Jesus.

We forget that the goal is repentance.

Often when we are confronted with unbelievers, we get distracted and forget what our goal is.

Sometimes we think our goal is to prove that abortion, homosexuality or similar sinful lifestyles are wrong. Those things are wrong. They are sinful. But that is not our goal. They are sins. Sins not unlike all the sins that we do. Those who do such sins need to recognize them as sins and repent of them, just as we need to repent of other sins, but it is not our goal to prove that we are right.

Sometimes we think our goal is to prove that the political party we support is the right and only political party. Sometimes we think our goal is to prove that creation is true and evolution is wrong.

We may need to address these issues but none of these things are our goal. The goal is to call people to "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus never takes his eyes off the goal. He is there to preach repentance and salvation through Himself. When they bring the adulterous woman to him, he does not get sidetracked with questions of whether she should be stoned. He calls everyone present to repent. When He is confronted by the Samaritan women at the well, He does not get into a debate about her many husbands. He calls her to repent and receive the forgiveness that He has to offer.

He calls sins sin to be sure, but He focuses not on debates about the sin but on the need for repentance and forgiveness through Him.

We need to stand up and honestly confess the truth of scripture. We do not back down from calling sin sin, but we also need to keep our eyes on the goal. The goal is the preaching of repentance and forgiveness through Jesus.

We need to deal with other people not as though they are sinners and we are showing them the way out, but as though we are sinners who are traveling out through Jesus.

We forget that it is all about Jesus.

We have a tendency to make witnessing all about me, my abilities or more often my lack of abilities.

When Jesus called the disciples, they left everything to follow Him. It is not about who they were or what they had. They left everything behind. Their all about who Christ is and what He has to offer.

They left everything to follow Christ. That is a statement about the power of Christ's calling. It is also an indication that nothing they had or owned was of any use in their new life of following Jesus. The call was not of them. The work was not of them. They left it all behind. There was nothing they could bring to the table. They came to Christ to receive from Him all that they would need.

Throughout His ministry Jesus promises that He would give them what they needed.

Jesus tells the disciples, "**Ask, and it will be given to you**" Matthew 7:7.

He would give them understanding. He would give them the words to speak. He would give them direction. He would fill them with the Holy Spirit.

We tend to make it all about me, my abilities, my charm, my intelligence, my tactfulness. There is a place for tactfulness in witnessing about Christ. One would not get far sitting outside a window yelling fornicator into the night. But it is not the tactfulness of this world.

Because we make it all about me. We are often hesitant, afraid, and timid. We feel unfit and unworthy to be partakers in the work of the kingdom. Because of course by ourselves we are unfit. But it is not about us. It is about Christ and what He has promised to do through us. It is about His word and the power of that word.

When Christ calls us, we leave everything behind. That is part of that repentance that Jesus was talking about. Leaving all that I think I am behind and coming to Christ for Him to fill us.

Remember in the parable of the talents. He gave the talents to the servants, to one five and to one two and to another one. None of them brought anything to the Lord, everything they had came from the Lord. Jesus promises in the gospel of John:

John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

There is only one thing that we need the one thing we need is Jesus' word. It is not about me. It is about Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

This is the one thing that we need. This is the one simple message. This is the one thing that we know, even if we know nothing else. This is the light that shined among the gentiles in our Old Testament reading. This is the light that we have and can share with others.

Jesus is the light of the world. Witnessing is not that difficult it consists solely in showing people that light. It consists of sharing the simple message "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Amen