

Sermon for January 25, 2026
"What to Do When It Dawns on You"

Matthew 4:12-23

Back when Jesus was just getting started, they were going through dark times. John the Baptist got arrested for preaching against King Herod. So Jesus took off for Galilee to get as far away from Herod as possible. He went to Capernaum in the territory of Zebulon and Naphtali. Like the Bible says: "Zebulon and Naphtali on the road to the sea, land of the Gentiles; on the people that lived in darkness the light has shined. For the people who sat in the shadow of death, a new day has dawned." That is when Jesus began preaching, "Change your ways for the Kingdom of Heaven is closer than you think!"

Jesus' message was like a light in the darkness. The people had felt abandoned by their leadership. The Priests and Pharisees failed to give them spiritual direction, and King Herod had silenced the one spiritual leader they had, John the Baptist. So, Jesus' message, that they were not alone and without hope but that the kingdom was near, was a ray of light.

One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee he came upon some fishing boats. In one two brothers; Simon called Rocky and Andrew were just off shore casting their nets into the sea. Jesus called to them and said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." They dropped their nets and followed him. Then he came on a small group of boats. James and John and their father and the hired men were repairing their nets after a hard night's work. Jesus called them and they left their father and followed Jesus. They followed Jesus taking the good news to all the people, preaching in their synagogues and healing the sick! A new day had dawned for God's people!

Have you ever had one of the "Aha!" moments? You know one of those moments when all the pieces come together and it all makes sense. One of those moments when the truth dawns on you, and everything is seen in a new light. A moment when the darkness of ignorance and doubt is pushed away by the dawning of a new day?

I imagine that Larry Walters had one of those moments. Back in 1982 Larry Walters dreamt of flying. So one day he tied 45 weather balloons to a lawn chair and filled the balloons with helium. To his surprise the moment he cut his ties to the ground he shot up in the air and did not stop until he reached 16,000 feet. Now that he had gotten up, the issue was how to get down. Larry Walters had made provision for this. He brought with him a BB gun with which he planned to shoot the balloons one by one until he began to descend at a decent rate. The problem was that at 16,000 feet, it is cold and his hands were numb and he dropped the gun.

I imagine at this point the truth dawned on Larry Walters. He was hanging thousands of feet in the air with no means of controlled descent. None of the news reports I read about the event say this but I imagine Mr. Walters said a few prayers. We do know that he used the radio he had taken with him to call in a mayday. The truth had dawned on Larry Walters. He was in trouble and needed help.

By the way, he did get down safely but not before his ropes became entangled with some power lines blacking out a part of Long Beach, California. (Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawnchair_Larry_flight)

Jesus' coming was like the dawn of a new day. The people of God were living in darkness. The Romans, who merely tolerated their religion, were occupying their country. The

religious leadership were more interested in their own promotion than in leading the people in righteousness, and John the Baptist, a man seen as a prophet by the people, was in prison.

The people must have felt alone and abandoned. Had John been wrong? Was the Messiah not coming after all? Were they to continue to dwell in darkness?

The people sat in darkness and Jesus' message was a light shining in that darkness. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is at hand." God had not forgotten them. The prophecies of a savior would come true. They might even be coming true in Jesus!

So what did the people do when the light of God's truth dawned on them in Jesus? Matthew tells us about what a couple of people did. Peter and Andrew left their nets to follow Jesus. For a working person fishing could be a lucrative business. Salted fish from the Sea of Galilee was a delicacy in Rome and fish were the main source of protein for the people. Peter and his brother Andrew owned their own fishing business and they just closed up the shop and walked away.

The other people we meet are James and John. They are with their father Zebedee repairing their nets. This was "Zebedee and Sons Fisheries." They were mending their nets; taking care of the family business and their father. They walked away from generations of Zebedee family tradition and left their father and his business in the hands of the hired men.

What did these people do when the light of Jesus dawned on them? They followed. They stopped what they were doing and followed the light. Even though it meant leaving a lot behind they followed Jesus.

What do we do when the truth dawns on us? You know sometimes we find ourselves in a dark place in our lives. We realize that we are in trouble. It dawns on us that we are dangling by a thread with no solid place to plant our feet. Our hands have become numb and we have lost our grip on our one hope for safety. At that moment we realize we need some help. I think that is why you are all here today. You all realized at some point in your lives that you needed help, and so you sent out a mayday to God to deliver you from the predicament that you in your own ignorance had gotten yourself into. I know that's why I am here. I realized that I am a sinner in need of a Savior.

That is the universal human predicament. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We all need someone who can forgive our sin and give us eternal life, and that someone is Jesus. He died for our sins and gave us new life.

I believe that most of you have come to that realization. I know most of you. I think you know that you are helpless and hopeless on your own. I think you have come to that realization that you are in need of God's help. That trust has dawned on you. At least I hope it has. Because if it hasn't you really are in for a rude awakening. It is a long way down.

But like I said I think most of you have come to that realization already. The question is: Now that the truth of liberation through Jesus Christ has dawned on us, what should we do? Well, we should follow. We should listen to what Jesus has told us to do. We should go where he leads. That is what Peter and Andrew and James and John and the other disciples did.

Jesus the light of the world has dawned on us. We have seen his glory and know he is the one who can save us. The Kingdom is at hand, follow him. Go into all the towns and villages of your world and proclaim the Good News that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Heal the sick and care for those in need.

Then maybe the truth can dawn on them too!