



RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

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BIG IDEA:

To become fishers, the disciples needed to deepen their insight and unleash their compassion. Capernaum helped them do that.

KEY SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 17:24-27

Matthew 4:12-20

Matthew 11:23-24

Matthew 13:53-17:27

1. Matthew makes it clear that Jesus moved away from Nazareth because Capernaum was where his ministry needed to be. In conservative Nazareth, Jesus was nearly killed for affirming that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled in Him (Luke 4). Capernaum was a melting pot of ideas and a busy intersection of trade and travel. According to Aubrey L. Taylor, in his Geographic Commentary, “Jesus’s move from Nazareth to Capernaum was not a retreat into remoteness but a deliberate move into a more diverse region where his message and impact could have a wider and more receptive audience.” Some application questions:
 - a. We live in a small conservative town. What challenges do conservative towns have in embracing the new? Why is that?
 - b. Jesus stated that not one aspect of the law would pass away (Matthew 5:18). Jesus held on to the ‘truth’ even while employing new methods. How difficult is it for us to separate methods from the message?
 - i. Why is that?
 - ii. Can you think of an example where people struggled to do that? What happened?
 - c. When can methods go too far? Can you think of an example?
2. The disciples’ insight into whom Jesus was had to deepen. Read Matthew 13:51-53, noting the disciples’ answer to Jesus’s question. Now read Matthew 13:53-58, noting the contrast. Answer these questions:
 - a. What do you think Jesus meant when he said that every teacher was to bring out new treasures?
 - b. Do you find it easy to discover new treasures?
 - c. How does vv53-58 contrast with the disciples’ ‘we understand’? What significance might this have?

3. Having focused on the contrast between Jesus's disciples and the Capernaum population, the next section of Matthew (14:1-17:27) uses three unique insights to emphasize the mediating role of Peter and the disciples. We should also note 14:13-21, the feeding of the five thousand, where Jesus says to the disciples, "You give them something to eat" (v16). In this section of the Gospel, Peter's (the disciples) role as a mediator between Jesus and others comes increasingly to the forefront. With question 1 in mind:
 - a. How should Christian leaders play a mediating role, one that brings the broader Christian community and the lost together? Remember, Peter was supposed to be the bridge in 17:24-27 but got it wrong!
 - b. Pastor Craig suggested that insight, mediation, and compassion were critical skills Jesus wanted his disciples to develop. What other skills are necessary for building a bridge between Jesus and others?
4. On occasions, Peter and the disciples get their mediating role wrong (water walking, feeding the five thousand, and the temple tax), and Jesus increases their 'understanding' (see 13:51), three times correcting their 'little faith' (14:31; 16:8; 17:20). Answer the following:
 - a. Before today's message, how did you understand the term 'little faith'?
 - b. Considering today's message, how do you understand it now?
 - c. If little faith is related to more profound insight into Jesus's person and purpose, in what ways can we act in little faith even while believing in Jesus?
 - d. Noting how Jesus added insight to the disciples, how do you or will you give Jesus space to deepen your understanding so that your faith can grow?
5. Jesus pays the temple tax through a nature miracle even though he does not need to pay it. Jesus answers through a nature miracle because He does not want to become complicit in aspects of temple ministry that keep broken people out. These are the very people that he heals in Capernaum. Jesus wants nothing to do with a movement that does not balance truth with compassion. Answer the following:
 - a. One implication of the miracle is that some battles are best left until tomorrow. How hard is it for you to discern which battles to fight now and which to leave until tomorrow?
 - b. Jesus believed that the religious behavior of his peers lacked compassion. In what ways can our expression of our faith lack empathy?
6. How can we apply what we learned today about insight, mediation, and compassion to the polarized climate of the Roe v Wade decision? How can we stay true to our convictions while remaining compassionate and caring?