

Meeting the King

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Preacher: Nick Louw

[0 : 00] Who is the most famous person you've ever met?

Think about it. Some people have met some really famous people. Maybe a politician. I mean I don't know how famous politicians are. Maybe you met a well-known politician or a movie star or a sports personality.

Maybe a Springbok if you're lucky. I actually can't claim that I've met many famous people. I'm a little disappointed in that. I've seen a lot of famous people actually in the flesh.

I've seen the Queen of England, the late Queen of England in real life. Arnold Schwarzenegger, I saw him once. Nelson Mandela. But I can't claim that I met them.

I saw them but I didn't meet them. There's a difference isn't there? I can't claim that I've met Nelson Mandela even though I have seen him in real life. I can't claim that I've met the Queen or Arnold Schwarzenegger.

[1 : 05] There's a difference between seeing someone and really meeting them. Well do you know the same is true with Jesus?

Maybe you've seen Jesus in the Bible. Maybe you've heard about him a lot at church. You understand. And you believe in him. You believe that he exists.

But you know what? That doesn't mean that you've met him yet. There's a big difference between seeing Jesus, knowing about him and actually meeting him.

Well today we start a section in Matthew where we start to see people really meeting Jesus. And what we discover is that when a person really meets Jesus, then their life can never be the same again.

And this story that we're going to read of the first disciples meeting Jesus will show us four realities we're going to look at this morning that are true in a person's life who has genuinely met Jesus.

[2 : 17] And therefore it helps us to look at them and ask ourselves. For you to ask yourself based on what we see here, have I really met him? Are these realities true in my life?

And so we're going to look at these four realities together and ask ourselves those questions. And the first one, the first reality we see about meeting Jesus is that meeting Jesus is not up to you. So let's start by reading from verse 18. As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew.

And he said, It was quite common in those days for people to become disciples of a particular rabbi or master.

But it was the disciple who chose the master in those days, much like it is today. We choose who we follow on social media. We like what a person says.

[3 : 45] We like how they sound. And so we decide we will become a follower. We click and then they add, you're now their follower. We listen to what YouTube personalities or teachers we like to hear.

The ones that line up with how we think. And we decide to follow them. That's how we do it today, just back as they did it back then. But here, in this story, that's not the case.

Did you notice that? It wasn't the case that they chose to follow Jesus. Because, you see, when someone meets Jesus, when they really meet Jesus, it turns out that they don't choose that.

They don't choose to meet him. He chooses. He chooses them. The disciples in this story didn't wake up that morning deciding that they were going to be a disciple. They didn't wake up going, I think today we should find a rabbi to follow.

Don't you, Simon? Yes, I think that's a very good idea. No. They were just going about their daily lives. All that they were interested in that day was to catch some more fish, to feed their families, maybe make a bit of a profit.

[4 : 55] That's what they were. They were fishermen. They weren't looking to become disciples. They didn't plan to become disciples that day. They were going about their daily lives and Jesus chose them.

And when he did, notice that when he chose them, they didn't get to decide whether they were now going to take that on board or not. They didn't go to Jesus and say, well, thank you for the offer, Jesus.

You know, we're going to think about it for a few days and we'll get back to you. Just leave us your email address and we'll reply as soon as we can. No, they didn't have emails back then, by the way. The disciples did not hesitate. They immediately responded. Now, it's something that theologians call an effectual call.

And what it means simply is that when Jesus truly chooses and meets with someone and he calls them to himself, they cannot refuse him. It's effectual.

[6 : 00] When Jesus chooses to meet with someone, they will respond. And so that's the first way you can know whether you've really met Jesus. It wasn't your choice.

You didn't select him like you select a puppy at a pet shop and you choose the one that looks best to you. No, those who have truly met Jesus.

Now, some people might be attracted to Christianity and come to church because they've chosen that that aligns with their life and it works for them. But those who have truly met Jesus, those who Jesus has come and broken into their lives and they could not refuse that, they did not choose for that to happen.

They were not expecting for that to happen and often not looking for that to happen. And that's the first way you can know you've met him. It wasn't your choice. It wasn't up to you. The second reality that we discover about meeting Jesus in this story is that meeting Jesus is costly.

It costs you something to really meet Jesus. Look at verse 20 again. Immediately, they left their nets and followed him.

[7 : 15] Okay, so these guys were fishermen. And for fishermen, especially in the type of fishing they did in the Sea of Galilee, your nets were your most important asset other than your boat, but lots of them didn't have boats.

So, you would have a boat if you were rich and if you were lucky. But most fishermen had nets. That was their asset. They could not catch without their nets.

It was their livelihood. And so, by Matthew writing this and drawing our attention to the fact that they left their nets, he is deliberately highlighting what it cost these men to meet Jesus.

And it was the same with the next two disciples as well, as we read on from verse 21. Have a look in your Bibles from verse 21.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee, their father, preparing their nets.

[8 : 19] And he called them. Immediately, they left the boat and their father, and they followed him. And so, they had a boat.

Unlike the other two, they had a more successful fishing business, a family business with their father Zebedee. And that was pretty rare in those days, to have an asset, to have a boat, to have part of a family business.

If you had a share in a family business, and you had an asset like that, you were set. You were set up for life. You had a stable income. You had security. You had a pension, basically. It's our equivalent of a pension, to have those kind of assets.

And yet, do you see how quickly they left all that behind when they met Jesus? Because that's what really meeting Jesus does.

It causes people who really meet him to abandon what they once lived for. It's what he means later on in Matthew 16 when he says these words.

[9 : 24] If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it.

But whoever loses his life because of me will find it. That's what Jesus says. It means to meet him and to truly follow him, to truly be his disciple.

It means to deny yourself and to lose your life. In other words, to turn away from your own plans, your own control, your own security, what you want out of life when you turn to him.

You can't have both. You can't keep your security and your plans and keep going your way and also be a disciple of Jesus at the same time. You need to abandon that if you're going to truly follow him, which you will if you've truly met him.

This actually resonates a lot with me and just my story, which I thought I'd share with you for just a minute. When I really met the risen, living Lord Jesus Christ, it was when I was in university.

[10:42] And I knew about him. I'd grown up in a Christian home. I'd grown up going to church. I knew Jesus. I knew about him. But I really met him when I was in university.

And it was quite a big thing for me because I had gone to study business science at UCT for one reason and one reason only. And that was to make money. I wanted to get rich and make money. And I thought I could, I had the potential to and I had the opportunities to. And so that was my focus. That was my goal. But that, I didn't expect that about a year later Jesus decided that I would really meet him.

And it was a bit of a dilemma because suddenly I realized that I had to abandon what I was there for. I had to abandon my own plans in life and I had to submit to his.

And maybe as a Christian you've got a similar testimony, a similar experience to what it meant for you when you really met Jesus for the first time. That you had to abandon, you had to put aside your own plans in life and you had to submit to his.

[11:53] But you know, anybody who's truly met him will be willing to do that. Will be more than willing to do that. To die to themselves, to deny themselves and to lose their life. Just like the disciples were here.

Why? Why would a person be willing to do that? Well, because a person who's met Jesus realizes that this is, meeting Jesus is actually the authority of their creator coming to bear into their life.

When you meet Jesus, that's what you realize is going on. That your creator's authority is now entering into your life and he is taking over. Your very creator who made you, who gives you every breath you breathe, who causes every heartbeat you have to happen.

That creator is now coming and taking ownership and saying, I am taking over. And it makes every bit of sense to say, of course you are.

Because you are my God. You are my Lord. See, that's what happens when a person really meets Jesus. They realize that meeting Jesus is the authority of God coming into their life. They can't but put their own life and their own plans secondary to their maker.

[13:12] And that's what it means to deny yourself, to lose your life, to follow Jesus. That's what following Jesus really is. That's what discipleship really is. The Bible, that's how it defines discipleship.

It's extreme. It's absolute. It's not something you just add on to your life. True discipleship is a true giving over of everything to your new Lord. You see how different that is to how many people think about Christianity today?

Do you see how different the Bible's teaching on discipleship is to what many people today think being a Christian is? Many people today are consumer Christians.

What I mean by that is they come and consume whatever the preacher says, whatever the Bible has to say, to see how it helps their life.

Many people are Christians in so far as Christianity helps them. Christianity helps them to live their life.

[14:21] Kind of like a gym membership. Coming to church is kind of, for many people, it's kind of like going to gym. Where, you know, you sign up and then you go regularly because you know you have to and it's good for you to do that.

But, you know, you choose what machines to work on, what goals you want to achieve in your life. You choose what personal trainers you let take you and train you up a bit.

But it's still all about you improving your own life. Maybe this is a person who likes church, who enjoys coming to church, and yet they're still a Christian for them.

They're still a Christian for their purposes, to help them to live their life, to improve their life, to help them achieve their goals, to help them become a better person.

That's not the kind of discipleship we see in the Bible. That's not what Jesus calls people to. You know, you can spot those types of Christians, the ones who are Christians for how it helps them.

[15:26] One of the ways you can spot them is that they only come to church when the rest of life allows it. When it works for them. Oh, it didn't quite work for me to come to church.

There were so many other things. And, you know, I'll come to church when everything else is calmed down. And basically the subtext is, I'll come to church when I think it's going to be good for me.

When I think it's going to help me to achieve what I want to achieve in life. Well, I want to suggest something that might be a bit controversial. But I think it's true of what Jesus is saying here and what we're reading in the Bible.

Is that a person who comes to church like that, when it suits them, when the rest of life allows it. I don't think they've ever really met Jesus.

I don't think they've ever yet come to realize that Christianity is not about us fitting Jesus into our plans. But it's about Him calling us into His plans.

[16:27] Because that's the second reality of meeting Jesus. It's costly. It means abandoning our own plans and our own life and our own security and our own what we want out of life.

And submitting to what He wants now. That is what it truly means to be a disciple. And that's what happens when you truly meet Jesus. And that leads us to the third reality.

That meeting Jesus gives you a new mission. Meeting Jesus gives you a new mission. Verse 19. Follow me, He told them. And I will make you fish for people.

It's a weird thing to say. Of course, He's speaking to fishermen. So, He's using an analogy that they would understand to describe to them the new mission that they're going to have in their life now that they've met Jesus.

They're going to fish for people. They're going to catch people for Him. They're going to catch people for the kingdom. That's their new mission. I say new mission because everybody is on a mission.

[17:32] They already had a mission before Jesus gave them a new mission. We're all on a mission. Everybody in this world is on a mission. They're living for something. Something gets them up in the morning.

The decisions they make about what to do today and what job to get and where to live, those decisions are based on what they want to achieve in life. You're on a mission.

Most people's mission is to be happy. To find love. To be comfortable. Maybe to be rich. If you're a parent, your mission becomes your children.

Everything you do and everything you decide is about giving them the best setup you can. For them to be happy and comfortable. And to be successful.

Everybody's on a mission. Whether we know it or not. Everybody's on a mission. But when someone really meets Jesus, their mission changes.

[18:36] Their life's mission changes. The thing they live for changes. When they really meet Jesus. And their overriding goal is no longer their own happiness or comfort or even the comfort or happiness of their children.

When a person meets Jesus, their overriding goal. The first priority is bringing others to meet Jesus like they have. When a person meets Jesus, they realize that is the single most important thing for a human being in their life.

And when they've truly met Jesus, it is natural for them to want others to meet Him too. That becomes their new mission.

But Jesus uses a pretty strange analogy to describe that. To catch people. Like you catch fish. To catch people for Him.

It sounds like you bring them by force to Jesus. I mean, I don't know if you've ever seen the trek net fishermen at Fishhook. When they send those nets out and they row in and they pull those fish in.

[19:39] The fish aren't there by choice. Okay? It's not like the fishermen go to the fish and say, Would you like to become part of our fishing expedition today? Would you like to join our net?

No. We're just giving you an option if it works for you. No. The fish have no choice. And that's the analogy Jesus chooses to use here.

And it sounds like we're forcing people to Him. But is that true? Well, if you think about it, it's not that we're forcing people to Jesus. But it is true that they don't have a choice.

What do I mean by that? Well, if what we read earlier is true. That when people really meet Jesus, it wasn't up to them. Then it's true of the people that we bring to meet Jesus.

If they genuinely do meet Him. If Jesus chooses them, they don't have a choice. Just like we didn't have a choice when He chooses us.

[20 : 44] And you know what that does? When we realize that. When we realize that actually, when a person comes to meet Jesus, then it wasn't really their choice at all.

That makes our job a whole lot easier. Because what it means, think about it, is that we don't need to be skilled evangelists. Or trained teachers. We don't need to find clever ways to manipulate people or convince them.

If it's not really up to them at all, whether they meet Jesus or not, then our job is simply as Christians to be faithful witnesses. To just be not ashamed to talk about the Jesus that we've met in our life.

To make sure that He is a reality of our life to people outside. And He will use that. It's not particularly the clever words we say or the clever arguments we have.

It's just being a faithful witness of what is the reality for us. And everybody who has truly met Jesus, that will shine out of them. It will be noticed. And it's just to be not ashamed.

[21 : 52] To talk about Him. And to want others to know about Him. And He will use that. He will use that willingness. He will use that openness.

Notice in verse 19, one of the most encouraging things about verse 19. I'm going to read it again. Follow me. He told them, And I will make you fish for people.

I will make you. The original, the older translation is, I will make you fishers of men. Which is a little obsolete because it's men and women. But it doesn't matter.

I will make you is the point that's important. You don't make yourself a fisher of people. When you meet Jesus, He makes you. He, He, He puts, He changes your life in such a way that it's going to draw other people to Him through what you say and how you live.

He will make you. It's not up to you. And that's, I don't know about you, but that encourages me. It encourages me that Jesus wants to and has a plan to use my life and my words and my conversations and me just being myself and open and loving and loving Jesus and loving other people.

[23 : 04] He's going to use that. He's going to use that to call the people He wants to in my life to Him. That is really encouraging. I will make you.

You know, we just cast the net. We don't decide what fish get caught in it. We live genuinely Christian lives reflecting the Lord that we've met. We let Him shine out and through us.

And He will catch who He wants to. But you've got to want that. You've got to want other people to meet Jesus like you have.

And that's another way you can know someone's really met Jesus is they want to help others to do that. It becomes their mission they have a passion to. It's what they're looking to achieve when they go to work.

When they go to the sports club. When they build relationships with people. In the back of their mind is I want this person to meet Jesus. I want this person to know my Lord.

[24 : 11] They need to. Because this person is lost. This person's life is going nowhere. They might look successful. They might look like they've got it all together.

But they're going to grow old. They're going to die. And they're going to face their Creator. And Jesus is their only way to be saved. And I want them to meet Him like I have. I want them to know the life and the hope.

And the restoration that I have. In knowing Jesus. You've got to want to.

And people who have met Him want to do that. People who have met Him are thinking. How can I look for opportunities in this conversation that I'm having with this person.

To share Jesus with them. To invite them to church. To find an opportunity that I can maybe offer to read the Bible with them. You'd be surprised how many people actually say yes when you offer that.

[25 : 11] If only you would do that. Because actually many people don't really know what the Bible says. Many people don't really know about Jesus. And they're curious.

And if only one of their friends says, You know, I'm a Christian. And this is the most important thing that we can know. And I'd love to read some of the Bible with you. And see what you think.

I'd love to share with you my church's God course. We've got the God course on YouTube. It's a four part course. I've spoken about it many times before. That you can just simply share with your neighbors and your friends.

And say, hey, check this out. And tell me what you think about it. Just Christians looking for every opportunity. You see. It's their mission in life. And it's why Christians.

It's why those who have met Jesus give money to their local church. And give time and get involved in their local church. Not out of duty. People can do it out of duty.

[26 : 11] Because they think, oh, I'm a Christian. This is what I've got to do. I've got to go to church. I've got to get involved. I've got to give money. I've got to give my tithe. But those who have met Jesus, actually it changes their motivation for why they give.

Because now they give because they know that this is going to go towards more people meeting Jesus. And that's the greatest thing to spend your money on. If that's your mission in life. They don't give out of duty. But they give out of a desire for others to meet Jesus. And they're excited when they see a visitor in church. And they're excited when the church is running an outreach event.

And they go, oh, I'm going to be there because I want to help. I want to help my church to get others to meet Jesus like I have. They're passionate about it.

It's their mission in life. Because if you are not passionate about others meeting Jesus, then that proves you haven't met Him yourself. But fourth and finally, meeting Jesus gives you a new future.

[27 : 24] Meeting Jesus gives you a new future. Notice that Matthew follows this little story up with Jesus' disciples meeting Him with another story of Jesus performing these miracles.

I'm just going to read it again from verse 23. Now Jesus began to go all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Then the news about Him spread throughout Syria. So they brought to Him all those who were afflicted, those suffering from various diseases and intense pains, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, the paralytics, and He healed them.

And large crowds followed Him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. Now, I don't know about you, but when I read about the healing miracles of Jesus, I'm going, man, I could use some of that.

Because we've all got things. We've all, like most of us, I mean, unless you're young and your body's still working perfectly, we've all got stuff that can be healed. We've all got problems that we're dealing with.

[28 : 38] And we go, wow, these people were lucky. Why can't Jesus do that for me? And, you know, it's a valid question. But we've got to understand the miracles we read of when Jesus was here, they were done for a particular purpose.

They were meant, first of all, to validate His words, to show that He brings God's power to earth. But secondly, they were done to point us to the future.

That's what these miracles are here for. They're to point us to the future that God has planned for this world. Jesus' miracles were there to reveal God's desire for creation, for this creation.

God does not want it to stay like this. He wants to restore it. He wants to heal all of this and all of us. God's plan for this world is to restore all that is broken, to rescue this world from the curse that it is under since the fall, which causes all these diseases and death and all this horrible stuff.

And that is a promise. When Jesus does these miracles, it's a promise for what is going to happen for all people who have truly met Him in their life. That's what His miracles point to.

[29 : 47] Not that it'll happen right away. The moment you meet Jesus, all your diseases are healed. Yeah. No. That's not how it happens. It's not going to happen like these people.

Much as we want Jesus to heal us now, there are good reasons that He allows trials to continue for a time. Because there is something more important that He has come to heal us from in the meantime.

The root cause of all this brokenness and that is our sin. That is why Jesus came. To heal the sin, our broken relationship with God.

That is what He is about. That is what He came. He didn't come to heal these people. While He did, to show us why He's come, Jesus came to this earth eventually to go to the cross and to die for the sins that separate us from God.

So that we can have hope of future perfect restoration and eternal life. And that is what Jesus gives to all the people He calls to Himself.

[30 : 49] They begin, even now, as they come into a relationship with Him, they begin to experience liberation from the power of sin and they receive the sure and certain hope of what that overcoming of sin guarantees, which is eternal life and complete restoration one day.

And those who have met Him, those who have really met Jesus, have that hope deep inside them. Death is not the end. The diseases and the trials we have in life are temporary.

And you can see it. You can see those who have met Jesus by how they handle their trials because they look beyond them. They know what's coming. And that is why it is worth meeting Jesus.

That is why it is worth meeting Jesus if you haven't yet. So have you? I'm not asking if you know Him.

I'm not asking if you've seen Him from a distance. I'm asking have you met Him. Maybe, as we've been going through this and you compare your own life, you realize, if you're honest with yourself, and it's okay, maybe you're realizing today that you haven't met Him properly yet.

[32 : 15] So what can you do if that's you? What can you do seeing that it's Him who chooses? You don't choose Him. So what do you do if you realize that you haven't met Him yet?

Well, you do what these people did. I'm going to read again. Verse 23, Now Jesus began to go all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom.

And then down to verse 25, large crowds followed Him. You see, He began speaking. He began giving the words of life and truth, and people followed Him. Not all of these people who followed Him actually met Him and were converted and became disciples, but they followed Him because they knew that His words were the way to life.

They knew that there was something special about His words, that they must prioritize listening to this man over all other things. That's what you do. If you realize you haven't met Him yet, you listen until it sticks.

You keep coming back. You keep listening to His word because this is how He calls people. Through His word being preached, through His word being proclaimed, through the gospel message.

[33 : 30] That's how He calls people. When you hear that, one day it'll just drop and it'll stick and it'll change you. And if that hasn't happened yet, keep coming back. Keep listening until it sticks because that is how He chooses people, through His word.

But what if you have met Him and you know you have because you see this as true in your life. You have a similar testimony. Well then, if that's you and you know you've met Jesus, then realize this morning He chose you.

You didn't choose Him. He has chosen for you to meet Him. You only know Him because He chose for you.

What an amazing privilege. What an amazing thing to bow the knee and just to be thankful for every day. Thank you for choosing me. Thank you that I've met you and that you've given me life through no work of my own, through no merit of mine.

Jesus chose you. Praise and thank Him for that, but also realize that He's chosen you for a purpose. That He's chosen you not to carry on living your life that you want for yourself.

[34 : 46] He's chosen you for a mission and that is to help those other people who haven't yet met Him to meet Him. That is why you are here. Those other people here in this church who haven't yet met Him, if you have, you are here to help them to do that.

That's why we're together. So you can get to know them. We can build relationships and you can help others to meet Jesus. That is why you are here if you have met Him, if He's chosen you.

And to help those people outside. Jesus has put you into a particular job with a particular circle of friends and particular opportunities and He's put you there so that you can help those that He chooses to meet Him.

He's going to choose and call people to Himself through you being an unashamed witness of Him. If you have met Him, He has chosen you for a purpose.

Will you live according to that purpose whatever it might cost you? Let's pray. Lord, we thank You that You speak through Your Word and that even through just a little story of meeting the disciples when we stop and we meditate on it and we hear Your voice, You have something to say to us, Lord.

[36 : 12] Lord, I pray for those who realize this morning that they haven't fully met You yet. Lord, I pray that You would help them to see why they need to meet You.

And would You through Your Word be gracious to call them to Yourself like You called these disciples and change them and give them life and hope and a future.

And Lord, I pray for those who have met You. We thank You, Lord, that You have chosen people through no merit of our own. And Lord, we pray that You would help us to realize and to live out the purpose for which You've chosen us.

That You would help us to be ways that other people can meet You. What a great privilege, Lord. Would You make us excited about that? Would You make us want to live for that every day that we would be excited and passionate and pray for people we know that they might meet You and that You would give us the great privilege of being used to catch people for the kingdom.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[37 : 37] Amen. Amen.