

GOSPEL PEARLS

Sifting everything

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When he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen." From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people. His fame spread to all of Syria, and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases and racked with pain, those who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan followed him. (Mt 4, 12-17. 23-25)

For historical reasons the descendants of the Kingdom of Judah were seen by the Israelites as belonging to a land afflicted by the darkness of heresy, in which elements of the original Jewish religion were often joined to the paganism of the local population, giving rise, among other things, to Samaritan worship. The Galileans were seen as suspect by the priests and Pharisees in Jerusalem. Yet the ever-surprising designs of God the Father had planned that His Son would begin the preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven right in that land historically despised as being inhabited by infidels. Let us go beyond human prejudices in order to behave as Saint Paul suggests, not quenching the

Spirit within us and not despising prophecies, in order to sift everything and hold on to what is good (1 Thess 5:19-21).