

Message #4
“Fishers Of Men”
Mark 1:14-20 (Luke 5:1-11)

Introduction

I have a favorite fishing hole. I've always had a favorite fishing hole. Even when I've moved around for various reasons I quickly find a place where I can fish and enjoy it. I love fishing. It was something I did with my father growing up. We had a slew of poles and we would spend all day fishing. Even today I still love to fish. I love taking my pole, my tackle box, and making my way down river about ten minutes from where I live.

Fishing for me is something I enjoy and it is an escape for me, a hobby. It is peaceful, relaxing, and something that allows me to forget about everything else for a few hours and just do something I both love and something that has a lot of great memories for me. I enjoy fishing.

I will pack up a cooler with some food and a soda and head out. I prefer to do it either early in the morning or towards nightfall. I just fish. I'm not an expert. I do not have 30 different types of tackle, lures, or special equipment. It is a simple challenge and if I catch a couple great it not that's OK as well.

For most of you whether you are crazy about fishing or have never fished you probably have a similar picture in your head about what fishing is. The image of Andy Griffith

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with Opie walking to and from. It is a peaceful and easy hobby. It is fun to see little kids expressions when they catch that first fish and even funnier watching an adult learn how to fish that has never done it before. There is a humble innocence when it comes to fishing. But that has not always been the case.

Let me share with you two sections of scripture that describe Jesus and the Four Fisherman known as Andrew, Simon, James, and John.

Mark 1:14-20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

Luke 5:1-11

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon

answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Today as we continue our study of the gospel of Mark we now come to Jesus calling His first disciples. Before we get into the sermon let me share a few things about what is going on in the text that need to be pointed out.

First let's talk about Fish!

Peter, Andrew, James, and John were all fisherman and were two pairs of brothers. These men worked on what is often called in scripture the Sea of Galilee. The truth is it is just a big lake. It is twelve miles long and seven miles wide. It is surrounded by hills on both sides that reach 1,000 feet. This lake has a lot of fish.

In this area of Northern Israel fishing was one of the three main industries the other two were agriculture and shepherding. Fisherman on this lake made good money. Fishing was a big symbol to the Israelites at this time. In fact so important that even one of the

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gates of Solomon's Temple was called Fish Gate. Not just that but the symbol of a fish is synonymous with Christianity for the past two thousand years. Have you ever seen the Jesus fish? Perhaps you have seen it on the bumper of a car? The Greek word for fish is Ichthys. It is actually an acronym that stands for Jesus Christ God Son Savior. The early church would use the sign of the Ichthys as a password to worship services in the catacombs of Rome in the first century. Christian theology is summed up with this symbol.

If the greatest symbol of Christianity is the cross the second greatest symbol of Christianity for the past two thousand years would be the fish, in fact the fish was more popular as the symbol of Christianity then the cross was.

We also need to remember this: A lot of people take this section of Scripture, preach and teach that this is the first time Jesus ever encounters or meets these four brothers. This could not be farther from the truth. Remember verse 14 of Mark 1: Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Mark gives us chronological time markers throughout his gospel. That phrase Now after John was arrested is a time marker. Between verses 1-13 and the verses 16-20 about one year has passed by. These four men have already spent nine months out of the past year traveling with Jesus. These men were already following John the Baptist. They saw

Jesus baptized. They followed and watched Jesus cleanse the temple. They were with Jesus in Samaria when Jesus talked to the woman at the well. They had already witnessed the healings in Judea and witnessed the transformation of turning water into wine. These men have already been following Jesus and have already seen a lot. What are they doing here fishing?

Well first off Jesus isn't a jerk! Jesus knew these men were married and had families to support. For nine months they followed Jesus everywhere, not making any money. The past three months Jesus went home to Nazareth to preach and teach alone and the fisherman went home to fish.

With all that being said, let's look at our text and I want to share four observations of what it means when Jesus says to these men and to us to be 'fishers of men'. Four observations that we do not associate with fishing today.

Observation #1

Biblical Fishing requires Nets not A Pole

These men are professional fisherman and earn their living from it. They had to be serious about fishing and they used large nets. In fact three different types of nets are mentioned in our text. As Jesus approaches them they are cleaning out their nets. The net that Peter and Andrew are cleaning is known as a weight net. It had weights on all sides. When they were out to water they would throw the net over the side and the net

would sink to the bottom. Whatever was underneath the net became trapped. The net would then raise up and close; and whatever is in the net was caught. After fishing all night, these two brothers along with the rest of the crew were cleaning out the nets before they headed home. They had been out all night and had not caught a thing. Even though they had not caught a thing these nets were needed to catch a lot of fish and sometimes they worked.

Observation #2

Biblical Fishing Requires A Boat In Dangerous Waters Not Standing On the Safe Shore

Jesus was on the boat and used the boat as a stage as he preached to the gathering crowd. While Peter and Andrew are cleaning their nets, Jesus is preaching. After Jesus is done preaching He tells Peter to push off the shore a short distance and to let down their nets.

Remember this is not a fishing vacation for them. They had nine months of work to do in three months. These were large boats with large nets and this was their livelihood. Jesus, this landlubber, does not know that the late morning was a bad time to fish and that the best fishing occurred on the shore not out in the lake. If only Jesus knew this.

But Peter replies, Yes Master because you say so. Peter has known Jesus for a year. He has seen Jesus in action. He trusts Jesus even though he doesn't understand Jesus. After a few moments a smile comes across Peter's face. His muscles are flexing and his eyes

are bulging. The number of fish they catch is so large that the nets begin to tear and the boats begin to sink. Peter goes from doubtful to happy and to happy to worried. Peter's hands are full. If he lets go he loses the fish. He can't even wave for help. What does his crew do?

Observation #3

Biblical Fishing Is A Team Effort Not Something Done Alone

Quickly the 2nd team of fishing boats leave shore to go help Peter & Co. This boat is ran by James and John, the sons of Thunder. I'm sure the whole time they were on their way they were thinking, Peter, you idiot! The text says that as the boat approaches m, the fish spill over into the other boat. They had pulled up on the other side of the net so the net is now between the two boats. But now with so many fish both boats begin to sink.

This catch required a team effort.

On a side note talk about a blessing! They were shut out the night before and had loss an income of nine months traveling with Jesus. But in one moment, Jesus provides to cover all their bills, costs, salaries, and money left over. The Lord took care of them.

Now if I was a Health and Wealth preacher this would almost be a great text. The Lord blessed Peter and all of them with so much fish that it almost sank two boats. Look at how the Lord wants to bless you.

But here's the problem with that. They had not received any income for nine months. No fish, no money. Also Jesus was getting ready to call them again for a long ministry season. No money to be made during that time. They had families and bills to pay. The other place where this falls short for the Health and Wealth crowd is that a core doctrine of the Prosperity gospel says 'to expect a miracle'. None of them expected this, not even Peter. So this leads me to my 4th observation.

Observation #4

Biblical Fishing Requires Everything – Not A Place To Take A Nap

Remember Peter's response:

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

Peter moves from a place of excitement to now fear. This is not an expected miracle. This miracle moves Peter to fear. You would think Peter would like having Jesus around, he's good for business. But after their boats were steadied, Peter falls on his knees on a pile of slimy fish and says, "Leave me Lord, I am a sinful man"

Peter is thinking properly. The crowd who expected a miracle Jesus never gave one,

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Peter who was not expecting a miracle receives one. The truth is miracles cause us to see the purity and power of Jesus. Christ. Miracles move us not to a place of excitement but to a place of judgment. Peter realizing in a greater way now who Jesus really is, is struck with fear. The crowd is cheering and laughing at what just took place but they were not in the boats that almost sank. Only a professional fisherman can understand the power and majesty of this intimate yet public miracle that just took place. Just as Jesus saw through the waters to the fish Peter realizes this God-man Jesus can see through Peter right to His heart. That's judgment.

Once they dock, the fish were started to be counted, the nets cleaned again. Jesus now ushers the famous call to these four fisherman. He spoke to them in a way they would clearly understand.

And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be fishers of men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

These four fisherman now leave everything to fish for men. Literally to 'collect' men for the kingdom of God. It actually means to 'take lives captive' from behind enemy lines. Peter and Andrew leave the family business. James and John leave their father Zebedee and the family business to follow Christ. It might seem unkind for these 'sons' to leave the family business but this is the nature of discipleship.

Jesus moved into their domain (the fishing world) and proves His power. Now Jesus

calls them into His domain to be empowered to fish for men.

The Kingdom of God continues to advance.

Conclusion

Let me ask us hear this question? What can we learn from these four men?

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen. And lo, there were many fish in the waters all around. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish. And the fish were hungry.

Week after week, month after month, and year after year, these who called themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish, and how they might go about fishing. Year after year they carefully defined what fishing means, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing is always to be a primary task of fishermen.

Continually, they searched for new and better methods of fishing and for new and better definitions of fishing. Further they said, 'the fishing industry exists by fishing as fire exists by burning.? They loved slogans such as "Fishing is the task of every fisherman.?" They sponsored special meetings called "Fishermen's Campaigns?" and 'the Month for

Fishermen to Fish.? They sponsored costly nationwide and world-wide congresses to discuss fishing and to promote fishing and hear about all the ways of fishing such as the new fishing equipment, fish calls, and whether any new bait had been discovered.

These fishermen built large, beautiful buildings called "Fishing Headquarters.? The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish. One thing they didn't do, however: They didn't fish.

In addition to meeting regularly, they organized a board to send out fishermen to other places where there were many fish. The board hired staffs and appointed committees and held many meetings to define fishing, to defend fishing, and to decide what new streams should be thought about. But the staff and committee members did not fish.

Large, elaborate, and expensive training centers were built whose original and primary purpose was to teach fishermen how to fish. Over the years courses were offered on the needs of fish, the nature of fish, where to find fish, the psychological reactions of fish, and how to approach and feed fish. Those who taught had doctorates in fishology, but the teachers did not fish. They only taught fishing. Year after year, after tedious training, many were graduated and were given fishing licenses. They were sent to do full-time fishing, some to distant waters which were filled with fish.

Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded. They were commissioned and sent to fish. But like the fishermen back home, they never fished. Like the fishermen back home,

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they engaged in all kinds of other occupations. They built power plants to pump water for fish and tractors to plow new waterways. They made all kinds of equipment to travel here and there to look at fish hatcheries. Some also said that they wanted to be part of the fishing party, but they felt called to furnish fishing equipment. Others felt their job was to relate to the fish in a good way so the fish would know the difference between good and bad fishermen. Others felt that simply letting the fish know they were nice, land-loving neighbors and how loving and kind they were was enough.

After one stirring meeting on 'the Necessity for Fishing,' one young fellow left the meeting and went fishing. The next day he reported that he had caught two outstanding fish. He was honored for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the big meetings possible to tell how he did it. So he quit his fishing in order to have time to tell about the experience to the other fishermen. He was also placed on the Fishermen's General Board as a person having considerable experience.

Now it's true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish every day. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen's clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen yet never fished. They wondered about those who felt it was of little use to attend the weekly meetings to talk about fishing. After all, were they not following the Master who said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" Imagine how hurt some were when one day a person suggested that those who don't

catch fish were really not fishermen, no matter how much they claimed to be. Yet it did sound correct. Is a person a fisherman if, year after year, he never catches a fish? Is one following if he isn't fishing'

What must our response be to Jesus' call upon our lives for those of us that call him Lord and Savior?

It must be nothing short of this response:

And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.