

Jesus fishing

Text: Mark 1:14-20 for 1/21/2018 by Pastor Bolwerk

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" 16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him. 19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Do you like fishing? We live by one of the largest fresh water lakes in the world. So, it would not surprise me if more than a few of you here today enjoy going fishing. I have to be honest, I'm not much of a fisherman. I just don't have the patience for it. Sitting for hours waiting for something to take the bait, and then having to fight like crazy just to get the fish into the boat or onto shore. It seems like a lot of work for something you are going to eat. Don't get me wrong, I love to eat fish. I just to like to catch them, clean them, or cook them.

Maybe I would enjoy fishing more if the fish just came and jumped into the boat. That would be much easier. But fish don't do that, do they? You can't just call fish and them and have them come to you. Instead, you have to catch the fish. You have to work to make the fish come to you.

As we hear what Jesus was doing by the Sea of Galilee, as recorded by the Gospel writer Mark, we see Jesus doing a little fishing of sorts. So, whether you like fishing, or not, let's join him today in doing that. Let's go do some ...

Theme: Jesus fishing.

- I. Being caught
- II. To go and catch

Just like a fisherman, to get people to come to him Jesus had to "catch" people. Now we might wonder, "Why does Jesus have to 'catch' people at all?" Jesus is the Son of God who has the power to heal people, feed people, and raise people from the dead. You would think that people would be flocking to Jesus. Why does Jesus have to "catch" people? Because, just like fish, by nature we don't want to be caught. We don't want to be caught by God because we want our freedom to sin. God's law says, "Do this" and "Don't do that." God's law tells us to love God perfectly, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Our sinful nature says, "I'm not doing that. No one is going to tell me what to do!" Then, what does our sinful nature do when it hears God? Just like sinful Adam it runs away. Our sinful self runs away from God and into sin. We run into greed, envy, and lust. We run off into pride, anger, and self-pity. We run off into laziness, apathy, worry, or sensuality. We run to anything that makes us feel good, or feel powerful, or feel like we are in control. Then we take those things that make us feel so good and we make them our gods. We find ourselves trusting what makes us feel good instead of trusting in the true God.

That sin separates. That separation is more than just us running away from God. God said through the prophet Isaiah, "**Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you**" (Isaiah 59:2). Sin is so repulsive to God that he doesn't even want to look at it; he turns his face away from sin. That is why sin drives apart God and the

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people of this world. And sinful people have no desire to come to God. Scripture says, **“the sinful mind is hostile to God”** (Romans 8:7). Sinful people only run away from God. Yet this is not what God wants. God created people to be in a relationship with him.

So, how does God reunite those sinful people to himself? How does God recreate the loving relationship that he longs to have with the people of this world? He does that with a promise. God promised a Savior to undo what the sinful people of this world have done. God worked to fix the problem of sin by doing a little “fishing.” God the Father sent his Son into the world to “catch” people for his heavenly kingdom.

So, how does Jesus catch people? Jesus sets out to catch people by proclaiming good news; by speaking about God’s love. Jesus uses his words to bring about a change in people’s hearts. He tells people, **“The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe”** (v. 15). The words of Christ that have the power to turn people away from their sinful desires. Jesus words create the faith people need to trust him as the only Savior from sin. The words Christ proclaims have the power to change the way we think, and the way we live.

Casting his words out to lure us to him, Jesus catches our attention with his unselfish love. His self-sacrificing love is so different from the love of this world that it does catch our attention. Jesus gives up everything that is his as God: heavenly glory, power, honor, and respect. He gives it all up to become like us. He does that so he can share with us everything that is his. Living as our substitute, Jesus catches our sins as he willingly dies to pay for them all. Christ gives up his sinless life to pay for our sinful desire to run away from God. After making a full payment for sins, Jesus catches our souls as he rises in power, shattering death and the power of the devil. Our Lord then covers our sinful shame with his own holiness. Jesus catches us with his love, fills us with faith, covers us with his righteousness, and then reunites us with his own heavenly Father. That is Jesus fishing.

But what if fish went fishing? That sounds silly. That sounds like something you would see in a cartoon. Yet, at one time, we were like fish out in the wild doing everything we could to not be caught by God. Then Christ came along with his life-saving word. He cast that word in our lives, and as he did his Holy Spirit worked at creating a living faith in us. That faith not only trusts Jesus for his forgiveness, that faith takes action. It acts to speak to God. It takes action to hear and listen to God. It acts to worship God. It acts to glorify God. God is truly glorified when his kingdom grows. So as those who have been caught by Jesus maybe it’s time for us to do a little Jesus fishing. Jesus fishing means being caught to go and catch.

To go and catch others for Jesus, to begin with, means we need to be following our Lord by faith. That’s what see happening in this portion of Mark’s Gospel. Jesus went to call Andrew and Peter and James and John, men whom he had already “caught” and brought to faith. **“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men”** (v. 17). What is important to note here is that Jesus says, *“Follow me.”* He does not say “Go run ahead of me,” or “Go wherever you like.” Jesus wants his believers to follow him. That means following him in all aspects of life. We are to follow where he leads, and follow what he teaches. We also want to follow how he cares for souls, which means warning people of sins and forgiving people of sins. To follow Jesus means we need to be watching closely where our Lord goes, noticing what he does, listening carefully to what he says, and obeying what he commands. Our new self wants to follow Jesus, but it is not as easy as it sounds.

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We all wrestle with a sinful nature that can easily become distracted, or be tempted to take our attention off our Lord. For those times when we wander away, or swim off in our own direction, Jesus calls us back to himself with his word. He calls us to repent turning our eyes to his forgiveness, and through his gospel he gives us the strength and ability to keep following him.

As we follow, our new self wants to use Jesus' "fishing" techniques. What techniques did Jesus use that we can also use to "catch" people for his kingdom? It starts with proclaiming the good news about God's kingdom. God the Son came into this world to forgive sins. That means that we need to point out how sin is a problem. A person doesn't know they need a Savior until they understand what they need to be saved from. So, like Jesus, we use God's law to show sin for what it is: it's something that kills a person's soul, something that separates people from God.

Once we have revealed the truth about sin, then we call people to repent. That means we are calling people to change their minds about sin, helping them see how deadly sin is. We also call people to change their minds about God, showing them that God is not the enemy, he is the one working to save us. We point out to them how our loving God is doing everything for the good of people's souls. That means speaking about the salvation that Jesus won for this world. We want to share with others how Christ paid for all sins, opening the doors to heaven. Share with people the promises of God that are theirs in Christ. The promises of forgiveness, peace with God, a new life now, and an eternal life to come. As Jesus' followers, do a little Jesus fishing to go and catch others for God's kingdom.

I'll probably never be much of a fisherman. But whether you love fishing, or not, take some time this week to do a little Jesus fishing. Place the lure of Christ's saving gospel before someone who is still running away from God. Share with them the good news of the Savior who caught you with his love. Share with people Jesus, the one who caught you so that you can enjoy peace with God now, and so you can look forward to his eternal peace in heaven. Amen.