

Jesus fishing

Text: Mark 1:14-20 for 1/24/2021 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.

We live by one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world. So, it would not surprise me if more than a few of you here today enjoy doing some fishing. I'll 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 don't like to catch them, clean them, or cook them.

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

The Gospel writer Mark recorded for us what Jesus was doing one day by the Sea of Galilee. In Mark's words we see Jesus doing what we could call a little "fishing." 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. 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 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 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!" So when our sinful nature hears what God commands, 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 to 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 good and we make them our gods. God calls us to trust him, but instead we find ourselves trusting the sins that makes us feel good.

Jesus fishing

Text: Mark 1:14-20 for 1/24/2021 by Pastor Bolwerk

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 disgusting to God that he doesn’t even want to look at it; he turns his face away from sin. And to make matters worse, sinful people have no desire to come to God. Scripture says, **“the sinful mind is hostile to God”** (Romans 8:7). The sinful mind sees God as the enemy. So, sinful people 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 he longs to have with the people of this world? He does that with a promise. God promised a Savior to undo the sin the people of this world have committed. 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? To catch a fish you need some kind of bait. Jesus sets out to catch people by using his words as “bait;” by proclaiming the good news of 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). These words of Christ 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 us, 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. Christ’s self-sacrificing love is so different from the love of this world that it does get 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 this so he can share with us everything that is his. Living as our substitute, Jesus “catches” our sins as he willingly goes to the cross to pay for them all. As Jesus hung on that cross God the Father did something surprising: Instead of turning his face away from us, he turned his face away from his own Son. The Father abandoned his Son to hell as Jesus suffered for our sins. 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, being caught by Jesus and brought into faith.

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 Jesus came along with his life-saving word. He cast that word in our lives, and as he did his Holy Spirit created a living faith in us. That faith not only trusts Jesus for his forgiveness, but our faith also takes action. It acts to speak

Jesus fishing

Text: Mark 1:14-20 for 1/24/2021 by Pastor Bolwerk

to God in prayer. It takes action to hear and listen to God. Our faith acts to worship God. It works 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.

Now if we are going to go and catch others for Jesus, that 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. We are to follow what he teaches. We also want to follow how he cares for souls. That means warning people about the dangers of their sins and forgiving people of their sins. To follow Jesus means we want to be watching closely where our Lord goes, noticing what he does, listening carefully to what he is saying, and obeying what he commands. Our new self wants to follow Jesus, but it is not as easy as it sounds.

We all wrestle with a sinful nature that can easily become distracted or be tempted to take our attention off of 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. Then, through his gospel, he gives us the strength and ability to keep following him.

As we follow Jesus, our new self wants to use his "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 to people 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 and his love.

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 turn away from the sins that are killing them. We also call people to change their minds about God, showing them that God is not the enemy. God is the one working to save us eternally. We help people see how our loving God is doing everything for the good of their souls. "Jesus fishing" means speaking about the salvation that Jesus won for this world. We want to share with others how Christ paid for all sins, even their sins. We can give people hope, letting them know that there is more to life than just this world. Because of Jesus, the doors to heaven stand wide open, and there is a place in that perfect paradise that Jesus has prepared for us and them. Share with people those precious promises of God that are theirs in Christ. The promises of forgiveness, peace with God, a new life now, and an

Jesus fishing

Text: Mark 1:14-20 for 1/24/2021 by Pastor Bolwerk

eternal life to come. As Jesus' followers, let's do a little Jesus fishing. Let us 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.