

“Gone Fishing” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Epiphany 5 February 9, 2025

- I. **Luke 5:10** – And Jesus said to Simon [Peter], “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”
- II. **Why do fishermen love to go fishing?**
 - a. As a young kid, I grew up fishing all over my town and the surrounding area.
 - i. I learned to fish from a neighbor who lived behind our house, and her name was Grace.
 - ii. She was well into her eighties, but she would fish almost every day right out her back yard.
 - iii. It didn’t take long before I was catching rainbows, brookies, and brown trout most days of the summer.
 - b. What drew me to go fishing all the time?
 - i. I wanted to catch the big one... the world record!
 - ii. It was kind of like the gold miners that work tirelessly to find the motherlode, getting up every morning with a sense of hope.
 - iii. Every fishing trip always starts with an air of excitement...
 1. Will I finally catch the big one today?
 2. Maybe I will catch so many fish I will get bored...
 3. I can imagine a stringer full of fish for dinner.
 - c. Even commercial fisherman cast out their nets with an air of hope and excitement.
 - i. Did we pick the right spot to get a bunch of fish?
 - ii. I can’t wait to see if the nets are full.
 - d. For fishermen, one of the worst feelings is to spend a bunch of time, money, and energy to go fishing and never get a single bite... or pull the nets out and get nothing.
 - i. I used to call that “getting skunked” – and I guess we said that because it stinks when you don’t catch any fish.
 - ii. You see, we go fishing to catch fish... and the bigger and the more we catch, the better!
- III. **Jesus tells Peter that he will be fishing for men from now on.**
 - a. Peter, the commercial fisherman, was going to stop casting his nets for fish in the Sea of Galilee and begin casting a different kind of net... for human beings.
 - b. Now, I want you to stop and consider how that makes you feel, because Jesus is talking to you too.
 - i. He calls on all His followers to cast out the net of the Gospel and fish for people.
 - ii. For some reason that doesn’t have the same air of hope and excitement to it as we head out the door for a fishing excursion.

- iii. For some reason that feels a little like a job we are required to do that isn't exciting at all... maybe scary more than anything else.
 - c. From our earliest days of learning about the Bible... maybe in Sunday School... this lesson was taught to us – just like I did for our Lamb's Lesson this morning.
 - i. We are told that Jesus calls on us to share the Gospel with others, and the Good News of salvation through Him is like a net catching people and bringing them to faith.
 - ii. As a child, it never crosses our mind that it's scary to talk about Jesus... or to tell the story that Jesus died and rose again to wash away our sins.
 - iii. As an adult, we consider all the factors about what the other person might say... what will they do... and we decide not to throw our nets out because we are afraid.
 - d. Rather than an excitement to see what the Gospel will catch today, we feel obligated and under compulsion because Pastor Jim reminded us that Jesus tells us to fish for people.
 - i. Isn't that for Christians with the gift of evangelism or something?
 - ii. Don't pastors do that?
 - iii. I don't even have the right equipment... I don't know the Bible that well, and I'm not that great at talking to people.
 - iv. People don't want to be bothered with religion stuff... that's my own personal beliefs that should be kept personal.
 - e. Again, we come up with lots of reasons why casting the net of the Gospel is a chore... an obligation... or scary.
 - i. Sharing the Good News becomes a "have to" rather than a "get to".

IV. **The Gospel lesson transforms our thinking about fishing for people.**

- a. Jesus is preaching and teaching the powerful Word – that I talked about last week – The Word of God is able to do great things.
- b. It gets so crowded on the shore with people that He goes out on Peter's boat to get some distance for preaching.
- c. Somewhere along the line, Peter heard the Word and he came to belief... and hearing the Word and believing is more than just in the mind... because it leads to acting or doing what God wants.
- d. So, Jesus tells Peter to go into deep water and cast the nets – even though Peter knows that deep water would have no fish... and they were skunked after a whole night of trying!
 - i. Yet, the net came back so full it took other boats to bring in the catch.
- e. There Peter realized, I am in the presence of the Messiah... woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips... and I have seen the Lord of Hosts! (Isa. 6:5)
 - i. Jesus' response? Don't be afraid, from now on you will be catching people.

- f. On that beach beside the Sea of Galilee, Peter realized that he was in the presence of the Messiah... and instead of falling over dead because he was an unworthy sinner, Jesus called on Peter to follow Him.
 - i. None are worthy to be called Christian, but we are all sinners saved by grace.
 - ii. The grace of God, the Good News is that Jesus stands before us in our sinful condition and pays for our sins with His blood.
 - iii. In suffering and death, Jesus chose to take your sins that make you unworthy to be in God's presence... and forgive you.
 - iv. Just as Peter realized he was in the presence of no ordinary man... but in the presence of God... we realize that the God of the universe... the Lord of Hosts has called us into a relationship with Him that will never end.

- V. **When we hear and believe the Gospel proclamation**, we are not the same.
 - a. A transformation occurs in us that gives us the power to trust God with our whole being and all our actions in life.
 - b. Back in the Old Testament when God tells His people to "Hear, O Israel", the call to hear meant to believe *and do*... to trust *and obey*.
 - c. When Peter came to faith in Jesus, and then he was told to cast his nets without a chance of catching anything... Peter trusted and obeyed.
 - i. From that point on, when Jesus told Peter to do something that seemed silly or impossible, do you think he rolled his eyes and said, "that's dumb Jesus!" Or... do you think he had hope and an air of excitement that something big was about to happen?
 - d. Martin Luther once wrote about this passage and said that the sea is the world, the fish are people, the net is the Gospel, and the boat is the church.
 - i. The sharing of the Gospel, or witnessing about Christ, is just like casting a net... and by God's hand, we pull it back into the boat... or the church.
 - ii. By the way, do you know where you are sitting in the pews?
 - 1. The area you occupy is called the nave, which is Latin for boat or ship... and if you look up you can see that our sanctuary looks like a ship that's been flipped over...
 - 2. Praise God that someone casted the net of the Gospel to you and you were pulled into the rescue boat of our church!
 - e. Casting the net of the Gospel does not have to be scary or feel like we are under compulsion... it is a wonderful privilege that does carry an air of hope and excitement every time we go into the world.
 - i. We pray for courage and the willingness to step into whatever situation God provides, and let God do the rest.
 - ii. Maybe just a simple invitation to come to church... or get in the boat is all a person needs to be "caught".

- f. As you leave here today, don't feel guilty or obligated, feel blessed that Jesus wants to fish with you...
 - i. Perhaps we will get a sign on the outside of our church door as everyone departs that says, "Gone Fishing".
- g. Trust the Lord and cast your nets, for the Lord wants the boat to be full.