

Being Caught and Goin' Fishin'

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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January 25-26, 2020

Matthew 4:12-23

God's power comes in being relational. There are two parts – Jesus calls us to follow. Then Jesus sends us out to be fishing for men, women and children.

¹²Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. ¹³He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵“Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the
Gentiles—

¹⁶the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned.”

¹⁷From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

¹⁸As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

²³Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and

proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

God's grace and peace be with you all this day as God's Spirit, the Christ are with us now. Amen

I watched her do some fishing with the young boy sitting on the piano bench apart from the group. It was evening Vacation Bible school and the young camp counselors had the kids in hysterics. Yet there he was sitting all by himself. "Will you come and join us Billy? She said. The other kids are having fun."

"No. This is serious business. I can't have fun."

"Who told you, you can't have fun?"

"This is church. This is serious business."

"Yes and the kids are learning about Jesus. They're just playing some silly games. I bet you'd like it."

"Nope. I'm sitting right here." He hadn't taken the bait yet.

She cast out the line again. "You know there are many ways to learn about God and it's ok to have a good time doing it."

It took multiple casts to entice Billy off that piano bench, but by dinner time, he was hook, line and sinker into learning about Jesus while having fun.

Somehow young Billy had it in his head to be wary of the power of the institutions – even of Church! Church meant no fun, no fun, no fun. And to his credit, he was partly right.

Because in this text something fishy is going on here! When Jesus hears his cousin John has been imprisoned, He withdraws from Nazareth to a sea side town of Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The Greek word used for his 'withdrawal' is not like at all like the withdrawal or retreat I experienced of this last week. It is a word that connotes 'fleeing for one's life' such like Mary and Joseph escaped with young Jesus fearing the wrath of Herod's command to kill all the young children.

What did it feel like for our Lord to be scared for his life? The institution of the Empire was cracking down. Jesus knew it was serious business. Ruthless in its attempt to squash any individuals or groups that might challenge Rome's authority, John is thrown in prison where he cannot preach and his disciples cannot follow. Jesus knows the powers He is up against and He flees for his life to another region that is more desolate and isolated.

He certainly was fully aware of the power that comes with all things empire: laws, enforcement, rules, imprisonment, and death for criminals. Yet...Jesus was also fully aware of the power of God present in humanity and relationships.

Therefore...Jesus doesn't stop his ministry. He begins to preach in that place, creating connections, walking and talking with people.

Around the Sea of Galilee of course there were fishermen. And on this day, Jesus sees Andrew and his brother Simon Peter. Curious isn't it what Jesus says to them?

“Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.” (The Message Bible. Eugene Peterson. NavPress Publishing Group. Colorado Springs, CO. 1995. Pg 13)

Jesus has a two part promise for these brothers who've been used to a daily life of sun and waves, nets and slippery fins.

“Come with me! I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. Herein lies a promise that if you'll step off the sidelines with me, allow me to catch you, I will change you. You'll have a relationship with me that will change your life.”

“Secondly, then...I'll show you how to do the same thing with other men and women also.”

God always works in relationship. God is relationship in God's very being; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. That relational aspect of God doesn't end when Jesus comes to earth. Jesus invites us to know Him, to walk with Him, to listen to Him, to come near Him. We are changed within a relationship with God. Once Jesus starts fishing around in our hearts, there is no going back. We get caught! We're caught in love and grace.

Give me an amen if you agree! We read our Bibles and hear God's whisper in our hearts. We worship and feel a sense of peace and it only makes us want to worship

more. We go about our days and someone enters our minds and we recognize it as prompting of God to pray for that person...even if we don't know what's happening with them. We feel the power of kindness and humility as we serve others. This God life is a relational life and wow the net of God's power that comes as we allow ourselves to be caught in Jesus' net! God is so good. God is so so good!

Secondly, God's kingdom also relies on the fact that changed people ...change people. The woman who was inviting Billy to enter into the fun, had a mother who told her the stories of Jesus. She herself had experienced God's love and as an adult grew to be a Sunday school leader teaching others about God's love. We know that a relationship with Jesus doesn't dead end there. Jesus invite is a two part promise – I'm going to send you fishing!

Jesus calls us, compels us, commands us to then go and tell others about having a relationship with Jesus. Once we've been caught by The Fisher God, we go and Fish for others. We go and tell. God calls us to keep making relationships. We invite them into the net of love. We serve and pray and walk alongside.

The irony and the tension in this text between Empire institutional power and God's human relational power is not to be underestimated. Remember how Germans went against Hitler and hid Jews for safe keeping in their homes? Remember how the Underground Railroad in the South, ushered escaped slaves to freedom undermining the US Confederacy? Faithful Quakers and Harriet Tubman led these efforts. These kinds of human uprisings have happened for centuries and continue to happen today!

Jesus is beginning a movement of people that will grow and give rise to new life for those living under oppression. It begins with Andrew and Peter, James and John. Then more and more disciples, men and women will join as they see Jesus' miracles, as they feel His power, as they experience His love.

Think for a moment about your experiences begin fished for by God through other people. Who got you to be sitting in your chair in church today? Was it a mother? Grandfather? Youth worker? Sunday school teacher? Grandma? Whisper their name and then take a moment and give prayerful thanks for that person. (Quiet prayer)

Now, here's the part two! Ponder for a moment, who have you told about Jesus or God? Who have you thrown the net out to in Jesus' name? Maybe it was someone

in your family. Perhaps it was a kind act for a stranger. Who might you like to talk to about God? Who might you like to partner with? Whisper their names out loud or in your heart. Pray silently about that for just a moment.

There was a pastor who wanted to hold some meetings in a local coffee shop. But first he thought he'd make friends with the owner. So he went their multiple times to buy coffee. He and the owner discovered they had things in common. The pastor and his son attended the shop's celebration picnic and were invited over to sit with the owner and his wife. They had great fun together.

After a relationship was cemented, the pastor asked if he might hold some community meetings at the coffee shop about how the church might be of help to the town. The owner happily replied "Yes, I had no idea churches were interested in things like this!"

Think about how many times that net was cast before the show owner caught the pastor's vision. Think about the pastor's certainty of his own relationship with God grounded in love for neighbor which allowed him to go fishing.

Then the coffee store owner was caught. "I had no idea churches were interested in our town's people!" From relational fun, came serious business for the people of God.

Let's get caught. Let's go fishin'!
Amen.