

Fishing for People

I like to fish (childhood); but wouldn't say I'm a fisherman (never caught much). Today, story about fishing; really, discipleship. Finds guys, like to fish, real fishermen; calls first disciples. New career; more: new calling, to fish, not for fish but people. Today they fish for fish; blessed with success; boats begin to sink. But lesson not about fishing for fish; today Jesus shows what it means to go fishing for people.



Starts with Jesus fishing for people. **Vs. 1-3.** Fishing, not for fish but people. Teaching. So many people, turned boat into pulpit, beach into amphitheatre. I was there. Voice reflects off water. Boat, pulpit; taught people. What he came to do! **4:43** – **“I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”** Sent to go fishing for people, to teach God's word, because teachings of Jesus catch people. Jesus catches people.

When catch fish: cooler, fish fry; doesn't end well. When Jesus catches people, pulls them out of dangerous waters. When catches, he brings to faith, opens eyes to see Savior, reorients lives – see themselves as dearly loved children, sins separated, by sacrificial love brought into peaceful relationship with Lord. When catches, brings out of dangerous waters (unbelief, sin, hopelessness, despair) safely into boat. What happens when Jesus catches people. First lesson: **“Faith comes from hearing...word about Christ” (Rom 10:17).** Gospel message about Christ (life, death, res, daily presence, forgiveness, gift of eternal life): this is what creates faith, changes hearts and lives, brings fish safely into boat.

Ancient Christians of 1st/2nd centuries saw ship as symbol for church. Persecutions; cross dangerous; ship became symbol for church. God's church, tossed by storms of life, one captain (Jesus), one destination (shores of heaven). Even when sails trimmed, mast and beam form cross. Bible lessons: Noah's ark during flood; Jesus calming storm; here, fishing for people, safe in boat/church. Even in Christian architecture, in physical church building, place of worship called “nave” (Latin, *navis*, “ship” – our “nautical”). Nave is ship. See in ceiling: keel and supports. Really at First, LG. Idea: in church, boat, safe. Teachings of Jesus bring you safely into boat. **“Faith comes...the word about Christ.”** Here, we see Jesus sharing word about Christ, casting net of gospel into sea of humanity, bringing many fish into boat, believers into church. What he's done for you! Caught you, taught you, brought you to faith, pulled you out of dangerous waters into safety of Christian church, where continues to teach, strengthen, protect you on voyage to heaven. As Christian, safe with Jesus in boat. Jesus fished for you; fishes for people.

Wants boat full! Came to seek/save lost (Lk 19:10), fill church with believers. Wants boat full. To illustrate that, performs miracle: **vs. 4b-7.** Pro fishermen skunked night before. Now so full of fish, water about to crest over hull of boat. Unmistakable miracle!

Peter realized that. **Vs. 8b.** Happens when faced with reality that huge chasm between Jesus' holiness and our sinfulness. Jesus, holy God, demands perfection, judges evil. We are sinful people, break commands, deserve punishment. Understanding that ought to fill us with fear, make us realize that we don't deserve Jesus, his teaching, forgiveness, to be in boat.

But Jesus wants boat full; so says **vs. 10b**. See: miracle also metaphor for something bigger, greater. At command of Jesus, fishermen cast net, caught fish, filled boat. In same way, at command of Jesus, same fishermen would cast net (gospel), catch fish (believers), fill boat (church). So with this miracle, this metaphor, Jesus calls first disciples to share in work of fishing for people.

Vs. 10b. KJV & old NIV: “catch men;” “fishers of men.” But disciples are both male and female, so we “fish for people.” Not just for apostles, pastors, but all Christians. If Jesus calls us to faith, then to discipleship, then to fish for people: share gospel, invite people to church, evangelize community, witness for Jesus, give reason for hope we have – fill the boat. That’s where Jesus takes us with this lesson. Started with Jesus teaching, fishing for people; realize: caught us. Then miraculous catch – Jesus really saying, “Here’s what evangelism looks like; how we fill the boat.” Then the call: follow me; let’s go fishing for people.

So I like to fish. I guess I am a fisherman. May not be good at fishing for fish. But Jesus has called me to fish for people. Called you, too, in your own life, in your corner of lake. So take up the call, cast the net, catch the fish, fill the boat – go fishing for people.

Luke 5:1-11 (NIV 2011)

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ²He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” ⁵Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

⁶When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” ⁹For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” ¹¹So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.