

# "Fishers of Men" Series

## Introductory Sermon

### "They Were Fishers" -

### Mark 1:16-20

Paul Harvey once said, speaking of the church's focus: "We've drifted away from being fishers of men to being keepers of the aquarium."

We're content to keep the status quo; we're comfortable where we are with what we have all too often. Jesus had something else in mind for His followers.

#### Why did Jesus call fisherman first?

The calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John as the first disciples **was not accidental**. Jesus' decision to begin His disciple-making mission with fishermen **was intentional, symbolic, and foundational**.

In both **Matthew 4 and Mark 1**, the sequence is clear: Jesus **proclaims** the coming of the Kingdom and then **immediately calls fishermen**. Why? Because fishermen represent the **type of disciple** Jesus is forming - **hard-working, patient, persistent, and always ready to cast the net**.

This sets a precedent. While not all of Jesus' disciples were fishermen by trade, the calling to 'fish for men' **becomes the model for all who would follow Jesus**.

The metaphor of fishing continues **throughout the Gospels** and even reappears after the resurrection in John 21 to **reaffirm Peter's call**. Jesus doesn't drop the imagery—He deepens it.

The **Great Commission** universalizes the call. Jesus **began with fishermen** because their way of life reflected

the heart of evangelism: **daily, gritty, faithful labor for the sake of others.** That call is still ours today.

The **book of Acts** shows the **pattern expanded**. The fisherman-disciples become **apostolic leaders** who evangelize in Jerusalem, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). **Ordinary believers** begin to share the gospel everywhere they go, not just the apostles. This matters because the fisherman model of evangelistic, disciple-making **becomes the norm**, not the exception, **for all believers**.

Acts 1:8

<sup>8</sup> But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 8:4

<sup>4</sup> Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

Paul picks up similar metaphors in his letters, using **agriculture** as a dominant application to personal evangelism. He also encourages believers to follow him as He followed Christ, showing that what Jesus did and taught, he did and taught, including being a fisher of men.

1 Corinthians 3:6

<sup>6</sup> I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

1 Corinthians 11:1

<sup>1</sup> Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

To follow Jesus is to fish for people. It's not a hobby or a sport – it should be a way of life.

Jesus didn't use "fishing for men" as a metaphor just because it sounded good. He used it because it reflected the life His disciples already lived and one they would instantly understand and how it applied. It was a daily, difficult, humble, team-oriented work ethic that they

would need in the years to come.

Evangelism is not an event – it's a lifestyle. It's not about instant results – it's about faithful, consistent labor.

## I. FISHING WAS A WAY OF LIFE – IT WAS A DAILY ACTIVITY

### A. Fishermen in Galilee didn't fish for sport.

They weren't weekend anglers. They were **daily laborers** – fishing was their livelihood.

### B. If they didn't fish that day, they might not eat that day.

Although there were ways to preserve their catch to sell at the marketplace (primarily by salting it heavily or sun-drying it, or both), if they had a bad day or didn't sell their fish that day, they wouldn't be able to buy bread, oil, or other staples. It was a **hand-to-mouth way of life**.

### C. When Jesus said, "I will make you to become fishers of men," they understood:

This calling to follow Jesus wasn't going to be a temporary or seasonal thing but a daily, continual, necessary work.

We often treat evangelism as a once-in-a-while opportunity. But in Jesus' mind, it's a way of life. It's how we live, speak, and move – **every day**.

Luke 9:23-26

<sup>23</sup> And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. <sup>25</sup> For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? <sup>26</sup> For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall

come in his own glory, and *in his* Father's, and of the holy angels.

## II. FISHING WAS HARD WORK

### A. Fishing on the Sea of Galilee meant:

1. Early mornings, long nights, heavy nets, sore backs, and chapped hands

Luke 5:2

<sup>2</sup> And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing *their* nets.

2. Rowing through storms and sweating through stillness

3. Working hard all night and sometimes catching nothing

Luke 5:5

<sup>5</sup> And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

### B. Jesus wasn't calling them into something easier - He was calling them into something even harder, but infinitely more meaningful.

Reaching the lost for Christ is not an easy job. It's tiring, sometimes controversial, and quite unpredictable but it is exactly the kind of work Jesus is shaping us for.

"You can't always fish from the shore. Discipleship often times means getting in the boat and staying in the water." (anonymous)

### Supporting Scripture:

### Ecclesiastes 9:10

<sup>10</sup> Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

### 1 Corinthians 9:22-27

<sup>22</sup> To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. <sup>23</sup> And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with *you*. <sup>24</sup> Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. <sup>25</sup> And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. <sup>26</sup> I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: <sup>27</sup> But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

## III. FISHING REQUIRED PATIENCE, SKILL, AND ADAPTABILITY

The Sea of Galilee (also called Lake Gennesaret or Lake Tiberias) was approximately 13 miles long and 8 miles wide, with depths reaching about 140-150 feet. This freshwater lake was remarkably fertile, supporting at least 18 species of fish. The fishing industry formed the economic backbone of numerous settlements around its shores, including Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Magdala.

The climate and geography created specific fishing conditions. Sudden storms could arise (as mentioned in Mark 4:37-39), making fishing not only difficult but potentially dangerous. Fishermen needed intimate knowledge of weather patterns, seasonal fish movements, and the lake's underwater topography.

**A. You couldn't just throw a net anywhere and expect a catch.**

1. Fishermen studied the water. They knew fish behavior. They had to learn timing - **when to cast, where to wait, when to move.**

In John 21:6, Jesus told the disciples to cast the net on the right side of the boat. When they obeyed, they caught a bounty of fish. Timing and obedience mattered.

John 21:6

<sup>6</sup> And he said unto them, **Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.** They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

2. And even then, success wasn't guaranteed - but **they kept fishing because that's what fishermen do.**

#### **B. Evangelism isn't "one-size-fits-all."**

It requires **discernment, timing, prayer, and wisdom.**

Just like fish, people don't always respond right away. But that doesn't mean we stop casting.

"Jesus isn't calling us to be flashy - just faithful."  
(anonymous)

### **IV. FISHING WAS A TEAM EFFORT**

#### **A. Peter didn't fish alone. James and John worked with their father and hired servants (Mark 1:20).**

Mark 1:20

<sup>20</sup> And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

#### **B. Net fishing, as it was done then, demanded**

## coordination and cooperation.

Luke 5:7

<sup>7</sup> And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

**No one man** could haul the net, clean the fish, patch the gear, and row the boat all by himself.

**And no one man** can do all that needs done today when it comes to fishing for men. It's not the pastor's job or the evangelist's job or the missionary's job to do it all - it takes all of us to reach the lost.

Evangelism is not a solo project. It's **the work of the Body of Christ**. One person prays. Another invites. Another goes. Another disciples.

We all have a part to play in the catch. We cast the net together - Jesus does the filling.

## Supporting Scripture showing this team effort in evangelizing the lost:

1 Corinthians 3:6, 9

<sup>6</sup> I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase... <sup>9</sup> For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye *are* God's building.

Acts 13:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup> As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. <sup>3</sup> And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

## Acts 18:24-28

<sup>24</sup> And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. <sup>25</sup> This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. <sup>26</sup> And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. <sup>27</sup> And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: <sup>28</sup> For he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

### V. FISHING MEANT LETTING GO OF WHAT WAS CAUGHT

#### A. Fish were caught to feed people - not to be trophies.

Fishermen didn't keep fish for themselves. They sold them, gave them, shared them.

#### B. Evangelizing the lost isn't about building our own following, our own "kingdom," if you will.

It's about leading people to Christ and watching Him transform them. **It's about building His kingdom.**

#### C. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every king..." (Matt. 13:47)

**The sorting isn't ours to do - we simply cast the net.**

The people we reach aren't notches on our belt. They're souls to love, to disciple, and to release into



| their God-given calling.

Conclusion: So, when Jesus called these men to follow Him and said He would make them “fishers of men,” He wasn’t being poetic – He was being **intensely practical**.

He was saying:

| “You already know what it means to work hard, wait long, clean nets, and try again. You already live a life of daily, necessary, exhausting work—and now I’m calling you to do the same thing, but for people’s souls.”

He called fishermen because **fishermen already knew how to live like evangelists**.

We might consider a prayer something like this:

| “Lord, teach me the life of a fisherman. Make me steady in my labor, patient in my casting, wise in my timing, and humble in my teamwork. Help me live a life that reaches others – not with pressure, but with faithfulness. Make me a fisher of men.”