

Cast Your Nets

Luke 5:1-11

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The first rule of fishing is that you can't catch anything if your line isn't in the water. That is why my brother Aaron always brought his fishing pole even when we were supposed to be canoeing. He never caught anything, but he always had the line trailing behind the canoe just in case.

Similarly, the first rule of evangelism is to preach the word. It might not seem like a very good chance. It might not seem like the fish are biting. If you aren't sharing the word, there is no chance.

Jesus tells us to cast our nets that is to preach the word. In this day and age, it might seem as though throwing out God's word isn't going to catch anything, but in our account this morning God encourages us to trust his promise and cast the word anyway. After all, if your line isn't in the water you have no chance of catching anything.

Verse 1-3

So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, ² and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing *their* nets. ³ Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

Matthew begins his account of the miraculous catch of fish with a quote from Isaiah 9:2

Isa 9:2 The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

Jesus comes preaching the light of his word in the darkness of Galilee, and the people are so eager for that light they press about him on every side. Jesus reminds his disciples in the gospel of John.

John 4:35 ³⁵ "Do you not say, `There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest '? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!

The people are eager to hear the word. Jesus is eager to preach it. They are like sheep without a shepherd. They are lost and without hope. As we learned last week Jesus came down from heaven to proclaim freedom to the captives and liberty to the oppressed.

Nothing has changed since Jesus' day. The fields are still white with harvest. The people live in darkness and despair. They both desire and need the hope and forgiveness which God's word has to give. All around us are people lost and confused and looking for hope.

In the sixties, many people were convinced that we could find hope and happiness by doing away with the establishment and all authority, but it hasn't made a better world. Crime and violence have only risen. People are less happy and more depressed than ever. They live in anger and resentment and that path leads to self-destruction. God's word not only offers grace and forgiveness but also the power to learn to forgive. God's word has the answer, a savior who died for their sins and the promise of a life to come.

It is true that many people reject Jesus and his word out of hand, but the need is there, and you never know who will listen until you share that good news. You can't catch a fish if your line isn't in the water, and you can't catch a person for Jesus until you share the good news.

Verses 4-7

⁴ When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." ⁶ And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. ⁷ So they signaled to *their* partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

Jesus command to Peter was odd on two points. First, the night was a better time for catching fish, not midday. Second, closer to shore was better than "out in the deep," where Jesus sends the disciples.

Jesus no doubt purposely sent them "out into the deep" because the fishermen would know that is not the place to catch fish. Jesus wanted no doubt that this was a miracle, not just a coincidence. He wanted them and us to see that the catch was his power at work.

The deep part of the lake was also a metaphor for Galilee. The shallows where one might expect to find believers would be Judea where the word was more wide spread. Galilee has many more gentiles and less of God's word. Jesus sends them into the deeps of the lake and the world to catch men for Jesus.

We too might often think this is the wrong time or the wrong place but since we are relying not on our cunning but on God's word, there is no wrong time or wrong place.

We've been trying to study Jonah in bible class. This is the same thing we see in the book of Jonah. God sends Jonah to Ninevah the most unlikely place for people to listen to God's word. Yet Jonah goes and God works through his word to being people to repentance.

We cast the nets, but God gives the increase. Just as it was God's power that caught all those fish not the cunning of the two brothers, so also it is God's power working through his word that catches people not our cunning tactics.

The apostle reminds us:

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Cast out the word. It may be that God will fill the church with too many fish to fit. It may be that God will work through that word for other means, but if you don't cast the nets there will be no fish.

Verses 8-11

⁸ When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." ¹¹ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

We know from the gospel of John that these four had already met Jesus and had already followed him as disciples. The difference here is that they "forsook all." They were no longer temporarily/intermittently following him. Rather now they were called into full-time service

They leave the nets and boats behind. These are the tools of their old trade. The tools they will need from now on is God's word and promises. We too have all the tools we need to share God's word. His word and his promise.

God's word and God's promise are all that we need to become fishers of men. It is alone God's word that will bring people to Christ, and we have God's promise that he will work through the preaching of that word. There is no reason not to cast our nets. God gives the increase. Amen