

Jim Gill

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"It's Catching"

Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13) Psalm 138 Luke 5:1-11 I Corinthians 15:1-15

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE 5:1-11

Last week we saw the end of Jesus' First Sermon in his hometown and the violent reaction to his message. I noticed that a part of your Mission Statement is Making Disciples. In this morning's gospel lesson we read about Jesus' First Call to Disciples to go and make more disciples. Hear the word of God from Luke 5:1-11

Let's pray. Dear Lord, thank you for this your word. Thank you for this story of your Son Jesus and the lengths to which he went to get the attention of a group of rough and ready fishermen. May you get and receive our full attention as we seek to understand the implications of this wild story for our own lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So, there once were two guys who went on a fishing trip. They rented all the equipment: the reels, the rods, the wading suits, the rowboat, the car, and even a cabin in the woods.

The first day they went fishing they didn't catch a thing. (Sound familiar?) The same thing happens on the second day and on the third day. It goes on like this until finally, on the last day of their vacation, one of the men finally caught a fish.

As they drive home, they are both really depressed. One turns to the other and says, "Do you realize that this one lousy fish we caught cost us \$1,500?"

"Wow!" says the other, "It's a good thing we didn't catch anymore!"

When it comes to answering Jesus' call to make disciples the opposite is true. Our goal is like the goal of those who play pokemon. Our goal is to catch them all!. (the parking lot of Faith Presbyterian in Baytown was one of the spots where people could "catch" one in the Pokemon Go game. For months we would see folks coming into our parking lot circle to a certain spot and leave. Some days we had more people coming to our parking lot than our church!)

This morning's gospel lesson takes place not in a house of worship or its parking lot. Jesus goes to the lake. Jesus is being followed by a crowd of folks who have heard about his miracles. They press closer and closer to the water's edge finally prompting Jesus to impress into service a beached fishing boat belonging to a man named Simon, the man whose mother-in-law Jesus had recently healed. So when Jesus asks, Simon lets Jesus climb in, and he pushes off, and Jesus continues teaching, using the reflection of the water as a combination natural Sound System and secret service detail to keep the crowds at bay.

When Jesus finishes his message Simon is ready to get home for some shut-eye in preparation for another night's work. After all, night time, especially the early morning hours before dawn, was best time for fishing, even if LAST night was not so good. Instead, Jesus says, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

Simon must have thought to himself, "This is not the time to be fishing, in broad daylight in the heat of the day. This teacher might be special in SOME things, but he is a carpenter, not a fisherman.

Now comes the real fish story. The catch is phenomenal. It's too big for one boat so Simon calls to his business partners, James and John to come and help. But the catch is so great that both boats start to sink. Simon has never seen anything like it. Simon fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'"

Jesus only laughs, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching people!" So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Once there was a man like Simon who had spent fruitless day fishing. In desperation he picked out three fat fish at the local market. "Before you wrap them," he said to the clerk, "toss them to me, one by one. That way I'll be able to tell my wife I caught them. 1

Which is the bigger miracle here-the miraculous catch of fish ... or the fact that professional fishermen walk away from such an incredible catch? They drop it all; give it all up - their business, their home, their way of life, and, eventually, their very lives themselves - all to follow Jesus.

Simon trusted that the man who could heal his mother-in-law, could keep crowds spellbound sitting in a boat on a lake and could engineer such a miraculous catch knew where he was going. Simon did not want to let too many others or other things to get between him and Jesus. Simon wanted to go where Jesus was going even if it involved going deep....into deep water.

This was Jesus' first call. What are the terms of call? What did Jesus look for? Our Call Committee here that had their first meeting on Tuesday night. What will they be looking for? Great theological training? Eloquent Speaker? Photogenic looks? Guitar player?

Jesus first draft picks are fishermen, actually two sets of brothers- Simon and his brother Andrew and their business partners James and John. Fishermen were not the most erudite folks. They did not have much education. As we can see from this morning's passage they were not even very successful fishermen. They fish all night and catch nothing. They had to have a carpenter tell them when and where to fish.

You know the old saying of Lao Tse, "Give a man a fish and he'll eat today. Teach a man to catch fish and he'll eat for a lifetime."

But in Texas it's more like, "If you give a man a fish, he will eat for a day. But if you teach a man to fish, he will bore you to death with endless fishing stories and photos of himself on Facebook holding fish."

Last night I was flipping channels and caught a little of Fishing and Hunting Texas with Wade Middleton and saw that what I used to use to tell me how to get where I wanted to go is now being used to tell fishermen where to fish. Yes Garmin takes the guess work out of fishing.

Someone needs to invent a Garmin that takes the guesswork out of catching people for God's kingdom.

Some are born into the fellowship and raised up in the church. Others however are brought into the life of the church when something attracts them, draws them in, and many times it's you and me. Eighty percent of the people who join churches say they do it because someone invited them.

Brothers and sisters, we are God's most chosen channel of reaching out and catching others for the kingdom of God. It is true that some will get caught in a worship service. Some may get caught in a funeral service. The driver at Crowder's Funeral Home who drove me to the cemetery for Rose Piske's graveside service on Friday said he comes to Faith Lutheran every Christmas Eve. He is Catholic, but he started coming when his daughter came here and continues even though she now lives out of state.

There are others who will be caught somewhere other than a worship service. Simon and Andrew and James and John were at their place of business—the lake. Which begs the questions, what do professional fishermen do for vacation, spend two weeks behind a desk?

There's a saying that fishermen have...you go where the fish are biting. To catch people you have to go where people are...at the lake, at the store, at the office, at the back fence, at the mall, at the movies.

Most of our witnessing is likely to happen in passing moments of conversation those occasions when we show, in relatively minor ways, who we are and to whom we belong. I think of a suburban woman who was playing tennis with her good but quite secular friends. In a conversation break between sets she began referring to something she had read that morning. It would have been easy to say, "I read something this morning ." Instead, with no attempt at being preachy, she simply introduced one word: "In my devotional reading this morning." It was not a major soul-winning engagement. It was, however, a true sowing of seed. By a word, she had opened the door for some further conversation.

Perhaps our greatest problem in becoming Christ's witnesses is that we are so possessed of the idea that we must say something dramatic and far-reaching that we fail to say the small, immediate and potentially significant thing. To put it in the language of our lesson for the day, most of us really don't act as if we even have a call to catch others. We're out in the waters of human need every day, but we don't seem to know it or recognize the opportunities when they are right in front of us.

The issue is not that we should become more aggressive about sharing our faith. It is that we should be more sensitive to the needs of the world around us, and more sensitive to the subtle prodding of the Holy Spirit. The two sensitivities are wonderfully intertwined. To be sensitive to the Holy Spirit must mean that we will be more sensitive to people and their pain; to be more sensitive to people ought to make us more open to God and God's purposes. 2

When you got your bulletin this morning each of you received a business card. It has the time for worship on it. I want you to take that card and hold it for just a second. Can you hold it up where I can see it? Here's mine! I want you to consider that card to be your lure or your net.

I want you to ask God to work in your life this week so that you will give your card to someone this week. I want you to use it to extend an invitation. It doesn't have to be to come to church. Maybe it's to go to lunch with you. Maybe it's to go to the lake with you. Maybe it's just to say, "Hey we have this crazy transitional preacher and he told me I had to give this card away to someone. Here, Give him a call."

We may not be the most erudite, or be eloquent speakers. We may think we're too young like Jeremiah. We may not have had a dramatic call in worship like Isaiah or the apostle Paul. However, everyone is subject to Jesus' call to make disciples.

Are we ready to drop our nets into the water? Are we ready to drop our nets for catching fish for good and start catching people? Are we ready to try different lures or bait if some don't work? Are we ready to not give up when we've tried all night and had no response? Are we willing to go deep?

One thing is for sure. Sharing a business card with someone won't cost \$1,500 like the two fellows I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon. The last thing I want is for us to be glad we didn't catch any more." Oh that we had the determination and dedication of those Pokemon Go parking lot player circles to try and catch em all.

I promise not to refer to Paul Harvey in every sermon but I do have to share this one. He said, "The problem today is that too many Christians are no longer fishers of men but keepers of the aquarium."

The verse that I focused on for Rose Piske's funeral on Friday was one of her favorites: 2 Timothy 4:17. "I have fought the good fight. I have run the race. I have kept the faith."

Our purpose is to be more than keepers of the faith. We are also to be sharers of the faith. When we start sharing our faith I believe we will find that it's contagious. I believe that we'll find our purpose. I believe we will find it's not only keeping...and sharing the faith. I believe that we will find that when it comes to reaching out to others ... it more than just keeping ... It's catching.

Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for each person here today. I thank you for the way that each one found out about You and about our church. We are a welcoming congregation. Help us to be an inviting congregation so that there will be more folks to welcome. I pray that each of these cards will find their way into the hands of a person who is open and receptive to your Call. I pray this in Jesus' name in the full confidence that if you can reach Jeremiah and James and John and Andrew and Simon that you are fully capable of reaching and catching more through such a simple thing as this simple card.

Make us strong so that we may bear the good news of your love to the ends of the earth. Grant that our enthusiasm may ignite the lives of others, so the together we may minister to people whose eyes and ears are yet closed to your Word.

These things we pray in Jesus' name.

1, ChristianGlobe Illustrations, by King Duncan

2 Reading the Signs, From Empty Nets to Full Lives, by J. Ellsworth Kalas