

Fishers of Men

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Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **Mark 1:16-20**. This morning the title of our Message is: "Fishers of Men".

It was early in the morning. Few people were on the shore at that hour. About the only people active that early in the morning were the weary fishermen who were just finishing another hard night of fishing on the Sea of Galilee. They are mending their nets after a long night of fishing.

Things are winding down and all the men are anxious to get their catch to market and then go home to get some rest. But, as they finish their activities for that morning, a man passes by along the shoreline. He calls out to the men in the boats, invites them to come follow Him. When He does, four of the men in the boats leave their nets and boats behind to follow this man as His disciples.

His call to them is simple, "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Yet, it was a call that changed their lives forever!

If we are called by God to be His children, then we are also called to grow up and be fathers and mothers to spiritual children. He wants to make us all "fishers of men".

That's what he says in **Mark 1:16-22**, "Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw **Simon** and **Andrew** his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 17 And Jesus said unto them, **Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.** 18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. 19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw **James** the *son of Zebedee*, and **John** his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him."

[Prayer]

Our spiritual growth in Christ is measured by how we are making followers of Jesus Christ. This is Christ's commission to make disciples, followers, of all nations! We are to mentor, counsel, do Bible study with people all around us and lead them to Christ—and lead them to growth in Christ likeness. This is evangelism! And it is the heart beat of God!

- Indeed, someone said, "Evangelism is the sob of God."
- C.T. Studd said, "Some wish to live within the sound of a chapel bell; I wish to run a rescue mission within a yard of hell".
- Evangelism is the anguished cry of Jesus as He weeps over a doomed city.

- Evangelism is the cry of Paul when he says, "I wish myself were accursed from Christ for my brother and my kinsman according to the flesh."
- Evangelism is the heart-winning plea of Moses who said, "Oh these people have sinned, yet now if Thou wilt forgive their sin, if not block me, I pray Thee, out of the book, which Thou has written."
- Evangelism is the cry of John Knox, who said, "Give me Scotland or I die."
- It is the cry of Wesley who said, "The world is my parish."
- Evangelism is the sob of parents in the night weeping over a lost son.
- Spurgeon said, "If you are saved yourself, [God's work of sanctification] is but half done until you are employed to bring others to Christ. You are as yet but half formed in the image of your Lord."¹

How can we become fishers of men? Well first we have to be Called by Jesus!!

- I. First consider that the **People** Jesus calls are **Ordinary**. We are fascinated by the 12 apostles, four of which we are going to look at today. One thing that

Jesus calls very **ordinary** people. Jesus called the first group of the apostles, all four of whom were fishermen. Three of the four were Jesus' inner circle. Peter, James and John became the inner core of Jesus' disciples. James was the first apostle martyred. Peter and John (with Paul) were the chief apostles in the early church. As ordinary as they were, their ministry carries on today! We are still talking about them!

A. The apostles were uneducated men. What is so shocking is that the whole founding of the Christian church is given to these ordinary men. Remember in **Acts 4:13**, Peter and John are preaching, and it says when the Jews "saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus". These men had no great education. They were ordinary men.

B. None of them went to seminary. None of them had an extraordinary education. They were trained in a time period that is best measured in months—**about 18 months** to be exact—not years. By "...the time Jesus identified and called the Twelve from the larger group of His followers,² half of his earthly ministry was almost over".³

C. This was not the first time they had seen or heard of Jesus (**John 1:37-40**). They had been casually acquainted with the Lord from the time of John the Baptist's ministry, about **18 months earlier**. Andrew and probably John are the first to make contact with Jesus when they were both followers of John the Baptist.

In fact, if you study **John 1:40**, you'll see that **Andrew** was present when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (**John 1:29**). Then a few verses later, we see that they have an encounter with Jesus. Remember this is

¹ Charles Spurgeon. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volume 32*, Sermon 1906, "How to Become Fishers of Men" (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1886), 337.

² Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16

³ John MacArthur. *Twelve Ordinary Men* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2002), xiv.

about 18 months before He officially calls them to be apostles and “fishers of men”. Look at this exchange between Andrew, John and later Peter in **John 1:37**.

John 1:37-42, “And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? 39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.”

So Andrew and an unnamed disciple, probably John, had spent a day with Jesus, and Peter had met Jesus already during this time.

- D. **Application:** The point is, Jesus calls very ordinary people. Those men were nothing special, simply instruments in the master’s hand. You never know who God is going to use. Be sure if you think God could never save “so and so”, that’s just the person God wants to save and use. God doesn’t call the ones we think He’ll call.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 tells us: “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence”.

- II. Now consider the **Pathway** Jesus recommends to effective evangelism is **Adoration**. **Verse 17**, “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” If you want to witness for Christ, you must first worship Christ. John Piper said, “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t.” Stay close to Christ, and you will be used of God to transform hearts for Him. If you are a clean vessel, Christ will pick you up and use you in bringing people to Himself.

- A. The **secret** of evangelism. You might say, “I am willing”. Ok. Great. Then let me tell you the secret to catching people for the kingdom of God. You must be following Jesus yourself.

What is the pathway to amazing evangelism? I want to see a move of God here! I want to see you all making followers of Jesus Christ. What is the pathway to evangelism? Christ here does not say we need evangelism classes. He doesn’t say we need a bus ministry. He says if you want to be good evangelists—if you want to see people actually converted, then first you must do something: you must “come ye after me” or “follow Me”... and “I will make you fishers of men”. We all want to be fishers of men. We are all commanded to be evangelizing every creature. The pathway to evangelism is revival and worship and walking with Christ and knowing Him!!

Before you can preach Christ, you must first know Him and love Him!

Testimony: I've witnessed to thousands of people in my lifetime. We all know that it is God that converts the soul. He must draw people to Himself.

Quote: John Newton said, "All the means of God's grace are useless until God steps in". The means or instruments of God's grace, like prayer and preaching and evangelism are all useless unless God steps in and does something.

It is God who must begin the work and it is God who "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (**Philippians 1:6**). He is the "author and finisher of our faith" (**Hebrews 12:2**).

- B. The **significance** of the word "come after". The word in Greek is translated "come after" and "follow". It means to be a disciple "**to cleave to another, conforming to His example**". In other words, these men left their nets, their boats and life as they knew it, to cleave to Jesus and learn from Him!

So many Christians are frustrated. They want to be making followers for Christ. But how many of you here today are actually replicating what you know about Christ in another person? Who will be in heaven because God chose to use you as a tool? Well, God's not going to use any one who is not willing.

- C. The **signs** or marks of following Christ. How ought we to follow Christ?
1. We will follow Him carefully. In every area of life. Ephesians 4:22-24—It doesn't mean we follow Him perfectly, but carefully! Put off the old man, put on the new. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. If we want to catch men and see them saved, we must follow the greatest "fisher of men". If you are a believer in Christ, you will obey Christ. Christ gives you a heart to obey Him. If you know Christ your heart will break for your children to be saved; it will break for your loved ones to be saved. It will break for every creature to be saved. If you are saved, you have the heart of Christ.

I know you want to see people saved. You desire that none perish but that all come to repentance. But how can you see people saved? You must stay close to Jesus Christ.

So then, if I want God to convert those around me, I must first follow Him. God will not use a dirty vessel. Do you like to eat with a dirty fork? Neither does God use dirty vessels. Cleave to Jesus.

2. We will follow Christ **Urgently**. It means that we put Christ before all other things. Look at **verses 18-20**, "And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. 19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him."

What kind of passion do you have for souls? Are you willing to forsake all and follow Christ? If you follow Him, He will make you fishers of men!

These men left their professions—they became fishers of men.

Application: Our passion ought not to be merely our work, but we ought to see our work as a mission field. We must leave the idea that we are on this earth to

simply make a living. No, we are here to live for Christ and glorify Him in our vocations. We are called to do our work to His glory. Part of that, is reaching the people we work with for Christ. Do you pray for your co-workers?

III. Thirdly, consider the **Promise** Jesus gives us to make us "fisher's of men".

A. This is a promise to **sanctify** us. "I will make you fishers of men". "He who has begun a good work in you is will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 1:6**). God has promised to make us like Christ. Christ came into the world to "save His people from their sin" (**Matthew 1:22**). He came to catch men from the polluted pond of sin!

Christ will make us what we ought to be. He will make us evangelists and soul winners. I don't know how to become a fisher of men. But if I stay close to Christ, He'll make me one! He'll make us all missionaries and evangelists if we stay close to Him.

Spurgeon said, "When Christ calls us by His grace we ought not only to remember what we are, but we ought also *to think of what he can make us.*"⁴

The moment we are saved, one of the immediate results of the Holy Spirit coming in is our mouths begin to tell the good news! We say with the apostles in **Acts 4:20**, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." All who love Christ want to tell others.

Someone asked Spurgeon, "Will the heathen who have never heard the Gospel be saved?" He replied, "It is more a question with me whether *we*—who *have* the Gospel and fail to give it to those who do not have it—can be saved."

Charles Spurgeon said, "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. If they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees. Let no one GO there UNWARNED and UNPRAYED for."

B. This is a promise to **strengthen** our **faith**. Christ puts us out to sea when we are saved, and it takes a lot of faith to navigate the rough waters. A fisherman is a person who is *very dependent, and needs to be trustful*. He cannot see the fish. One who fishes in the sea must go and cast in the net, as it were, at a peradventure. Fishing is an act of faith.

Evangelism is an act of faith. We are fools for Christ. We are the off scouring of the world. Yet we still go, knowing that the heathen rage and imagine a vain thing.

Yet even fishing from this pulpit is an act of faith. There have been days when I have preached the Gospel, and people have been born again that very day. Other times, I wait.

As I grow in Christ, Christ promises to make me a fisher of men. God is the only one who can make the fish hungry. It is God who makes people hungry for the Gospel.

Application: Are you hooking sinners with the Gospel? You are insufficient for the task. You were never meant to feel strong in evangelism. You are to feel that you

⁴ Ibid.

have no strength, and then depend on the strength of the Lord. Salvation is a work of God, but God will bring sinners to you as you draw near to Him.

You that have no strength, yet you must attempt this divine work in the strength of the Lord. Obey Him. Open your mouth wide, and He will fill it!

- C. This is a promise to **toughen** our **perseverance**. A fisherman who gets his living by it is *a diligent and persevering man*. The fishermen are up at dawn, and they continue fishing till late in the afternoon. As long as hands can work men will fish. May the Lord Jesus make us hard-working, persevering, unwearied fishers of men! "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy". We are called to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ". It takes labor and tears to see people come to Christ. We must weep! God must hear our cries and see our fasting! God will save, but we must persevere. We must beg and plead and go! God will hear; God will see, and God will save!
- D. This is a promise to **cultivate** our **wisdom**. The fisherman in his own profession is *intelligent and watchful*. It looks very easy to be a fisherman, but it is not! There is a real skill in it, from the mending of the net right on to the pulling it to shore. How diligent the fisherman is to prevent the fish leaping out of the net! Sinners too are very crafty fish, and they use their fallen minds to avoid salvation. We shall have to be always at our business, and to exercise all our all of our mind if we are to have success in fishing for men.

How do we mend the nets? By knowing the Word of God. You must not allow them to escape. You must "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

- E. This is a promise to **grow** our **courage**. A fisherman must sail on the raging sea. A little brine in his face does not hurt him; he has been wet through a thousand times, it is nothing to him. He never expected when he became a deep-sea fisherman that he was going to sleep in the lap of ease. So the true minister of Christ who fishes for souls will never mind a little risk. He will be bound to do or say many a thing that is very unpopular; and some Christian people may even judge his utterances to be too severe. He must do and say that which is for the good of souls. It is not his to entertain a question as to what others will think of his doctrine, or of him; but in the name of the Almighty God he must feel, "If the sea roar and the fullness thereof, still at my Master's command I will let down the net."

Conclusion: Are you fishing for men? Perhaps it is because you are not following Christ as you ought. If you are not meeting with Christ, you will not be thrilled with Him, and you'll have nothing to talk about with sinners.