

January 24 2021

Fishers of Men

Luke 5: 1-14

Children's Message: Why did the disciples and apostles call Jesus Teacher? Because He knew where to find the schools of fishes.

This morning's message is about fish and the important role it has played in our faith and the church. The earliest Christian symbol in the church was the fish. Not the cross as you might think. The cross would become the main Christian symbol centuries later. Think about this, if we lived in 250 AD, we would have a fish painted on the wall where our cross is.

The early Christians chose the fish because of the many parables and stories Jesus used containing fish. There are more parables and stories with fish in them than you might think. The word for fish in Greek is Ichthys. The early Christians used this word to express their faith, belief and what they knew about Jesus. Each letter in Ichthys would be the first letter of a word that would make up a sentence about Jesus. So in Greek, it would be Iesous Christos, Theou Yios, Soter. In English it

is Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. This was a beautiful and secretive expression of faith. This would be shared and known only by Christians. Now you know it too.

I would never have guessed that the Greek word for fish would play such an important role in Christianity. How it would be creatively used to express our faith. Or how it would become a secretive symbol for early Christians to identify each other.

Big People's Message: I remember my first Peter moment. I was about ten years old and ice fishing for smelts on the ocean with my Dad and brother. We were hauling up smelts most of the day and fishing two holes. The day seemed to fly by quickly. When we arrived home and emptied our boxes, I was totally amazed at our catch. It was an incredible bounty. We had between five and six hundred smelts. Now the work of cleaning them set in. The laundry sink never seemed to be empty. I spoke with my brother this week about the experience. This was one of many that we shared. He tells me that those days of plenty are done. Now you can only take sixty smelts a day. As youngsters we were amazed at the size of the catch and the size of the smelts. Funny how things always seemed bigger when you were a kid. Reflecting on the parable this morning, I kind of understood Peter's astonishment.

Well back to the story at hand. This is a remarkable advertisement and marketing promotion on Our Lord's part. This amazing catch of fish

made a great impression on Peter. So much so that he abandoned his boat, nets, family and partners to follow Jesus. Just as he used to catch fish, now he will be catching and bringing people in. Peter will give up his old way of life for a life centered around the teachings of his new master.

What was it that Jesus was offering these fishermen? Was it abundant catches of fish on a regular basis or something more? What could be so powerful an offer that they would abandon all and follow Him? Little do they know that they have been caught up in the nets of the master fisher. The fishers have been fished. The bait used on them was the opportunity of a life inspired by the Holy Spirit, based on God's forgiveness and salvation through the cross, with eternal life. Mind you Jesus does not play all His cards in this encounter. Or at least we are not told of it. I suspect there was a lot more words exchanged in this encounter. Jesus will reveal a lot more to these fishermen over the coming three years. What individual would not want what Jesus is offering? It is not a bad thing that these fishermen have taken the bait, hook line and sinker.

This morning's story reminds us that we also are to be fishers. These words apply to us today as they did to Peter on Lake Gennesaret. These words of Our Lord may have more meaning than we realize. We should reconsider the words, "Do not be afraid, I will make you fishers

of men.” These words are jumping off the page and will soon need to be set into action. Think about when this pandemic is over. You and I will need to go fishing. We will be entrusted to fearlessly go out and bring those in who have stayed away. We will need to help them dispel their fears and invite them back to church. We will need to cast our nets wide and give people a sense of connection and community. We need to rebuild and gather our church communities with the Master Fisher at the center. In short we will be doing mission. This has been the bedrock of the church for two thousand years. We are not on Lake Gennesaret but in Green Bay and Thalberg. Like Peter, we may be just as surprised with the catch we bring in. Miracles certainly continue to happen in our times. Do not be surprised.

Keep in mind who we fish for. We are the best advertisement and marketing promotion for the work at hand. Our Lord said that they will know you are My followers by how you love one another. What is alluring to others is how we have internalized Our Lord’s teachings and examples and how we reflect them back into the world. How we live our lives speaks volumes to those around us.

You have been warned. We will have our work cut out for us. Have faith and be optimistic with the future fishing task at hand. The Lord never gives us more than we can handle. With prayer, I feel we will be amazed at the catch that will be brought in when the time is right.

Once I caught a Clown fish, the darn thing wouldn't stop telling jokes.
Once I caught a shark with a cough. It spit out me brother Jim. It was
Jim that had the cough.

Take care and God Bless, Pastor D