

“Promises of Jesus: I Will...Make You Fishers of Men”

Scripture: Matthew 4:18-22

Graphics: fishing, nets, I Will

Big Truth: Being a follower of Jesus is a response to the promises of Jesus, as offered and proven by the actions of Jesus. It's not something we initiate, but something Jesus has already done for us. Jesus promised to love us. Jesus promised to make us fishers of men. Jesus promised to give us rest. Jesus promised to come back for us. Our response is to find what Jesus is doing and join him as we live out our salvation in Him.

Focus Phrase: Jesus promises to make me a faith-sharer, so I will share my faith in Him.

1. Introduction

- A. The biggest fish I ever caught by myself was a 27" Northern Pike when I was a teenager. My family and I were cruising on a house boat in the Rideau Canal along the Canadian border when early one morning, I decided to get up and fish before breakfast. When the fish grabbed onto the lure, I thought it was a whale. By the time I was done, I had awakened every person on the boat calling for them to get the net.
- B. As you can tell, I'm not much of a fisherman, although I do mildly enjoy fishing. Fishing takes patience. Fishing takes time. Fishing takes the right equipment and training. Yet, in reality, everyone can fish if you have some equipment and training. And if you have a mentor, who has caught lots of fish, it's very helpful and rewarding.
- C. Jesus taught his disciples with lots of different metaphors in the gospels, but the one that seems to rise to the surface of the water is Jesus' use of the **fishing metaphor**.
- D. Much of it has to do with an economy in the region around the Sea of Galilee in the first century that was driven by fishing. Fish was a staple in the diets of the people of Israel, even to today. And, in our scripture today, Jesus uses this metaphor of fishing to make a PROMISE to the disciples.
- E. Last week, we started this sermon series, which we're calling ***I Will: The Promises of Jesus***, by receiving the promise from Jesus: "I will love you." I pray you felt loved this week and were able to love others because you experienced Jesus' love.
- F. The second promise has to do with fishing. Jesus promised his disciples, many of whom were fishermen - as recorded in Matthew 4:18-22 - "**I will make you fishers of men.**"
- G. But what did Jesus mean by that? And what were the disciples supposed to do in response? That's our focus for today and that's where we're heading. But, this isn't really about fishing or fish, right? This is about Jesus teaching us how to go out and pull people into the boat that is the Kingdom of God.

- H. If you're taking notes this morning, here's our destination: *Jesus promises to make me a faith-sharer, so I will share my faith in Him.*
- I. I'm ready to PRAY. Let's place all this before the Lord.
- J. **PRAY!** (Jesus, You are Lord...)
- K. Let's go into the Word. This morning, Matthew 4:18-22. Let's do something a little different this morning...let's stand as the gospel is read in our hearing.

2. Scripture

A. READ Matthew 4:18-22

- B. (SIT) As we begin this scripture, Jesus was walking away from the crowds and up to the region of Capernaum. Capernaum is a beautiful city on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. (picture) It was one of my favorite places to visit when we went to Israel 4 years ago.
- C. He was walking by the lake, really, on a mission. His mission was to begin to seek out disciples for God's plan to build the kingdom.
- D. Now, Jesus was a rabbi, which means he was formally trained in the Jewish Laws and religion. It was very unusual for rabbis to ever seek out, or call, disciples. If someone wanted to be a student learner - which is what 'disciple' means - young people would seek out the rabbi, not the other way around.
- E. But there was Jesus, seeking out followers. First, it was Simon Peter and his brother Andrew. They were fishing. Do you know why the bible tells us they were fishing? Because they were fishermen...fishing. (trick question :))
- F. Anyway, Matthew tells us that Jesus **approached** them...they didn't approach him. Jesus **saw** them...they didn't see Jesus. Jesus **spoke**...they didn't speak. The initiative was all Jesus'. I think Matthew makes a point of this in his gospel account so that no one will think that disciples were the ones making the initial choice. Jesus made the choice to go, to see, and to speak to Simon and Andrew...intent on making a command and a promise.
- G. It reminds me of what St. Augustine said: "I could not seek, if you had not already found me." (Confessions, Book I)
- H. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote this, in the Cost of Discipleship, "Discipleship is not an offer man makes to Christ. It is only the call which creates the situation." (The Cost of Discipleship, 68.)
- I. The command Jesus made was, "Follow me..." In the Greek this is an imperative, which means Jesus was clearly commanding them to follow him.
- J. Here's what Jesus' command was not: He didn't say ADMIRE me, UNDERSTAND my principles, or even ACCEPT him, really. He said, FOLLOW ME.

- K. Yet, the second part of Jesus' statement to them was contingent on the first. "Follow me...and I will make you fish for people." That's the NRSV translation. Other translations say, "I will send you out to fish for people..." but we know this is for men, women, children, young people, old people, and everyone in between...from every tribe, nation, tongue, and nationality.
- L. And, Matthew tells us, IMMEDIATELY, they left their nets and followed him. Now, we can skim right over that, but it's important to understand that Simon and Andrew were fisherman. They were probably middle-class fisherman, who made a decent wage with multiple boats, people working for them, and people to feed with their fish. Yet, IMMEDIATELY, they gave it ALL up (all the money and work and security) to follow Jesus. But...To what? Where? How? Why? When? Completely uncertain.
- M. Simply by the POWER of Jesus' word...they left it all and followed Him. That's supernatural stuff right there!
- N. Same thing with James and John, sons of Zebedee. In THEIR case, they were mending nets, which means they were successful fishermen, right? If you never catch anything, your nets never need to be mended. I don't break my fishing poles or lose lures because I rarely go fishing!
- O. And, not only did they leave nets and boats, but they left their father to continue the work. IMMEDIATELY, they left their boats and father.
- P. This passage in Matthew and the same account in other gospels is significant because it's the beginning of the church. The first disciples had no clue what Jesus was going to ask them to do...or what Jesus would go through.
- Q. But they DID, by the power of Jesus' words, say YES!
- R. What they'll find out over the next three years, as Jesus gathered more and more disciples, is that Jesus was building the foundation of a church. And that church will have one main purpose: to save people from death by repenting of their sin and believing that Jesus is the Son of God.
- S. And through the church, the Kingdom of God will be populated. Through the church, people who believe will invite other people to believe by sharing their faith with those around them.
- T. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodists said this of the purpose of the church: "There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits."

3. Application

- A. Jesus was very clear in his teachings that there will come a day when every single living person will be judged for his/her actions while they lived. When

- the Day of Judgement comes, each one of us, each family members, and each person who has ever lived, will stand before God to hear what He has to say.
- B. Yet, we know what He will say, because scripture tells us.
- i. He will say to those who believed in Jesus, "...you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But because of your faith in Jesus, you are forgiven and redeemed and will enter the Kingdom of God." There will be a celebration in all of heaven on that day!
 - ii. To those who did not believe in Jesus, God will say, "...you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And, you have chosen to live and die on your own apart from Jesus. And you have chosen to spend eternity apart from me." That will be the saddest day of all Creation.
- C. God's desire is for every living person to accept the invitation from God through Jesus to live everlasting life in the glorious presence of God and not apart from Him. God desires that SO incredibly much that He was more than willing to send Jesus to earth to live, suffer, die on a Roman cross, and then be raised from the dead 3 days later.
- D. Church, we believe that God sacrificed his OWN SON for you and for your family and for your neighbors and for this community and for the people in Africa and Europe and China and every corner of the globe.
- E. And to tell the world about this incredible gift of salvation, Jesus began by choosing 12 disciples, and then those 12 disciples told 70, and 3,000, and then hundreds and thousands and millions. Those first disciples became exactly what Jesus made them and taught them: fishers of people...faith-sharers!
- F. They cast nets of preaching to large crowds - we read about that in the books Acts. They went out from Jerusalem and told everyone they could find about this Jesus, who was raised from the dead, who healed people, and performed miracles, who cast out demons, and brought people back to life.
- G. What more convincing do WE need to become fishers of people today? What more evidence COULD we need?
- H. I think the answer to those questions is:
- i. We want to see it happen in OUR time too! We want to see people healed and people saved and people raised from the death of sin and addiction and trashed lives. We want to be made into faith-sharers!
 - ii. We want to see Jesus' name lifted up in the public square and across the world. We want to see the Holy Spirit fill us with power for preaching and evangelism and serving our community. We want to burn inside us with passion for the lost and the lonely. We want people to see Jesus IN US!
- I. That's what we want, God! Church, that's where Jesus is leading us.

- J. Jesus went to those disciples and said, “What you’ve been successfully doing is great: fishing for fish. But, now is the time to stop focusing on THAT and start building a church that believes in Jesus, despite the cost, despite the sacrifice, and despite the comfort and popular opinion of the world. Come! Follow me! I will make you fish for people.”
- K. Here’s what that promise means for you and me. Jesus will do what Jesus promised to do, but:
- i. First, it means that **There is a Cost for you.**
 - a. Learning to fish for people as a primary focus of your life will cost you.
 - b. It will cost you nets and boats like Peter and Andrew, James and John. That’s money that you give away to others and to the ministry of the church, so we can do this together in here and out there.
 - c. It will cost you relationships, like it did for James and John. It may mean that some people stop wanting to be around you. Yet, it may mean that you will go where Jesus calls you to go...to meet new people and fish new waters.
 - d. One of the absolute blessings for Stacy and me as we’ve gone where Jesus has led us is that we get to meet new people and add friends and loved ones to our list wherever we go - in our childhood churches and communities, in the church we baptized our children, in our first appointment, and now in our second one. We don’t lose those connections, but make new ones to love.
 - e. Yet, there’s been a significant cost. We’ve had to move away. We’ve had to say goodbye to people who have died. We’ve had to be bold in building new relationships (which isn’t easy for this introvert). But Jesus said “follow me.”
 - f. Jesus may not be asking you to go into pastoral ministry (if you feel He is, let me know), but He IS calling you to follow Him, wherever He leads to teach you and grow you. There will be a cost.
 - g. And, Jesus doesn’t call you expecting you to only serve or do the things for Him in the areas where you’re comfortable and knowledgable.
 - h. His promise is to equip you when you agree to follow Him.
 - i. Are you willing to say to Jesus, “Make me fish for people”? “Send me!” Are you willing to pay that cost for Jesus?
 - ii. Learning to fish for people means **There is an Uncertain Future.**
 - a. The call of Jesus on the first disciples meant that they couldn’t be 100% sure of where life was heading after that. They didn’t know how to fish for people, where to fish for people, when to fish, what it all meant.

- b. Being made into a fisher of people means that there will be moments in your days that you never expected. I've seen that this week at VBS:
 - i) Little disciples going out of their way to share paper sunglasses that said, "I see God's goodness in you!"
 - ii) I've watched dozens of adults and youth (54 to be exact) come here every evening, tired from the work day, so that they could simply be present to love children through music, crafts, snacks, bible stories, science experiments, games, skits, bad acting, and lots of laughter.
 - iii) And do you know what? We lifted up the name of Jesus and those kids were blessed and invited to begin thinking about living THEIR lives for Him too! To become little disciples.
- c. Following Jesus and being made into a fisher of people by Jesus may mean an uncertain earthly future. But what it means even MORE is a VERY CERTAIN future with Jesus forever in the Kingdom of God.

4. Conclusion

- A. Fishing for fish may be something we like to do...and can even provide food. Yet, there is a lack of an eternal mindset in fishing for fish.
- B. Not so with fishing for people.
- C. We are all aware of two very important truths, or we probably wouldn't be here.
 - i. First, God gives each person the choice to chose life with Him for eternity or life apart from Him for eternity. And,
 - ii. Second, Jesus chose the church (you and me and all the believers) to tell the world about Him in order for people to make the choice for Him in #1.
- D. Jesus is counting on us. But he's not just sending us out with nothing to work with. **He's given us himself.** He's given us the Holy Spirit. He's alive and going before us. He's praying for us and loves us.
- E. He WILL make us fish for people instead of whatever else we think life is about. Are we willing to pay the cost and live with the wide-open unknown future - when people will come into our lives to be caught for Him, when we will go out from this place to fish for people in Jesus' Name? What will it take for us?
- F. Jesus' command was, "Follow me." Jesus' promise is to keep making you into a fisher of people. Jesus will deliver.
- G. Jesus promises to make me a faith-sharer, so I will share my faith in Him.
- H. Tell them what Jesus has done in your life. Tell them why you believe. Cast that net and Jesus does the rest.
- I. **Let's pray.** We will be ready, Lord. Start with me! Start with US!