

I.N.I.

Third Sunday after Epiphany  
January 21, 2018  
Mark 1:16-20

In Christ Jesus, who has called us to **GO FISHING** with Him, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Ruth and I were walking on Lake Mendota the other day and we were amazed at how many ice fishermen were out. It was like little villages scattered all over the ice. There were shanties, four wheelers, grills with fire blazing, and their many tip ups. We walked down the lake and back, waved to some, said "hi" to others but did not see any of them catch anything. Now I've never ice fished before, and I really like walking on the lake, but standing or sitting shivering for a couple hours in the dead of winter is not for me especially if you don't catch anything. Even if it is nice outside fishing and getting nothing is a chore not worth the effort. That is also what Peter thought.

We find this same event from our text recorded in Matthew and Luke. Our text from Mark gives us a brief summary of what happened. Luke gives us more details. We are told that a crowd gathered. Jesus used Peter's boat as a pulpit to preach from. After the preaching was done He instructed Peter to let down his nets once more. He was less than eager to do this since they had fished all night long and had not caught anything. It seemed futile and useless. But Peter obeyed Jesus' word and when they cast their nets in they were filled with fish. Peter fell down on his knees and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" To which Jesus replied, **DO NOT BE AFRAID. FROM NOW ON YOU WILL CATCH MEN.**

Jesus had revealed to these men that He was the Messiah and the power of His words now moved them to forsake all and follow Him. Every time a sinner is moved by the Spirit to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior and then follow Him, the power of Christ and His Word is manifest, shown forth. There is an epiphany!

Being a follower of Jesus means we are **ALL called to GO FISHING**, not on a frozen lake for fish, but in daily life for people! Not with lures, bobbers, nets or tip-ups but with the Gospel. And one of the best places to get a good supply of the Gospel is at regular Sunday morning worship services.

We read vs. 16-18. **AND AS HE WALKED BY THE SEA OF GALILEE HE SAW SIMON AND ANDREW HIS BROTHER CASTING A NET INTO THE SEA; FOR THEY WERE FISHERMEN. THEN JESUS SAID TO THEM, COME AFTER ME, AND I WILL MAKE YOU BECOME FISHERS OF MEN. AND IMMEDIATELY THEY LEFT THEIR NETS AND FOLLOWED HIM.**

There was no need for explanations or small talk. They already believed in Jesus as the Messiah. We see that from John 1. Now they were being confronted with an invitation to give up everything they knew, their livelihood, their occupation, to train for a new one---to fish for people. Immediately--at once--they left their nets. Their immediate response gives testimony to the power of our Epiphany Lord's Word. But we shouldn't marvel at Peter and Andrew's obedience or at their readiness to follow Christ. They obeyed Christ's call not because of some righteousness of their own but because of Christ's grace and mercy. They were chosen, called and convinced by the power of Jesus' Word. Discipleship is a gift of grace. We should, rather, marvel at Jesus' mercy toward these men and the power of His Word.

Little did they realize what it would mean to follow Jesus. Little could they imagine what it would cost them to carry a net for Jesus. It would mean a whole lot more than just tagging along behind their Lord and Savior on His trips to Jerusalem and around Galilee listening to Him speak. It would mean much more than just sitting at Jesus' feet, in the safety of His presence and be filled with His loving Word. It would mean action, commitment and sacrifice on their part.

And that leads us to our theme this morning. This calling was given not only to Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John. It is a universal calling to every believer. It applies to every single Christian, without exception. And that includes you. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is your only Savior from sin? If you do, then you are God's fisherman---because faith in Christ is the only prerequisite for the job. You don't have to have a college degree or study theology. You don't have to

spend four years in a Bible College or three years in the seminary. If you have faith in Jesus, you've already got what it takes to cast out a net for Jesus.

### **THE EPIPHANY LORD CALLS YOU**

But be aware that He calls you:

#### **I: TO A LIFE OF TOTAL COMMITMENT**

Very often I hear people say. "Is that all there is to being saved, simply believing, or saying I believe in Jesus?" Well the answer to that is "yes and no." Yes, we are saved simply through faith in what Jesus has done for us. Simply cling in repentant faith to Jesus' perfect life and atoning death and resurrection and you have the free gift of eternal life. But no, there is a lot more to faith than just saying "I believe."

James wrote it in his Epistle, **FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD!** To follow the Lord and be a fisherman for Jesus means first of all to **SUBORDINATE** everything to the Lord. Give yourself--heart, mind, body and soul--to Jesus. Subject yourself; hand over all of your boats and nets, your business and your wealth, your will and your desire. Those who follow the Lord Jesus pursue riches of a totally different nature than those which can rust and decay, be stolen or lost. To follow the Lord requires placing everything into God's hands---our earthly callings, our jobs, our businesses, our schooling, our marriages, our families, our health, our lives. All will be subordinated to the Lord.

We see James and John leaving their father and their fishing business and forsaking it all for Jesus.

Make no mistake about it--it's a very demanding call! It requires **TOTAL COMMITMENT**. This fishing for people for Christ and following Him is not something we can slough off, or something we can do in our spare time. It is far more demanding than any other job you'll ever do. It means we will strive to **LIVE LIKE** our Savior in all our ways.

Being humble--**LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS...HE MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION, TAKING THE FORM OF A SERVANT, AND COMING IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN. AND BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, HUMBLED HIMSELF AND BECAME OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.**

Being loving and forgiving unconditionally--**AND BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER, TENDERHEARTED, FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, JUST AS GOD IN CHRIST ALSO FORGAVE YOU.**

Being obedient--**NO ONE, HAVING PUT HIS HAND TO THE PLOW, AND LOOKING BACK, IS FIT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

This calling means to **SHARE THE CROSS of Christ**. Jesus said in Matt. 10:38 **AND HE WHO DOES NOT TAKE HIS CROSS AND FOLLOW AFTER ME IS NOT WORTHY OF ME. HE WHO FINDS HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT, AND HE WHO LOSES HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE WILL FIND IT.** Peter tells us in his first Epistle, **FOR TO THIS YOU WERE CALLED, BECAUSE CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED FOR US, LEAVING US AN EXAMPLE, THAT YOU SHOULD FOLLOW HIS STEPS...**

It was on the cross that Jesus died and paid for the guilt and punishment of our sins, reconciling us to God the Father. Our cross is a sign of our discipleship, of our following Jesus. Will we lift it up, or let it lie?

This calling also means **TO SHARE THE WORK of Christ**. Jesus says to us, **I WILL MAKE YOU BECOME FISHERS OF MEN.** The preaching of the Gospel is one of Christ's highest priorities. His Gospel was more important to Him than eating and drinking, than healing and performing miracles, than any personal comfort. The Gospel is **THE POWER OF GOD TO SALVATION FOR EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES.** Jesus is still calling disciples to carry a net for Him, the net of the Gospel, regardless of the cost. People need to first hear the Gospel before the Holy Spirit can lead them to believe it and be saved. If it is up to us, and it is, will those people ever hear the Good News?

Our text this morning lays some serious questions on our hearts. Will we take up our cross daily? Will we follow Jesus no matter what the cost; of our money, of our free time? Will we carry the net of the Gospel out to the world and go fishing for Christ?

## **THE EPIPHANY LORD CALLS YOU II: TO A LIFE OF GLORIOUS SERVICE**

If you're anything like me, and I'm sure you are, you can't help feeling a sense of shame over what a poor "fisherman" we often times are. Not speaking when we should have spoken up, missing opportunities to cast the net of the Gospel to someone who is lost, spending more time speaking about the mundane and trivial rather than the eternal. But we need not despair. Jesus has called us to a glorious service and gives us the power to serve.

Even as Jesus said to Simon Peter, **DO NOT BE AFRAID, FROM NOW ON YOU WILL CATCH MEN**, He says to you and me, "Do not be afraid of your sins. They can't disqualify you from being My disciple, for I have already cast your sins away into the depths of the sea. Don't be afraid because you feel you do not have the ability or you lack confidence and courage. I will fill you with courage and confidence and give you the abilities you need."

In His love for us Jesus came to take our place and give His life as the spotless Lamb of God slain on the cross. If we have been guilty of failing to **GO FISHING** daily as we should, if we have been lazy in our **CASTING OUT** the net of the Gospel, or reluctant and fearful to do so, we can turn to our Savior in heartfelt repentance and hear Him say to us, **SON, DAUGHTER, BE OF GOOD CHEER, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN...YOU CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH ME WHO STRENGTHENS YOU...Now go Fishing for Me!**

Jesus gave His life in loving service for us. Why? So that we could be His own, live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him both here on this earth and forever in heaven. He was our atoning sacrifice. He lived the perfect life of obedience and that righteousness is ours through faith in Him. He also rose from the dead, and the power of His resurrection lives in us to empower us to go out and live for Him. That is the message, that is the net of the Gospel, that needs to be cast out to all the world. It caught you and me and freed us from our sins. It forgives us and gives us the power to not only **WANT TO** fish for Jesus, but **TO GO OUT** and fish.

When Jesus called His disciples, He called them to surrender all to Him, but He did not call them to a life of poverty, isolation, defeat and unending misery. He called them to a life of glorious freedom, fullness, victory and eternal joy. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, these four fishermen never forgot who called them. The Lord of heaven and earth had invited them to be His closest, most intimate and dearest companions for an exciting and unforgettable three years and a lifetime of wonderful service.

Above all, they never forgot in whom they had placed all of their confidence and trust for forgiveness and eternal glory. In Jesus, their Lord and Savior

Jesus wants to share the glory of His death and resurrection and the eternal glory of His heavenly home with you and me and with all of mankind. Therefore He calls His disciples, His followers, us, to carry this message to the world regardless of the cost. What an unmerited privilege we have been given by receiving this call through the Gospel to be Jesus' fishermen.

There is no denying that the cost of discipleship is steep. Jesus never hesitated to let people know up front what it would cost to follow Him. But Jesus was also quick to assure His followers, even as He assures us through His Word, that He will be with us every step of the way, give us the ability, power, courage, will and desire to carry out His calling and in the end we will receive the crown of life.

So let's get going! Let's not just talk about it--let's do it! Let's go **FISHING FOR CHRIST!**

Amen.