

GO FISH
Mark 1:14-20

The passage we're looking at today has been done, and done, and done. If you've been in church for very long, you've heard this passage. You've heard that Jesus wants you to fish for people, meaning he wants you to go out into the world and bring people in. And maybe that idea offends you. Or maybe it scares you. Or maybe you're just tired of hearing about it.

Well, if you will work with me, I'm going to show you some things that you probably didn't know, and you're going to see this whole fishing for people thing in a new way. If you're offended, this will help. If you're scared, this will help. And if you're tired of it, hopefully what I'm going to show you will get you excited again.

Mark, chapter 1, verse 14:

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God (Mark 1:14, NRSV).

Stop right there. Here's the first new thing— The Christian message is GOOD NEWS! One reason we're afraid to fish for people is because we don't want to come across like the street preachers holding up judgmental signs that say,

- "God Hates You"
- "God is Your Enemy"
- "You're Going to Hell"

But the thing is, that is *not* the Christian message! Mark 1:14 says that Jesus came proclaiming Good News. It was not "God hates you." It was not "You're going to hell." It was GOOD NEWS – a message of hope, and love, and better relationships, and a better world.

Now you say, "I don't know, Claude I'm still pretty nervous. If I let people know I'm a Christian, I'm going to be associated with the street preachers and the sign-wavers..."

And you know what? *You're right.* Christianity has a lot of negative baggage in our culture right now.

So what that means is that you and I have to SHOW PEOPLE that the Christian message is good news. Before we tell people about God's love we have to show people God's love. That's why this church is so committed to serving our community. That's why we do Bethany Café, and Bethesda Center, and the homeless food bags we gave out last week. That's why our youth go to Rupert Bell Park to work with the homeless. That's why we're collecting toiletries for the prisons. That's why we're doing the Poverty Simulation next month.

By serving people and meeting needs, we demonstrate that the Christian message is GOOD NEWS! And you know what? That's exactly what Jesus did.

So it's Good News. That's the first thing. Now look at v. 15—

15 “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near” (Mark 1:15a).

To the people who heard Jesus say this, this is *really* good news:

- The time has come – what time?

- The time of God's Promise.
- The time of Messiah.
- The time you've been waiting for.
- The time when God does something about this awful world we live in.

And then the central message of Jesus: “The Kingdom of God has come near.” And the Kingdom of God is so much more than just going to heaven when you die!

- It's a quality of life that starts now**
- It's a network of relationships that starts now**
- It's a new life of meaning and purpose that starts now**
- It's vision of the future that changes your life now**

When we go out to fish for people, we're not just selling “fire insurance.” We're inviting them to be a part of a wonderful state of existence called “The Kingdom of God.”

That's the second thing – and then look at the rest of v. 15 –

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:15)

Now, look at that word, “Repent.” That's also associated with street preachers, and graffiti on overpasses, and hand-painted wooden signs nailed to telephone poles along country roads. We think it means, “Weep and wail and be sorry for your sins.” And while those emotions can certainly be a part of repentance, that's not actually what the word means.

“Repent” actually means, “Change your mind.” The original Greek word is *metanoia*. It literally means “new mind.” So, to repent is to see things in a new way. It's to *wake up and see what God is doing*. In the Old Testament, Repent meant, “Get your life in order SO THAT God will do something.” But here Jesus is saying, “God's *already* doing

something! The time has come, the kingdom of God is near – so WAKE UP and see what God is doing!”

Now, that’s important to you as a fisher of people, because what we’re going to see is that Jesus wants you to wake up to what he’s already doing. He’s already out there stirring up the fish. You just need to wake up and see it.

And this is important to the people you’re “fishing” for, because you need to be praying that they would wake up. Ask God to open their eyes and let them see that He is alive, and He’s good, and He’s at work in the world.

SO – we haven’t even gotten to the part about fishing, and I’ve already told you three new things:

1. The Christian message is Good News! It’s not those hate-filled signs that the street preachers wave.
2. We’re inviting people to be part of the Kingdom of God, which is a wonderful state of existence that starts now.
3. “Repent” simply means Wake up! And that’s what we need to pray for when we pray for friends and family who are not in a relationship with God.

Now: The fishing story. Verse 16 --

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen (Mark 1:16).

It’s interesting that Mark says, “Casting a net...for they were fisherman.” That’s redundant. Why else would they be casting a net into the lake? It’s like saying, “He saw them selling shoes, for they were shoe salesmen,” or, “He saw them repairing a roof, for they were roofers,” or, “He saw them running their mouths, for they were Methodist preachers.”

The fact that Mark points out the obvious must mean that he really wants us to know that these guys are fishermen. WHY? Because he wants us to understand that Jesus calls ordinary, everyday people. The first disciples were not highly educated, seminary-trained religious professionals. They were ordinary people just like you.

And look at what Jesus wants these ordinary people to do:

“Follow me and I will make you fish for people” (Mark 1:17).

Get this straight: To follow Jesus is to fish for people.

Followers fish!

Fishing is the family business! If you’re in Jesus’ family, you’re going to fish!

Followers fish!

And notice that this is before Jesus has taught these guys anything! They're newbies. They're wet behind the ears. They're so green that if you threw 'em in a fire they wouldn't burn! But from the very beginning Jesus says, "Let's go fishing!" Because –

Followers fish!

Now, that excites me – and it scares me to death.

It excites me because of the possibility of changed lives, and improved relationships, and people finding new life in Christ

It scares me because talking about Jesus – out there – is hard. I have no problem doing it in here – in here I'm safe – in here I could preach all day (in fact, some of y'all wish I wouldn't preach all day). But out there, where people make fun of Christians, and people reject Christians, and people have all these horrible ideas about Christians—that scares me to death. It's bad out there. I don't even like to tell people what I do for a living!

And I'm guessing if it scares me, it probably scares you a little bit too.

So here's another new thing I wanna show you. This is verse 17, but it's from a different version. This is the *New Living Translation*:

*Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will **show you how** to fish for people!"*

See that? Jesus says, "I will **show you how**." What that says to me is that if I'll just stick close to Jesus, he'll *show me* how to fish.

I remember when my son David was just a little guy and I showed him how to fish. I took him to the pond in our neighborhood and I showed him how to put a worm on the hook, and I showed him how to watch the bobber, and how to set the hook once you got a bite. It was such good times sitting there, building our relationship as we fished.

And that's what Jesus wants to do with you! He wants to hang out with you and teach you how to fish!

Jesus says, "Come follow me, and I will **show you how** to fish!" That takes a lot of pressure off! But it gets even better: This is Mark 1:17 in the *English Standard Version*, which is a stricter translation from the original Greek –

*And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will **make you become** fishers of men."*

The original Greek words carry this idea that Jesus is going to turn you into something—like when the fairy godmother turned a pumpkin into a coach. Jesus is going to take you,

whoever you are, whatever you do, whatever you're good at—he's going to use your personality, your relationships, your position in life—he's going to take all that and use it to reach other people.

You are uniquely positioned to reach somebody.

There are people in your life who, if I went to 'em and said, "Hey, why don't you come to church?" would say, "Preacher, get out of my face!" But YOU – because of who you are – because of your unique position – you can reach that person.

It starts with you showing them that the message of Christianity is Good News!

It continues as you build a relationship and they experience the Kingdom of God in you.

And then as you continue to pray, the day finally comes when that person wakes up and sees that God is alive and at work in the world. And then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, your dear friend or family member turns to God and finds new life.

Jesus says, "If you'll follow me, *"I will **show you how**"* to do that." Even better – "If you follow me, "I will **make you become**" the kind of person who does that. Wake up, you'll see that I'm already stirring the water, and there are fish in your life who are ready."

**Note: I am indebted to Andy Stanley of Northpoint Community Church in Atlanta for some of the ideas in this sermon—especially the phrase, "Followers fish!"*

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