

**Sermon - 01/22/23**  
**Ps 27; Is 9:1-4; 1 Cor 1:10-18; Mt 4:12-23**

We're pretty sure Noah didn't do much fishing from the ark. He only had two worms, you know.

My idea of a great day fishing is packing a picnic, heading out on the lake with friends. I drop my line in the water at some beautiful, shady spot – put my feet up and open a good book. I don't catch many fish.

As we open the Gospel of Matthew, we come upon Jesus at the beginning of His ministry. There is news. His cousin, John Baptist has been put in jail by Herod Antipas. The text does not tell us Jesus' ministry was about to begin, as John's ministry was ending. Rather, we see Him take action. A picture is worth a thousand words. He leaves Nazareth, where He has lived and worked with His family. He goes to Capernaum, on Lake Galilee. In our passage for this morning, He begins to call His disciples. Peter's fishing company is in Capernaum. Peter is fishing with his brother, Andrew. They hear Jesus' voice over all the other sounds of the seashore and the docks. Makes you think, doesn't it? The prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, knew from a young age that the Lord was calling them by name. There was already a place in their lives for the Lord to dwell. Peter, Andrew, James and John have such a heart-place also. They did not pause. They left their nets and their boats behind. I ask you, do you experience that "holy discontent" in your life? Not that you don't love those around you – not that you don't enjoy what you do – your career and work. But, is there a longing in you that is not yet fulfilled? Listen for the voice of God as you are studying your Bible and praying. Ask God the Holy Spirit to show you what purpose He has for you now. The next thing is to answer His calling – to follow the Lord Jesus, as these disciples did.

Jesus' purpose in calling these disciples was not simply to surround Himself with friends. The point was to spread the Good News. Notice that Jesus begins to preach the very same message that John had preached before he went to prison: He tells the crowds, "Repent! For the kingdom of heaven has come near." Isaiah's prophecy made hundreds of years before is being fulfilled in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (in Capernaum) – the Light of the world is illuminating the darkness. Jesus is not teaching us how to go to heaven. He is announcing the great Good News that God's power is manifested on earth as it is in heaven. The kingdom has come near. The moment you hear it, believe it and accept it, it is yours forever. In it we move forward.

Jesus performs miracles of healing as a sign of who He really is. He is divine – born into the world supernaturally. Jesus is sent in the flesh by your heavenly Father to be that Way – that Truth – that Bridge over troubled water – into the place of God's desiring – His presence. I'm talking here and now – not by and by!

These first disciples Jesus called were fishermen. If you know even a few Bible stories, you remember Jesus told them, "I will make you fishers of men." So, nets, boats, other fishing gear – all were left behind. What tools were they to use in this new calling – fishing for men?

When you and I hear the Lord calling us to follow Him, we have one foundational question we must answer: Do I trust God to be Who He says He is?

I stand to tell folks again and again that God – the God of the Old and New Testaments – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. He is exactly who He says He is.

The tools, the methods we use to "fish for men and women, boys and girls," are basic. Let me unpack the tackle box – Proverbs 3:5-6:

First, "Trust God from the bottom of your heart;"

This is the number one building block of doing what Jesus and the disciples did.

*(Continued on next page.)*

Second, “don’t try to figure out everything on your own.” By faith in the Word of God we look to Him for grace, inspiration, courage, strength to share Jesus day after day.

Third, “Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go;” Listening to God’s Word as revealed in the Bible, and revealed in your prayer and meditation upon what you hear, as well as the relationships with those you trust (your friends in Jesus) and the Holy Spirit. These means will set up road signs and confirmation about being someone who shares the Good News.

Finally, by believing His love and purpose for you, “he’s the one who will keep you on track.” Jesus is saying, “Follow Me...”

These four things in your tackle-box fulfill the purpose the Lord has for you.

Again, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
And do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He will make your paths straight.”

The Book of Proverbs continues like this:

“Don’t assume that you know it all.

Run to God! Run from evil!

Your body will glow with health,  
your very bones will vibrate with life!

Honor God with everything you own;  
give him the first and the best.

Your barns will burst,  
your wine vats will brim over.

But don’t, dear friend, resent God’s discipline;  
don’t sulk under his loving correction.

It’s the child he loves that God corrects;  
a father’s delight is behind all this.” (vv 7-12)

This is our purpose – this is why we are here together today. Get your fishing gear! Amen.