

Series: John

Title: From Fishermen to Fishers of Men (The Voice of the Gospel)

Text: Jn 21: 1-14

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John 21: 1: After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; [sea of Galilee] and on this wise shewed he *himself*. 2: There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee [James and John], and two other of his disciples. 3: Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. 4: But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. 5: Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. 6: And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. 7: Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. 8: And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. 9: As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. 10: Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. 11: Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. 12: Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. 13: Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. 14: This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

It was here the Lord first called them. And this scene reminds us of our Lord's promise when he called them, to turn them from being *fishermen* to *fishers of men*.

Matthew 4: 18: And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19: And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20: And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him. 21: And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. 22: And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

We only know our Lord Jesus by revelation. And revelation is only by the Lord speaking into the heart he has made.

John 21: 1: After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he *himself*.

After his resurrection, whenever any saw the Lord it was because the Lord revealed himself by speaking his Word. It is his Voice. Mary Magdalene did not recognize him until he spoke and revealed himself. The two on the road to Emmaus did not recognize him until he spoke and revealed himself to them. They don't know him here until he spoke and revealed himself.

Proposition: The means God is pleased to use in fishing for men is the preaching of the gospel of Christ and him crucified and prayer. It is because it is only Christ the Word speaking the word, that reveals himself in the hearts of sinners.

Romans 1: 16: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17: For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from Faith to faith [from the Faithful One to the faith of his child]: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

WHO DOES OUR LORD USE?

John 21: 2: There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

"*There were together.*" The Lord uses men he calls to preach but each one he calls and unites in a local church are together preaching the gospel.

Who were they? They were sinners who Christ made to know they were sinners.

Simon Peter. He was impetuous, self-willed, one who had denied knowing the Lord three times, who even at this time had led them out there fishing.

Thomas called Didymus. Willful unbelieving Thomas. Pessimistic Thomas. Thomas was good at focusing on the cloud rather than the silver lining.

Nathanael of Cana in Galilee. When he heard the Lord Jesus had come out of Nazareth, he said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth." That was a mighty bigoted statement to go thumbs down on an entire town. That came from the sinful flesh. But Christ looks on the heart the Spirit has created. And speaking of the new heart the Lord had given him, Christ called him, "An Israelite indeed in whom is no guile."

And the sons of Zebedee. John and James were ambitious, prideful. They wanted to sit on each side of the Lord in glory. They are the "sons of thunder." When some did not believe they asked the Lord if they should cry down fire on them.

Have you noticed how the Lord taught his apostles, through their besetting sins?

Peter resisted the Lord's word when he told Peter that Peter would deny him three times. Peter boasted what he would and would not do. Then he denied the Lord as Christ said he would. But the Lord restored him. So later Peter exhorted us to submit to one another, humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, that he might exalt us in his time, casting all your care on him for he careth for you. Remembering, the Lord is accomplishing the same afflictions in our brethren.

John thundered when he desired to cry down fire on unbelievers. He filled the others with indignation because he thought he should be greater than them in heaven. By the Lord unchanging love to John, later John wrote three epistles instructing us to believe on the Lord Jesus and love one another. By God's grace John became the loving apostle.

James did the same as John. Another time he looked to his own wisdom and strength telling Paul to come under a Jewish vow in order to make his Jewish brethren receive him. That was of James flesh. Later, we find his epistle teaching us what he learned. He declares the works of faith God works in his children as we preach the gospel and fish for men. It is a trial of faith. So we must be patient, ask God, believe God is able, nothing wavering. We use only the gospel by which God made us to be born-again. He learned to be no respecter of persons but to rejoice in mercy rather than judgment. The Lord taught James not to be many masters and judges but to remember, there is One Lawgiver able to make his children stand. He taught James to submit to the Lord's will. We are to use our riches for the furtherance of Christ's gospel rather than saving them up to be witnesses against us in the last day. Like Job, we patiently wait on the Lord to establish our heart and the heart of brethren and be not grudging against one another. For lost sinners, as well as for brethren sick in sin (both are as helpless as orphans and widows) we are to visit them with this one message of the good news of Christ, pray for them, trust God to anoint them with the Holy Spirit, knowing that if they have sinned, God will forgive them. James knew by his own errors that every other means are the spots of false religion. James entire epistle speak of these works of faith that only God works in his children, even overruling our sins and errors, as the Lord did for James.

The example James gave is Abraham. Many times we lose patience, look to our own wisdom, and use James' epistle to do exactly what the epistle tells us not to do. But Abraham believed God was able to raise from the dead. Therefore, he patiently waited on the Lord. He denied himself any other means but believing God. He had to deny the one he loved when Isaac said, "We need to go get a lamb." That is like men who look to self when trials come. But as Abraham refused to listen to Isaac, he comforted Isaac with the gospel. This is the best answer we can give when brethren want to provide by our own hands, our own strength and our wisdom. Abraham said, "*My son, God will provide himself a lamb.*" Those are works of faith that James and each of the apostles had failed at miserably. Yet as we see here, Christ taught them and made them doers of the word. And we will see how.

Before we move on, notice in verse 2, *and two other of his disciples.* We don't know who they were. That is the lesson. It is not our name that matters, only the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by whom we are saved. Of the impotent man made whole, Peter said,

Acts 4: 10: Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole....12: Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

So we see our Lord began sending forth the gospel using sinners saved by grace. They had all left the Lord when he was crucified. The 'Shepherd was smitten,' and 'the sheep scattered.' Yet, here they are back in Galilee together due to one reason, the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished the redemption of his people and arose from the dead. They were together because the Lord's grace is free and sovereign and he gives more grace. They were together because he gathered them and to teach them and make them fishers of men.

THE POWER IS NOT OF US

John 21: 3: Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

The Lord had sent word for them to wait for him in Galilee. Perhaps the others were there waiting. But Peter, being quick to act and slow to wait, said, "*I go a fishing.*" And being influential, he led the others with him, "*We go also with you.*" There was no waiting. They entered into a boat immediately. Some think Peter left the ministry for his former occupation. It would certainly magnify the Lord's grace and power here. But one thing is certain, the Lord did not command them to go fishing. So "*that night they caught nothing.*"

The power for our personal salvation, and for preaching the gospel together, is not of us. Each of us together must wait on the Lord. We must not use our wisdom or strength. All is of the grace and power of our Lord and Savior through the means that pleased him, preaching which gives all glory to God in his Son.

2 Corinthians 4:7: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

THE POWER IS OUR LORD BY HIS WORD

John 21: 4: But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. 5: Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. 6: And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

What a picture! "*When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore!*" The sun began to rise and there stood the true DayStar! Our Lord Jesus promised to gather his people and be present where he has gathered them. But our Light is Christ alone shining into the heart. They were not far off the land but by the natural light of the rising sun they knew him not. We only know the Lord Jesus by revelation. The one way we know Christ is speaking to us personally is by his Voice. The only way the word will be blessed to others is by his Word. Christ is the Wisdom and Power of God who speaks into our heart revealing himself.

By his word, he first brings us, personally, to confess our sin and inability to him. He said, "Children, have you caught anything?" These were grown men. Salty fishermen. Yet, they were not offended when a stranger on the shore called them "children." That was only due to Christ's Word spoken effectually in their heart. I hear each of them at once answering, "No!" By his power and wisdom speaking into our heart, Wisdom makes his child personally confess our own sin and inability to him. Not only do we confess our sin but that we have been striving to put it away by our own wisdom and strength. He brings us to confess we have accomplished nothing. It is Christ making us confess that in our flesh dwells no good thing.

Then by his word, he made them willing to cast the net on the other side and he filled it. What a lesson! When we look to our wisdom, our strength, our means, our works, we are always fishing on the wrong side of the boat! Again, this is personal. It is Christ alone who makes us, personally, know and cast the net on the right side.

He alone fills the net. He fill us with his Spirit by his Word personally. This is how he teaches us that he fills his pew. He may use us to invite someone. But he fills the pew and he fills the hearts of those in the pew. He alone fills the net by his word through the gospel. He Head of the church, he "fillet all in all" (Eph 1: 22-23).

When Christ has spoken his word into our hearts, that is how and when we know him and go to him.

John 21: 7: Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. 8: And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

The only way we know that the Lord alone is able to work this in others, and that he does it only through his word, is for him to work it in us, personally, time and again, saving us from our sin, our unbelief and our failures so that we know only he was able to work it in us. That means there will be times we will fall and the Lord will afflict us. But as the Lord restores you by the gospel try to remember the Lord is accomplishing the same affliction in your brethren when they fall. Speak the good news of Christ and his finished work of redemption to one another.

A PRIVILEGE OF GRACE

John 21: 9: As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. 10: Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

Brethren, it is a privilege of his grace that our Lord uses us together to preach his gospel. But the Lord does not have to use us. When they got there he already had fish on the coals. But what grace! He told them bring the fish they had caught.

Lest we become proud and think we are vitally need, the Lord shows us it is a privilege of grace, not only that he called us personally through the gospel, but that it pleased God to use those he has called to minister the gospel of his precious Name to others just like us.

WE PREACH CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED

John 21: 11: Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

The preaching of Christ and him crucified is the one means God uses. The only net, the only means, God's true fishers of men use is the preaching of the good news of Christ our God. We declared that our Lord Jesus successful redeemed God's elect. That he sends the gospel. That he sends the Holy Spirit. That he draws us to himself. We preach salvation is of the Lord. This is not only an evangelical message when God first calls his child. This is the gospel we are not ashamed to preach to all who God has saved. We must shut sinners up to the fact that we were ruined in the fall. The Spirit must regenerate us and God must teach us that God our Father and his Son Christ Jesus gets all the glory in salvation.

You have heard the difference between fishing with a hook and fishing with a net. Fishing with a hook and bait deceives the fish. With a net, you simply cast it into the sea and wait on the Lord to fill it.

Scripture describes the world's religion, with the various means and tactics they use to attract and coerce professions out of sinners, as using hooks. God calls them anglers. They use a different net, like a trawl that drags across the ocean floor and forces fish into the net. And the end result is different. They glory in themselves and worship their net and their drag.

Habakkuk 1: 15: They take up all of them [men as fish] with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16: Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them [by the fishers themselves] their portion *is* fat, and their meat plenteous.

God is so wise to use the preaching of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul said it pleased God to save them that believe through the preaching of the gospel. Here is why. The means is different and the end is different.

1 Corinthians 1: 29: That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Notice, in our text, the net was full yet *the net was not broken*. Our Lord shall send the gospel forth until each and every one of his blood bought children are brought in.

Also, notice, "*For all there were so many.*" There was 153 fish so each person had plenty to eat. When the gospel of Christ is preached, for all the Lord's disciples, there is food just for them. The Lord gives each one their daily bread abundantly just according to what he knows they need.

THE WORK IS FINISHED

John 21: 12: Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

The good news of the gospel of Christ is that the work is finished by Christ. The Lord Jesus told them, "*Come and dine!*" All is ready! Christ by himself purged the sins of his people. By his obedience, he is our Righteousness. He works this work within us by the Spirit creating a new holy heart in his image and Christ keeps us sanctified unto him. This is how he is made Sanctification unto us and keeps us separated unto him. If the Lord had left them to themselves the disciples would have never returned to him.

When he speaks the word into the heart then we know him, "*none dared ask him, 'who art thou.'*" *They each knew he was the Lord.*" Our Lord Jesus promised this would be the case when he speaks into the heart.

Isaiah 52: 6: Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* he that doth speak: behold, *it is I*. 7: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! 8: Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

Therefore, by Christ speaking into our own hearts, all Christ's watchmen lift up the voice in agreement giving Christ all the glory. But it Christ's Voice lifted up together with the voice of one crying in the wilderness that makes the word effectual in the heart. It is Christ himself, personally, who feeds us and he is the living Bread.

John 21: 13: Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. 14: This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

The same as he revealed himself to them many times in those 40 days before he ascended, so he shall continue revealing himself in the heart of his people through the preaching of the gospel because he is our risen Redeemer who filleth all in all! Come and dine!

Amen!