

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

LET'S GO FISHING

Matthew 4:18-22

January 6, 2019

For public use: See non-copyright comments at the end of the message.

The title of my message today is “Let’s Go Fishing” and here are my three points:

- Good fishermen can use their skillset for Jesus
- Good fishermen must be prepared
- Good fishermen must think big

INTRODUCTION: Fishing for food has been around since the first generations of people. Fishing for sport and hobby is a modern development. A lot of money is spent on boats and supplies. In my travels to the Bahamas and Caribbean, I saw incredible sport fishing boats. No telling how much they cost. And I saw working fishing boats. It’s very easy to tell the difference.

Some places have an annual “Take a kid fishing day.” And recently, I learned of a non-profit organization that focuses on taking handicapped kids fishing. My sons and I have talked about going north one winter and renting an ice-fishing shack.

There was a day, however, when there was no sport fishing. Anyone who went fishing went with one goal in mind: to catch fish and eat them.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 4:18-22

Read with me from Matthew, Chapter 4 ¹⁸ *As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.*

²¹ *Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets.*

Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

This same story is told in the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke. It must be important since the story was told from three different perspectives.

GOOD FISHERMEN CAN USE THEIR SKILLSET FOR JESUS

EXPLANATION: By telling them to become fishers of men, Jesus was telling them to take their fishing skills and transfer them to reaching people for the Kingdom of God. He did not say, “Go get an education.” He did not say, “Find a rabbi and get trained by him.” He did not say, “Memorize a bunch of scripture and come up with a witnessing plan.” Those things could have been the result of Jesus’ command, but they were not part of his command.

What if Jesus had called out to the men in the boat, “Quit your careers. Learn a completely new set of skills because the ones you have are not any good for the work I have for you?” Had Jesus said that, the men would have been lost.

Jesus called the men to a higher form of fishing. And they did just what Jesus instructed them to do. They set aside fishing for fish and began fishing for people.

APPLICATION: Jesus is calling all of us to a higher level of whatever we do. If you are a cook, cook for the Lord. If you teach school, teach for the Lord. If you work on an assembly line, work for the Lord. Whatever you do, do it for the Lord. All our work needs to have a higher perspective. Consider that you are the Lord’s missionary wherever you are.

You may ask, but how do I cook for the Lord, teach for the Lord, or work on an assembly line, or whatever, for the Lord? What does that look like? How do I approach it from a higher perspective? Jesus answered those questions in his command, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” That’s the first step. If you don’t follow him, then you’ll experience the doldrums of life and everything will be just an exercise in going through the motions. What a boring way to live.

So good fishermen use their skillset for Jesus. What is your skill set? It's different from mine. Though there are similarities, you have skills I know nothing about. But I know what mine is. I'm doing my best to use that skillset for the Lord. These people were fishermen, and Jesus said, "Hey, I will make you fishers of men. Come follow me." So your current skill set, whatever it is, think about it from a higher perspective.

GOOD FISHERMEN MUST BE PREPARED

EXPLANATION: Jesus' command - "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." - explicitly implied that Jesus was going to teach them a whole new way to fish. He would take them from fishing on the sea to fishing on the land. And as we know, the disciples had a lot to learn about fishing for people.

They were a rough bunch. They weren't very educated, at least most of them. They probably didn't have good grammar. They probably hadn't spoken in front of crowds before. How many of you like speaking in front of crowds? Not me. I'm kind of used to it. The reason it doesn't bother me anymore is I can't embarrass myself any more than I already have. Public speaking's not easy, and here are a group of fishermen that Jesus was calling to be fishers of men. And he was going to give them the courage to speak in front of people they'd never imagined they'd be speaking to while they were fishing in those boats. They learned from the master, and a few years later when he ascended into heaven, the disciples were fully and completely equipped to fish for people on their own, because of his teaching. He taught them to fish in a whole new way.

I don't recall if there is a story about Jesus fishing himself. He ate fish, he was around fishermen, but whether he fished is unknown to me. We know from Mark 6 that Jesus was a carpenter and the son of a carpenter.

ILLUSTRATION: I read Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" recently. Yes, I know most of you read it in high school. But I didn't. I missed it somewhere along the way. It's a small book, and I read it in two sittings. A seasoned Cuban fisherman fished for over 80 days and caught nothing, but he remained faithful and continued to fish every day. Then one day he hooked something really large. The fish pulled his boat for many miles away from Cuba.

He held on to the line for several days, trying to stay awake. Dealing with the heat of the sun, the lack of water and food, and trying not to go insane were huge challenges. Eventually, the fish tired out and surfaced. The old man killed the fish and set sail for home, towing the huge fish. I won't tell you the end of the story, but the man barely escapes with his life.

There are several lessons to be learned from the story. The old man was unprepared for the big fish. He had a standard routine, and his guard was down because he hadn't been successful. And so, one day he went out without a helper and with only minimal supplies. He planned to fail another day. When the big one came, he was not ready. The man expresses his regret over and over for not being prepared. And you're wanting to tell the man, hey, let go of the line and save yourself. You're going to die. He just could not let go.

APPLICATION: As we become fishers of people, we must be prepared for things outside of the routine. The old man – who was a lifelong fisherman – had become so accustomed to failure that the big fish caught him by surprise.

I assume all of you have some approach to sharing the Gospel. You've probably thought a lot about it. Perhaps the way you share your faith in Jesus is through testimonies, that is, telling others about what the Lord has done for you. Perhaps you share your faith in Jesus by sharing scriptures or doing kind deeds in his name. Perhaps you share your faith in Jesus in a more direct evangelistic way, which requires the listener to make a decision. As a fisher of people, I encourage you to expand your tackle box. Don't do the same routine. If you're like the old man and you've fished with the same bait for 80 days unsuccessfully, maybe you need to try something different. Don't use the same bait over and over. Experiment a little. Try new things. Try new approaches. If you've been praying for someone in your family or life and there doesn't seem to be any response, try something new from the tackle box.

GOOD FISHERMEN MUST THINK BIG

EXPLANATION: The disciples became fishers of people indeed, but it didn't happen overnight. They were small thinkers at first. They had Jesus with them, God incarnate, the miracle worker, the healer, the most incredible person who's ever

lived on the face of the earth and yet at times they struggled with their small fish thinking. They didn't fully understand their mission until toward the end of their time with Jesus. They went from being on a boat doing the same daily routine to a whole new way of fishing, a whole new life and adventure with Jesus. When you read the book of Acts and other parts of the New Testament, you'll understand that they didn't go from being expert fishermen in the sea of Galilee to being expert fishers of men. They had to learn a new way to fish. They had to learn how to think big.

ILLUSTRATION: A little over fifteen years ago I took a group of boys to a tiny island in the Bahamas for a week. One of the boys borrowed a fishing pole and went to the dock. A local guy came by to talk. He looked at the boy's pole and hook and laughed. "Your pole and hook are too small. To catch a big fish, you need a big pole and a big hook." I was intrigued by what he said. How do the fish know the size and strength of a fishing pole? Why do the fish care about the size of the hook? It's interesting how a man who knew how to fish was more interested in the sizes of the fishing pole and hook than he was the bait. And you know what, when the boy started fishing with a bigger hook, he caught a big fish.

APPLICATION: As fishers of people, let's get ambitious. Let's get bigger poles and larger hooks. Let's not settle for only small-time fishing. Perhaps we've analyzed and debated what kind of bait to use instead of going fishing.

CONCLUSION: You'll never catch fish if you don't go fishing! Share the Good News of Jesus with someone today!

To preachers, teachers, students, and anyone else reading or using this message: I have posted this for all to use as you see fit. There is no need to cite me as the source. You are free to delete sections, add your own, or do whatever you want. There is no copyright. My request is that you do not copyright or sell my work. I am sharing my preaching notes in good faith with you because I know the challenges of putting together a lesson, especially when your week gets consumed with other things. Use it and enjoy!

I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com. Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA