**Net Fishers of Men**

Based on [Luke 5:1-11](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk5.1-11)

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Fifth Sunday after Trinity

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How great is Our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Through his steadfast love, he has forgiven us our sins and poured out upon us generously his gift of the Holy Spirit, making us a communion of Saints. We are the church, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. And he has called us here out of the world, not by trickery or deceit, but through the simple Gospel of his Son that, even while our outer nature is wasting away, we might partake of his divine life.

The simple idea of today’s gospel lesson is that–through the ministry of his disciples–Jesus will gather his people throughout the world into his church. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, this catch will happen and it is nothing less than miraculous when it does. And the net that drags men into the boat of the church is the word of God, his gospel—holy, unchanging, pure and unalloyed. It will not fail to catch those for whom it is cast, and Christ will not lose a single one whom his Father sends.

Jesus tells his disciples they will become “fishers of men.” And there’s something very important to realise. When someone today in our part of the world talks about going fishing, they mean “Bait fishing”. That is…taking a rod and a reel and a hook and a lure to trick the fish into biting, tickle their attention and string them along, then once they bite you can reel ‘em in. But the disciples, they weren't bait fishermen. They fished with nets.

This can be understood allegorically. What I mean is that bait fishing catches fish with a lure. It is deceitful. It is trickery. It draws fish by attracting the appetite.

So let us be mindful of this: When Jesus told his disciples they were going to be “fishers of men'' he wasn’t talking about bait fishing, he was talking about net fishing. And this tells us how we are to go about evangelising; not by treating the gospel like bait that needs to attract men, but like a net that is cast to gather the catch that God provides.

The ministry was not called to lure men into the church by their appetites. The holy ministry is not a method of fishing that tries to make one catch at a time, tailored to the target. Such fisherman choose the bait that is likely to attract their attention, that particular type of fish and on that particular day. Use shiny lures on cloudy days, oh their biting on plugs today…should we troll or jig…well depends on what the fish are up to.

The ministry of christ is not called to market a hook to a fish who wouldn’t otherwise bite. It seems to me, were Peter Andrew James and John bait fishermen he wouldn’t have called them to be fishers of men. Jesus didn't find men who could speak in lofty words, and make Jesus look attractive to the eyes, good for food and desirable to make one wise. Jesus didn't choose apostles who would hide the cross with self-help, purpose driven, fresh-new teaching that Jesus never thought of. In the book of Acts the people were astounded that such ordinary uneducated men as peter and john were able to be so persuasive. They weren’t persuasive; the Holy Spirit persuades. They weren’t able to hide the hook in the worm, hide the peas in the mashed potatoes, hide the catch in the sales pitch. They just spoke plainly the gospel. Jesus called men, men without degrees or titles–fishermen who did nothing but cast the net he gives them, the word of God.

St. Paul, speaking on behalf of all of the apostles upon whom the church was build says as much. He writes, “[**1**](http://biblehub.com/2_corinthians/4-1.htm)Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God,[***a***](https://biblehub.com/esv/2_corinthians/4.htm#footnotes) we do not lose heart. [**2**](http://biblehub.com/2_corinthians/4-2.htm)But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice[***b***](https://biblehub.com/esv/2_corinthians/4.htm#footnotes) cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.

It’s no mystery why most people don't willingly join the church. It's because the human race is cursed with sin. By nature we are self-involved sinners who have been seduced by the world and deceived by the devil and our hearts are at war with God...that's why we don't join the church by following our appetites. Men need to be caught to be sure, but how do you suppose a bait fisherman would go about it? Well, you hide the truth, the hook, under something that would attract their appetite. Self involved sinners would be lured by teaching to their interests, meets their needs. Worldly sinners would like to hear how Jesus can make them rich and popular. Sinners who hate God would be lured in by hearing that God surrenders his sound doctrine to scratch their itching ears. Oh not necessarily in some crass openly wicked way, but carefully hiding the hook under a man made lure.

Do you know what another word for lure is? Tempt. Another word for bait?...temptation. Temptation, that’s the devil’s way of doing things, not God's. The scriptures are clear that God tempts no one (James 1:13). The Lord of the church did not call us to make disciples of all nations by tempting them into a faith they would otherwise reject…but by baptizing and by teaching all that Christ had commanded. Teaching the pure doctrine of Christ is casting the net of the word.

St. Paul says “We preach christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the greeks.” Ironically the beautiful unsurpassable glory of the Gospel is covered in unattractiveness. Salvation is hidden in the humility of repentance and shame of a cross. So the snooty and proud fish sniff and pass it by in mockery, the belly feeders with disgust. The glory that is the gift of God is hidden from the eyes so that it can be received only by means of faith.

It pleased God to hide his power in weakness, his glory in suffering, his riches in rags, his royalty in carpentry, his royal sceptre in a reed; his crown in thorns. “There was no form or majesty we should look at him, no beauty that we should desire him.” The gospel is the opposite of worldly wisdom the opposite of an appearance of glory that hides the shame within. With the flesh of Christ the unattractive hook is on the outside, and the shiny reward hidden within.

Knowing what we do–that the gift of God’s Son is veiled in human flesh, that his power is made perfect in weakness, that he uses what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and what is weak to shame the strong, that God has come to us in the form of a servant–when the world rejects this message it is a sign of it’s authenticity. We know not to alter the message to meet needs and serve appetites, for it is God’s net, Jesus’ boat, the Holy Spirit,s calling. When the gospel is rejected we don’t change it, but shake the dust from our feet and cast the net elsewhere, to the highways and byways, and let God prepare the catch that he will sort for eternal life in the day that the Son of Man comes again to find faith on the earth.

47“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. 48When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. 49So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.