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## FISHERS OF MEN

Mark (and Matthew) recorded when Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to be “*fishers of men*” (Mk. 1:16-20; Matt. 4:18-22). These men had already met Jesus at the time of this calling (Jn. 1), and now Jesus sees them fishing in the Sea of Galilee and calls for them to be “*fishers of men*.” What a unique thing to say to these men. How can someone go from fishing for fish to fishing for men? Christ would spend the next three years preparing them for the work! What’s necessary to fish for men? Really, there are several similarities between this and fishing for fish? First, one needs a net if he’s going to catch fish or catch men! The spiritual net that’s spread is the Word of God! Christ wanted them to “cast” this “net” far and wide. He told them to preach about repentance and that “*the*

*kingdom of Heaven is at hand*” (Mk. 6; Lk. 10; Matt. 10). Are we looking for ways to “cast” the gospel net today? Have we thought of ways to use our opportunities to tell others about the Lord? If not, why not? Another thing these fishers needed was patience! Just as fish aren’t always caught right away, so also, men can be cantankerous and wish to fight against the truth of God’s word. The apostles needed patience! Paul also taught this to Timothy in II Timothy 4:2. The original twelve apostles would see the patience of Christ as He taught the people continually and faced opposition daily (Mk. 2:7; etc.). As “*fishers of men*,” these men needed patience, just as a farmer has patience when he plants the seed and waits for the harvest (Mk. 4:1-9, 14-20)! Today, we need patience as we teach folks about the Lord. A wise person

once told me, “Don’t expect a person to learn in five minutes what it took you five years to learn.” Yes, patience is needed as we teach and show people what it means to be a Christian. Fishermen also need faith that the method will work! The procedure for catching fish on Galilee is that one fishes at night and on the shallow end. We get a picture of this in Luke 5:5. In Mark 1:16, we read about Jesus walking “*by the sea*,” i.e., on the beach, and He sees Peter and Andrew “*casting a net into the sea*.” Evidently, they were standing on the beach and throwing their nets into Galilee. In the case of fishing for men, the Lord taught these men a method that works! They were to preach God’s word in its fulness and simplicity. They were to teach it faithfully to all (Mk. 6:12, 16:15; Lk. 10:9; Matt. 10:7; II Tim. 2:2). When these faithful men preached the truth, it would produce faith in others (Rom. 10:17). The same is true today! The gospel is “*the power of God unto salvation*” (Rom. 1:16).

Changing the message won’t produce Christians! We need to trust God that His way works every time it’s tried! Just like fishermen, these “*fishers of men*” had to go where the “fish” (men) were to catch them!

Thus, Jesus sent them to where the people were to spread this message. Before His ascension, Jesus would say a similar thing (Mk. 16:15), instructing His apostles to go “*into all the world*”! Why? It was so they’d “*preach the gospel to every creature*”! They had to go where the people were! Paul would do this, and we see him going to the synagogues because this is where the people were (Acts 17:3)! It does no one any good if we have a message but refuse to make it known! In this country, opportunities abound to spread the gospel. Yes, even in a pandemic, we can talk with people about the Lord! (Don’t forget your children, Eph. 6:4! Don’t assume that this “captive audience” knows the gospel if you’ve never taught it to them.) We can also write letters to people (remember those?), send texts, send emails, write a note on “social media,” make a phone call, and take advantage of numerous other ways to get God’s message out. Christ needed “*fishers of men*” 2000 years ago in Galilee, and He needs them today. Are you going to step up to the challenge (Matt. 9:37-38)? - Jarrod Jacobs. In our last study, we studied about Christ calling Peter, Andrew, James, and John

to be fishers of men. One other event connected with this calling is found in Mark 1:20 (and Matt. 4:22). Mark makes a point of saying that Peter and Andrew "*forsook their nets,*" and when James and John left, they left their "*father in the boat.*" Matthew's account varies slightly, saying they left, "*their ship and their father.*" In these four men's cases, they had to leave their family (father) and their business (ship and nets) to follow the Lord and be "*fishers of men.*" Jesus appreciated this and didn't take such sacrifices for granted (Mk. 10:29-30). Christ never promised the disciples a life of ease when He called for them. Nor did He promise a life free from sacrifice! I think Mark 1:18-20 states this lesson quite succinctly. Matthew 8:19-22 and Luke 9:59-62 teach a similar truth when three people approach the Lord about following Him, and each person is told essentially to choose Him over anyone and anything else. Yes, following the Lord requires sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2)! He never promised a life of ease on earth. He promised life eternal (Matt. 25:46) and rest one day (Heb. 4:9) if we've been faithful! Many have sacrificed for the Lord through

the years. I think of Elijah, Elisha, Job, and many others in the Old Testament. Some have lost their lives in order to remain faithful to God. This is recorded for us in Scripture. Even our "secular" history records the lives of those who risked life and limb that the gospel might spread far and wide. While many lost their lives, still others lost their livelihoods, and some lost families in order to live according to God's will. I can think of many preachers of the gospel whose sacrifices have allowed me to preach where I am today, and I'm thankful. The older I get, the more I understand, though, that anything truly worth having will cost something. I've also seen (with a few exceptions) that we don't usually appreciate the things given to us without some condition. Usually, the things for which we haven't struggled and earned are the first things we give away or sell. If that item breaks or is stolen, there's little emotion involved. I know there are exceptions to this, for example, an inheritance or something similar, but usually, what I'm saying is true. Watch people and see if I'm not right!

– Jarrod Jacobs



**DIRECTIONS:** Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

## 1) Training Our Heart Challenge

**Proverbs 6:16-19** *"There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers."* While we often meditate on the traits our Heavenly Father exhibits which we are seeking to emulate, it is also good that we look at the traits our Heavenly Father does not have, and prayerfully seek to keep them from entering our hearts as well. The Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray offered a prayer thanking God about various traits he did not practice. We ought to pray thanking God that He does not exhibit certain traits, and ask Him to guard and protect our hearts from them entering ours. Look over and examine these traits God hates, and spend each week this month in prayer to God asking Him to show us where we may be weak in any of these areas, asking to God to shape our hearts to love what He loves and to also hate what He hates.

## 2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

### *Isaiah 6:1-8*

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and whom will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"