

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

"Fishing with Jesus"

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

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Theme: Ways to think about evangelism

Songs/Hymns: We are God's people 472, Fishers of men, Days of Elijah, Follow me, the Master said 645

There are lots of good things to be said about Kamloops.

Compared to larger cities, housing is relatively affordable.

We have important amenities like a hospital and a university.

And while the city is spread out

a good network of roads and highways

Makes it easy to get around.

There are lots of good things to be said about Kamloops.

But probably one of the cities' greatest attributes

Is its proximity to nature: the hills, rivers, and lakes.

Depending on your interests you may or may not be aware that

"Kamloops boasts some of the best lake fishing

found anywhere in North America.

There are 100+ highly productive lakes

within a one-hour drive of the city

that are stocked year-round."ⁱ

PAUSE

Today we are continuing our exploration of the Gospel of Luke.

The church remembers the book's writer as an

"educated Greek physician,

a close friend of the Apostle Paul

and a core member of [Paul's] ministry team.

[Luke is] the only non-Jewish author of Scripture

and his Greek is among the most articulate

and nuanced in the New Testament."ⁱⁱ

His Gospel includes some of the best-known stories and parables of Jesus.

Luke tells us about the conversion of Zacchaeus.

Luke recounts Jesus' parables

of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.

And today Luke tells us a story about a tremendous catch of fish.

You've already heard the story.
Jesus borrows a fishing boat for a stage.
He is preaching to the crowds on the seashore.

After wrapping up his sermon,
He invites Peter, the fisherman whose boat he was using,
To head out into some deeper water
And put his nets out again.

We can all imagine Peter pausing
after hearing Jesus' request.

Here is a carpenter turned preacher
directing Peter, a seasoned fisherman,
on how to do his job.

We can all imagine Peter pausing
after hearing this request.

And yet Peter has been listening to Jesus.

If you turn back to the previous chapter,
You'll find that Jesus has even been at Peter's house
And has healed Peter's mother-in-law.

We can all imagine Peter pausing and wondering
If Jesus is out of his depth
when it comes to talking about fishing.

But because of what Peter has already witnessed
and experienced with Jesus
Peter is willing to take a chance.

Peter listens to Jesus.

And we are told that when Peter throws out his nets
He experiences the largest catch of his lifetime.

There are literally so many fish who have
Flopping about in his nets,
That the lines start to tear and break.

Peter knows the lake.
He knows that things like this don't ever happen.

He is filled with wonder, not about the fish,
But about Jesus.

And he suddenly feels naked,
 Aware of his own faults and shortcoming.
 And so, Peter asks Jesus to leave him.

But Jesus says:
 "There is nothing to fear.
 From now on you'll be fishing for men and women."ⁱⁱⁱ

I can't help but wonder
 If Jesus was smiling as he spoke to Peter.

Sitting in a boat
 With fish up to their knees,
 Jesus talks about fishing for people.

I can't help but wonder
 If Jesus chuckles at his own metaphor.

When you think about it
 There are all sorts of fishing metaphors
 That we use on a regular basis.

Her friends tell her that her new boyfriend
 is 'quite the catch'.
 She responds that he fell for her
 'hook, line and sinker'.

They are glad that she's finally moved on
 From that 'bottom feeder' she had previously been dating.
 They all agree that there will be wedding bells soon,
 If there are no 'snags' in the relationship.

Fishing metaphors continue to be part of our language
 Like they were in the days of Jesus.

And yet using this language,
 When used for evangelism,
 Doesn't always feel right.

Fishing is a predatory activity.
 When most of us go fishing
 We grab a rod and reel.

We put bait on a barbed hook (barbless if required)

When the line tugs or the float moves,
 We jerk the rod back
 to set the hook in the fish's mouth.

If we manage to land it
 we break its neck or bash its head in.

In Jesus day nets were used,
 But don't think that is any more humane.

After being hauled into the boat
 The gills of the fish collapse
 and they slowly suffocate.

How's that for an image
 Of sharing the Gospel with your neighbor?

What you should know
 is that metaphors are limited in the truth they convey
 and their realm of applicability.

Yes in most instances the 'early bird catches the worm',
 But don't ask the first mouse that ventures towards
 The cheese in the mousetrap.

For his part, the Gospel writer Luke seems to be aware
 Of the limitations of Jesus' fishing metaphor.

As one scholar notes:
 The NIV's translation 'you will fish for people' or
 "The NRSV rendering "catching people"
 masks a dynamism in the Greek
 that is lost in translation.

[Luke describes Jesus saying]
 to Peter that he will be
 "*taking*" or "*saving* men and women *alive*"
 for the kingdom...

[the same] verb is "used in the [Greek translation of the Old Testament]
 to denote rescue from peril of death,
 not the capture of animals—

and so [it is] as inappropriate to fishing
 as it is appropriate to the Christian mission..."^{iv}

All to say that when Jesus talks about 'fishing for people'
 he is talking about the sort of enticement used by fishermen
 to catch fish,

but that his ultimate aim in catching people
 is saving them not slaughtering them.

But if you don't find this explanation of Jesus' metaphor persuasive,
You might find his own example more illustrative.

Jesus wasn't just fishing
When he heading out into deeper water with Peter.

Jesus was fishing
That entire time he was with Peter in Capernaum.

Jesus was fishing for disciples, for followers.

How did Jesus do it?
Jesus accepts the hospitality of Peter
Both to visit Peter's home and use Peter's boat.

Jesus preaches God's word to the crowd
And to Peter and his family.

Jesus invite Peter to take a step of faith
to try his nets again
after an unproductive night of working.

And then Jesus invites Peter to leave his vocation
After hauling in a record catch.

Fishing for people according to Jesus,
Isn't a one-off event where bait is applied on a hook
And some unwitting soul is lured, caught,
And then celebrated as a trophy.

Fishing for Jesus is about a give-and-take relationship
That stretches over time,
Involves teaching, shared experiences,
Taking risks, and an invitation to follow.

Is this the sort of 'fishing' you could support
Even participate in?

I'm not a great angler.
That last four or five times I've been out
I've only got a couple of bites.

I'm not a great angler.

But I have a friend who is successful at fishing.
And it has much less to do with luck
than an interest in becoming a better fisherman.

He has read up on the lives of fish:
 How they feed and their preferred habitats.
 He visits lakes that are known to be productive.

He asks questions of experienced anglers
 He is patient when putting all this new knowledge
 Into practise.

To be honest my fishing has been less strategic.
 I go out when I want, to the place that is convenient.
 I cast my line for about an hour
 And then decide that the lake is dead.

Could it be that some of the worst evangelism
 is a lot like the worst fishing?

And could it be that Jesus has something to teach us
 About fishing for people today.

ⁱ www.tourismkamloops.com/thingstodo/outdooradventure/fishing/

ⁱⁱ Subby Szterszky "Unique and surprising narrative twists in the Gospel of Luke" www.focusonthefamily.ca/content/unique-and-surprising-narrative-twists-in-the-gospel-of-luke

ⁱⁱⁱ Luke 5:10 MSG

^{iv} Eaton, P. (2009). Homiletical Perspective on Luke 5:1–11. In D. L. Bartlett & B. B. Taylor (Eds.), *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year C* (Vol. 1, p. 335). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.