

Grace, Mercy, and Peace are yours in abundance. Amen.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets.²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. **This is God’s Word for our meditation.**

Dear Friends,

Minnesota is known as “The Land of 10,000 Lakes.” Where you have so many lakes, you have to have fishing and where you have fishing there are fish stories and so I have a fish story for you this morning. There was a man living in Minnesota who loved to go to garage sales. He loved garage sales because he could find all this neat fishing gear at bargain prices. He had purchased rods and reels and tackle boxes and lure and just all kinds of stuff, but unfortunately, even with all this great fishing gear, he had never caught a fish. Not even one, not ever.

And you know why he never caught a fish? He never went fishing. He had all the knowledge and all the equipment, but he never got into the boat, he never used the equipment he had. Today we are going to talk about fishing because that is one of the things God wants us to do. Some of you might be excited about this because you love to fish and that’s good because God wants us to be excited about fishing, but in this portion of scripture he points out we’re not out for fish, rather we are fishing for men – for people. As we consider this portion of scripture we will see that, **“God wants us to go fishing,”** for basically two reasons: **“Because the time is right,”** and **“Because he has called us to do This.”**

I. There is a saying out there that, “Timing is everything.” Anyone who has ever sold a house or had a house built knows there is a lot of truth to that saying. God knows that timing is everything too. That is why he sent Jesus into the world at this particular time and that is why we have these events of Jesus’ life unfolding before us.

I’ll run down those events for you very quickly so that you understand the setting:

1. Jesus is about 30 years old and he goes to John the Baptist to be baptized.
2. This begins the public ministry of Jesus
3. John identifies Jesus as the promised Messiah – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
4. Andrew and Simon who had been following John the Baptist, follow Jesus for a short period of time but then return to fishing.
5. Jesus goes out into the desert and fasts for 40 days. He is then tempted by the devil but rejects those temptations using God’s Word.
6. Jesus has been in Jerusalem but staying in the vicinity of Jerusalem might have brought his ministry to a quick end. There were things that needed to be done before Jesus completed his ministry here on this earth.

7. So Jesus was going to head to Galilee for a while where he would be able to preach and also to train his disciples for what was to come.

That takes us to the point of scripture we have here. Jesus said, **“The time has come.”** In other words this is the right time, but the right time for what? The right time for all the Old Testament prophecies to be fulfilled. But Jesus is not only looking to the past, he is also looking to the future. This is a defining moment for everything that would happen in the future. Jesus had come to bring the Kingdom of God – that is he came to rule in people’s hearts because that is what the Kingdom of God is – God ruling in people’s hearts.

But before Jesus could reign in their hearts they had to first see the need for him and so Jesus used one simple word. He said, **“Repent.”** Repent, that little word took them to the mirror of the law, the law that they knew all to well, the law of Moses, the Ten Commandments. In this law they could see that they hadn’t even kept one of God’s commandments perfectly as he demands. In this law they saw the punishment they deserved, the eternal suffering and anguish of hell. All in one little word, "repent." With this one word, Jesus showed them that they needed a Savior, that they needed him.

That is why he continued with, **“and believe the good news.”** And what was this good news? It was the good news that God had come to earth. It was the good news that the Savior that they had so long awaited, the Savior that they so desperately needed had come to suffer and die for their sins. That is the message the people heard and the message these early disciples heard too and then Jesus issued his invitation to the disciples to change professions – to become fishers of men.

The time was right. He was going to prepare them. He was going to give them the tools they would need – the law to show the people their sins and the Good News of salvation to point people to Jesus their Savior.

The time is right for us too. That word, “Repent,” is also meant for us. We need to hear that admonition of the Lord every day, because we sin daily. Sin and repentance are not a words we like to hear. We like to point out other people’s sins, but confessing our own is another matter. Kids sin when they don’t listen to their parents, or talk back to their teachers, or get into other kinds of trouble. But adults are disobedient too. We gossip, we have feelings of hate against other people, we lie, we have lustful thoughts, we don’t always treat one another with love and respect and the list could go on and on. We all need to repent. We all, children and adults alike, need a Savior and Jesus is the Savior we need.

Thank God that the Holy Spirit has created faith in your hearts so that you can believe and trust in Jesus as your Savior. Thank God for baptism because that is how many of you were called to faith – through the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Thank God for His Word because that is how God feeds your faith and helps it grow. Through these gifts of God he prepares you to be fishers of people and motivates you with his love..

God has given you the tools – everything you need to be fishers of people. So don't be like the fisherman in my opening story. He had everything he needed. He was prepared, but he never went fishing. He never used what he had. "Let's go fishing," because not only is "the time right," not only are we prepared but "God has also called us to do just that very thing."

II. When I was growing up, to go fishing with my dad was a special thing. There were nine kids in my family and we couldn't all go at once. Dad usually took two of us along with him and it was a special treat when he asked us if we wanted to go fishing with him.

When Jesus asked Simon and Andrew and James and John if they wanted to become fishers of men, they didn't hesitate. They were familiar with Jesus and John the Baptist had identified Jesus as the Promised Messiah for them so they were eager to leave their nets behind and train for this new profession. They were to become part of a special group. They were going to become his disciples – the leaders of the early Christian church.

In order to do that, they had to know who Jesus was and what he was going to do so they could share this "Good News" with others. As the disciples followed Jesus, he taught them and with the help of the Holy Spirit they prepared to become Fishers of Men. Jesus sent them out on a practice run during his ministry but their real ministry began on that first Pentecost, Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven and God blessed their efforts and brought many people to faith as they shared the Good News of Salvation.

Jesus has invited you to be part of a special group too. He has invited you to go fishing. What's your reaction? Are you filled with excitement and joy? Are you thinking to yourself, "I can't believe I get to tell people about Jesus." Or are you thinking, "Me! I can't do that. What if they don't listen to me or I've got to many other things to do or isn't that the pastor's job?"

Moses had a lot of excuses when God called him to lead the Children of Israel, but God did not want to hear his excuses. He had a job for Moses. We have plenty of excuses too, but God also has a job for us. He has called us to be fishers of men also.

It's not just the job of the Pastor. God calls to each and every one of us in Matthew 28:19 to **"Go and make disciples of all nations."** What a privilege God has given us to share the good news of Jesus our Savior. To tell others about God's Amazing Grace. How he has saved us not because of anything we have done but because of his mercy and grace.

I know it's not always easy and not everyone wants to hear about Jesus, but many people do and when you see the joy on someone's face as the Holy Spirit works in their heart, you thank God that he uses you as his messenger.

God has prepared you and God has called you to be fishers of people just as he called the disciples. You have everything you need and you might be surprised at the opportunities God gives you to share what you have. Don't be like the fisherman in our story who never went out but take those opportunities to do a little fishing with the gospel. Amen.