

## Fishers of Men

Shortly after the holy days of Lent and Passover, a priest, a minister, and a rabbi went off together on a fishing trip. They tried every kind of bait they could think of, but the fish weren't biting. So the priest got out of the boat and walked across the water to another spot. Then the rabbi got out of the boat and walked across the water. The minister got out of the boat, too-and started to sink.

He floundered around, climbed back into the boat, and tried again. Once again he sank into the water. He clambered back into the boat, and tried once more, this time almost drowning. Finally the priest said to the rabbi, "Do you think we should tell him where the rocks are?"

Let me ask you guys **have you ever been fishing?** I know I used to go fishing with my dad many years ago and I loved catching fish but I couldn't stand putting my fingers in the fish's mouth to remove the hook just in case they bit my finger.

Now let me ask you this question, **have you ever been fishing for something besides fish?** Did you ever lose money behind the couch cushion and had to fish down behind for it? Did you ever have to fish through your backpack to find your homework paper? I know when Roxanne's or Josh's birthdays come up they are always fishing with questions to find out what they are getting as gifts.

**But what does it mean to go fishing for something?** Well that's what we're going to learn today; when you go fishing you're not always fishing for fish.

**John 21:2 "Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathaneal from Cana in Galilee, the son of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together". John 21:3 "I'm going out to fish, "Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing."**

One of the most frustrating things I find about fishing is that you have no guarantee that you're going to catch anything. All night long they fished and caught absolutely nothing. And if that was me I would head off home in the morning and go to bed and do something else for a living.

**John 21:4+5 "Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered". John 21:6 "He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."**

Now if this was me I would be saying, you know what stranger, I'm really tired, I've been up all night and not caught a thing, I'm ready for bed. In fact the way our luck is going we will be lucky if we catch a cold, never mind any fish. But the disciples did what this stranger asked and I say a stranger because they didn't recognise it was Jesus.

Because remember Jesus had been crucified and buried, so they weren't expecting Him, even though Jesus told them He would be back. And they had seen Him twice before. So anyway they threw their net back in and look what happened.

**John 21:6 "When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish!"**

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An elderly lady was once asked by a young man who had grown weary in a fight, whether he ought to give up the struggle. "I am beaten every time," he said dolefully. "I feel I must give up." "Did you ever notice," she replied, smiling into the troubled face before her, "that when the Lord told the discouraged fishermen to cast their nets again, it was right in the same old spot where they had been fishing all night and had caught nothing?"

You see loved ones; just because we have no joy casting our nets in one area doesn't mean that we should give up on that area. We deliver thousands of leaflets every year in the Great Barr area with little response but that doesn't mean that we should give up on the people of Great Barr. It simply means that God wants us not to give up and when the time is right the people will come.

And when the disciples cast their nets again in the same old spot where they had been fishing all night and the fish came, it was then and only then did the disciples begin to question who this stranger was.

John 21:7 "Then the disciple who Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him and jumped into the water."

Peter had no second thoughts about this stranger, He knew it was Jesus and jumped straight in the water to get there first. John 21:8+9 "The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread". John 21:10+11 "Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn". John 21:12 "Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are YOU?" They knew it was the Lord".

Now how do you think they knew it was the Lord? Well possibly because they recognised His voice, after all Jesus Himself did say in John 10:27 "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me". Or maybe they knew it was Jesus because of the miracle of catching all those fish. But whatever the reason, they knew it was Jesus.

John 21:13+14 "Jesus came, took the bread and gave to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after He was raised from the dead."

And it's at this time we find its question time for Peter. Listen to the questions Jesus asked Peter. John 21:15+16 "When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" John 21:16 "He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time He said to him, "Simon son of John, Do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" John 21:17 "He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Now let me ask you, why did Jesus ask him if he loved Jesus three times? You see Peter was the one who jumped straight into the water when he knew it was Jesus. Peter was always

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jumping in without thinking sometimes. At the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter was the one that wouldn't shut up. When Jesus was telling His disciples about His upcoming trial and death and all the trials they were going to have to go through.

Peter jumped in and said in, **Luke 22:33 "Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you and to die with you!"** And Jesus had to stop him in his tracks and say in **Luke 22:34 "I tell you, Peter,"** Jesus said, **"The rooster will not crow tonight until you have said three times that you do not know me."**

And as we know he indeed denied knowing Jesus three times. When Peter received his object lesson concerning the Gentiles from Jesus in **Acts 10**, three times Jesus had to say **"Get up, Peter; kill and eat!"** You see with Peter things always came in three, possibly so that he would never forget His denial of Jesus three times.

But here Jesus asks him three times, **do you love me Peter?** Now I think that saying 'I love you' is very easy. But saying it and showing it at two different things.

**(I love you in different languages)** This morning we can learn at least three different ways to say, **"I love you."** In **German**, you would say, **"Ich liebe dich!"** **Can you say that?** In **Spanish**, you would say, **"Te amo!"** That is pretty easy, try it. In **sign language**, you would say, **"I love you"** like this. I know that you can all say, **"I love you!"** in sign language! You know, it is pretty easy to say, **"I love you,"** but it is sometimes a lot harder to show it by our actions.

As we have just read after Jesus was raised from the dead, he appeared to his disciples several times. On the third time that Jesus appeared to his disciples, he was with them on the shore by the Sea of Galilee. He turned to Peter and said, **"Peter, do you love me?"** Peter answered, **"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."** Then, Jesus said to Peter, **"Feed my lambs."**

Jesus asked Peter again, **"Do you love me?"** Again, Peter answered, **"Yes Lord, I love you."** Jesus said to him, **"Take care of my sheep."** A third time Jesus asked Peter, **"Do you love me?"** Now Peter was very sad that Jesus asked him this question again, but he answered Jesus again, **"Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you."** Jesus said, **"Feed my sheep."**

**Why did Jesus ask Peter the same question three times?** I think He wanted Peter to understand and he wanted you and me to understand that it isn't enough just to say, **"I love you."** We must show our love for Jesus by showing our love for one another and caring for one another.

**Do you love Jesus?** Then feed and take care of his sheep! Now, that is love that can be understood in any language. Now I know this mainly applies to us adults but it also implies to you guys too.

You could feed us by always asking questions because they help us keep our heads in the Bible for the answers. You could take care of us by being here on time and helping set up for worship. You could take care of us by helping our members up and down the stairs or making them a cup of tea.

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It was **Valentines Day** a couple of weeks ago and I'm sure there would have been many people saying **I love you** to each other. But what good is it saying I love you if you don't show it, whether it be with a card or flowers or a nice meal.

The point is it's no good saying **I love you** if you don't show it with your actions. **John 21:18** "I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are older you will stretch out your hands, and". **John 21:19** "Someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" In **Matthew 4:19** and **Mark 1:17** Jesus said, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Now most people I know would never give up everything they had to follow Jesus. But His disciples were willing to do just that, they left everything, including their fishing boats, to follow Jesus.

**Now do you think this would have been a hard decision for them to make?** Well in some ways it would have been difficult but in other ways maybe it wouldn't have been difficult. But I think the reason why Jesus asked them to follow Him was even more interesting.

These guys had been working hard as fisher men for years, catching fish one day and none the next. Going out in all sorts of water to earn a living so that their families can survive. When all of a sudden this stranger comes up to you and says, "**Hey follow me you guys are going to start fishing for men.**"

**Can you imagine how confused they were, I mean how can you fish for me?** Now I already spoke about when I went fishing with my dad and I remember using maggots for bait. But here's a question for you, **does the fish want to be caught?** No of course not that fish belongs in the water and wants to live there all of its life.

**But who makes the decision to try to catch the fish, the fish or the fisherman?** It's pretty obvious that it's the fisherman decision to catch the fish. You see when Jesus said we were to be fishers of men; He was talking about "**catching**" people and bringing them to Him.

Now I don't know about you but unless your on '**I'm a celebrity get me out of here**' I don't think most people in the UK would eat maggots. So we can't use them as bait **can we?** You see when you fish for men; you're hopefully not going to catch them in nets or on hooks.

**So are we supposed to just present the gospel, pray a prayer, and leave them with no other Bible knowledge and no church?** No. We are supposed to teach them. **What does Jesus want us to teach people?** He wants us to teach people to obey what He has commanded.

The bait we use is the opportunity to know Christ and spend eternity with Him in heaven. And just like fish, most people do not want to be "**caught**" by Christianity but we as the fishermen, must make the decision to go "**fishing.**" In other words just like Peter we need to show through actions, our willingness to fish for people that we really do love Jesus.

**So why would Jesus call them away from fishing for fish, for food, to fish for people, for Jesus?** Well very simply because Jesus wants to remind us that people are more important.

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Remember that Jesus doesn't want anyone to die without knowing Him. So He called disciples to help him reach other people. But let me ask you, **when did these disciples become fishers of men? Did it happen right away?**

Well you remember in **Mark 16**, right after Jesus died and rose from the dead, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and some other women went looking for him in the tomb, but Jesus wasn't there.

An angel, a messenger from God, told them Jesus had risen from the dead, and was going to Galilee to meet the disciples. They met him in Galilee and he said in **Matthew 28:19+20**, **“Go and make disciples of all peoples, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

Have you seen the film **Avatar**? When his brother is killed in a robbery, paraplegic **Marine Jake Sully** decides to take his place in a mission on the distant world of **Pandora**. There he learns of greedy corporate figurehead **Parker Selfridge's** intentions of driving off the native humanoid **"Na'vi"** in order to mine for the precious material scattered throughout their rich woodland.

In exchange for the spinal surgery that will fix his legs, **Jake** gathers intelligence for the cooperating military unit spearheaded by gung-ho **Colonel Quaritch**, while simultaneously attempting to infiltrate the **Na'vi people** with the use of an **"avatar"** identity.

While **Jake** begins to bond with the native tribe and quickly falls in love with the beautiful alien **Neytiri**, the restless Colonel moves forward with his ruthless extermination tactics, forcing the soldier to take a stand and fight back in an epic battle for the fate of **Pandora**.

Now **Jake** had a choice, did he love his fellow humans or did he love the aliens. He was in love with the beautiful alien **Neytiri** but just saying **‘I love you’** wasn't going to save her people. So he made the choice to show his love for her and her people by fighting with them.

So let me finish by asking you guys the same question which Jesus asked Peter, **do you love Jesus? Do you really love Jesus? Do you really, truly love Jesus?** Then ask someone here today what you can do to show that you love Him.