

## Where in the World is God? He is there – Calling You!

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours, from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Show of hands, how many of you have ever gone ice fishing? How many of you know anything about ice fishing? Well, allow me to share a little bit about it. You walk out on the ice with all your gear on a sled, and when you think you're in about the right spot, you start drilling holes with a big auger. Then the fun begins. Most people will use something like this when they fish (show pic on ppt.). It's called a Vexilar. A grown up's video game. All those lines and pretty colors mean something. The ones up top are the ice you sit on, and the bottom is the bottom of the lake. Any colors in between are what's in the water. It shows you where your lure is, and if there are any fish there. It really is like a real-life video game.

This past Christmas, while I was in Wisconsin, I was blessed to be able to go out ice fishing with my dad twice. It was awful. We didn't see a single fish. It rained. We drilled close to 20 holes on our second day out, and didn't get a single bite during the hours we spent there. That left me thinking, "Where in the World are the fish!?"

That kind of a question becomes much more serious when doubt the promises of our Lord, and we want to ask, "Where in the World is God?" Thankfully, our lesson for this morning shows us that Jesus is there, calling us to leave behind all doubt, and to go fishing for people!

### I. Jesus calls us to leave behind all doubt

In our text this morning, we see Jesus' ministry is in full swing. (**read v. 1-4**) Jesus is at the Lake of Gennesaret, more commonly known as the Sea of Galilee, and he's preaching and teaching his followers. There's only one problem. There were so many people there that they were crowding around him. So he looks around and sees a boat by the shore, one belonging to Peter. He gets in, and Peter rows the boat out a bit so Jesus can preach and teach the people. You would think that once he's finished, he'd go back in to shore. Instead, he calls to Peter, in a very personal and direct way, and says, "**Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.**" It was time for Jesus to teach and call Peter.

And what was Peter's response? "**Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.**" Peter was tired, worn out. He and his crew had worked through the night, with absolutely zero luck. No fish. We can't see Peter when Jesus calls him to go out fishing again, but I wonder if he rolled his eyes. Perhaps he was annoyed. They had just finished cleaning and repairing their nets, and now Jesus wanted them to go out again? Maybe we can even see sarcasm in his response. "Oh, well because you say so maybe we'll catch something." Maybe Peter was just being polite, simply saying "OK," but with no expectations or belief in the truth of Jesus words.

Maybe it's not fair of us to think any of this of Peter. After all, could we say we would react any differently? Do we always follow the commands of Jesus without hesitation as well? Or do we sometimes doubt the call that Jesus gives us? Jesus gives us the call to be "fishers of men." We are called to share the gospel message about Jesus, to cast out that lifeline to those who need to hear it. But do we, like Peter, start to make excuses?

It's tempting to come up with all sorts of variations of what Peter says. **We worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.** "I tried to talk to my neighbor about church, but what's the point? They'd say no anyways." "Ok, I'll go canvass, but it's really only because I have to." Maybe you're even tempted to doubt yourself. "I'll leave the evangelizing for someone else. I'm not very good at it." When we think and say these things, we're doubting the very words of God!

But our doubt does not stop with God's Word. We also doubt Jesus himself, that when we fail to share our faith, Jesus has made a mistake. There's a temptation to think that we're not worth forgiving, and to say along with Peter, "**Go away from me, Lord.**"

Where is the focus with that reaction? It's all on ourselves, on what we are doing. Of course we'll feel like failures when we focus only on our failure to share our faith or bring someone to church! That's what motivates someone to say, "Go away, Jesus. I'm not worth your time, nor am I worthy to share your gospel." But when we do this, we're really doubting Jesus power to forgive. And if Jesus isn't enough to forgive our sins, then where would we end up...

In the face of this doubt, we can be thankful for what Scripture has told us, for it makes it crystal clear that our abilities are not what "gets the job done." When we share the gospel, we're not the ones working faith in a person's heart. That's all done by Jesus. He has called us to trust him alone and to leave our doubts and fears behind, just like Peter and his companions left behind their boats and nets to follow Jesus. He has called us to fish for people, using his powerful Gospel!

## II. Jesus calls us to be fishers of men

I like to fish as much of the rest of you, and it's something that I enjoy a great deal. However, you're not going to find me on the Bass Master's Circuit or competing in tournaments up on Pyramid Lake. I'm not that good. Jesus hasn't called me to do that. He has called us to a greater joy, to be fishers of people!

When we hear the call of our Savior, we run to Jesus, and throw ourselves at his feet, begging forgiveness. He reassures us that he loves us, and that he does forgive us. But Jesus words to us do not stop there. He calls us with the same words that he spoke to Simon, James and John by the Sea of Galilee. **"Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men."** We are all called to serve and be fishers of people. Usually when hiring someone, it's all about them and the standard they need to meet. But this call from Jesus is all about the one who calls us. It's all about Jesus, about the love and compassion that he shows when he personally calls each of us by name! We are all called to be fishers of people!

Thankfully, we don't have to worry about what bait to use, or if we can come up with the words to "hook" a person. Jesus has already given us everything that we need: The Word of God, and more specifically the gospel message. The gospel has incredible power! It performs a miracle, creating life and faith in Christ in a person's heart where there once was death in sin. But that's not our doing. That's the power of the gospel! **Don't be afraid.** Jesus, our Savior, is doing all the work for us.

How can we be confident and unafraid when we are tempted to doubt that Jesus does all? It's all about where our focus is. If it's on ourselves, we're left with doubt in the face of our failures. but when we focus solely on Christ and put our trust in him, we are reminded that he will accomplish what he wants to. In the words of Isaiah, found in chapter 55, **So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.** Jesus will create faith in peoples' hearts. That is his desire, and he will accomplish that!

Think of it this way. When you go fishing and cast out a line, or throw out a net, you can't force a fish to take the hook into its mouth or push it into the net. You throw your line out there, and then you wait. Do you catch a fish on every cast? I wish, but sometimes you don't see results. That doesn't mean that you're a bad fisherman. It was an "off day," but there's always tomorrow. We want to do the same with the gospel message; to cast out our "nets" by witnessing about Christ and the sacrifice that he made on the cross for all of mankind, knowing and trusting that Jesus will fill them!

Perhaps some of you, your children, grandchildren could serve as full-time fishers of men. God has called some to serve in the public ministry as pastors and teachers. You're going to see about 40 people who are at least considering this in just a couple weeks when the Prep Singers are here. However, there are many others who have talents and skills that they use in other jobs. Those jobs are a calling from Jesus as well! He uses our unique talents and jobs, just as he did with those three fishermen, to spread the gospel message. Maybe you're a plumber, or engineer. Bank manager or retired. Even a father or mother. We all can use our "jobs," our vocations, to which Jesus has called us to spread the gospel message!

As we see the power of the message of Christ crucified, we are filled with joy and wonder for the love of our Savior. Peter and his friends were hit over the head with it! The Greek in verse nine says that "amazement seized Peter." He couldn't help but be amazed when he saw the power of Christ firsthand!

Sometimes, you may feel as if the witness that you give didn't hit home. It didn't seem to affect the person. But then days, weeks, months, even years later, they show up to church. That's the power of the gospel. Jesus had "hooked" them, he was just taking his time reeling them in! Here's a wonderful example of this. Pastor and I have been visiting with Jean Johnson, an elderly lady who has been dealing with the effects of several strokes. As Pastor was talking to her daughter this past week, she mentioned that at Jean's house she had found several flyers that the Springs had sent out. The crazy thing is that we haven't sent those out in years! Thousands, even tens of thousands of flyers were sent out, and all these years later Jean still has them, and is now hearing the Word of God regularly again! What a wonderful, amazing display of the power of Jesus!

So I urge all of you, keep casting out your nets! The results will be amazing! Share the gospel message of Jesus, comforted that your sins are forgiven. Assured that Jesus will do all the "hard work" of changing peoples' hearts. Amazed at the power of Christ and his Word. Where in the World is God? He is right there, calling each of us by name to share this wonderful news. Amen.