

Mark 1:14-20

From the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, there has been an interesting phenomenon in the world, known as **work**. I think it is safe to say that **nobody** works for **nothing**, but the things **for** which they work are actually quite **different**. Some people work only for the **money**. As long as they are paid a fair and livable wage, they are **happy**. Others work for the **satisfaction** it provides. There is a tremendously satisfying feeling in knowing that you have done something **well**, or that you have successfully **mastered** a challenge, or that you have **helped** someone else. These people are happy just to know that their talents are **needed**, and their services are **appreciated**. But for the **Christian**, there is still **another** reason for working - a very **important** reason. **Work** gives us the opportunity to serve our **Lord** - to do what pleases **Him** - and to do what furthers the welfare of His **kingdom** on the earth.

Now, wouldn't it be nice to find a job which successfully meets **all** of the above reasons for working? Such a job **exists**, and it can be **yours**, if you become a **fisherman - The Lord's Fisherman**. Being a full-time laborer in the Lord's kingdom as a pastor, teacher, or staff-minister provides you with a livable wage, a tremendous amount of satisfaction, and the assurance that you are helping to further God's kingdom here on the earth. I'd like you to think about your future very **seriously** today as we consider the question, "**Will You Be The Lord's Fisherman?**"

Some of you might be saying, "**Sure**, I'd like to work full-time for the Lord, but what does it **take**? Do I have the **qualities** for which Jesus is looking in His fishermen?" Let's see if we can **find out** from our text for today. We read, "*As Jesus was going along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, since they were **fishermen**. Jesus said to them, 'Come, **follow me**, and I will **make you fishers of men**.'*" Notice that the disciples didn't come to **Jesus** and **ask** if they could help. It wasn't **their** idea to tag along with Jesus, so they could see the **wonders** He would perform, or hear the amazing **words** He would speak. It was **Jesus'** idea. He came to **them**, and **asked** them to fill the positions which He had **established** for them.

It is both **interesting**, and also **comforting**, to know that Jesus didn't ask Peter and Andrew a lot of **questions** about what **talents** they had, or about the things they **could** or **could not** do. Instead, He asked only one thing of them. He asked them to **follow Him**. Can **you** follow Jesus? Of **course** you can - you've been **doing** it from the time of your **baptism**! It's the most natural thing in the

world for those who **love** Jesus, to **follow** Jesus.

But, **following** Him was just the **beginning**. From **there**, Jesus **took over**, and began to make these followers into pastors and teachers. He didn't expect them to be prepared **already**, but instead, He promised to **train** them personally. Jesus said, "*I will **make** you fishers of men.*" I'd like you to put yourself back into **grade school** for a moment. Imagine how **unreasonable** it would have been for a teacher to give us 100 **algebra** problems to solve, when we were just learning how to **add** and **subtract**! We would have been completely **overwhelmed** and said, "I just **can't** do it. I don't know **how**!"

Jesus' **disciples** would have said the same thing. "Lord, we are fishers of **fish**, not fishers of **men**! We don't know **what to do**!" It was going to take some **time**, but they would gradually **learn** what to do as they followed **Jesus**. They would hear **His** words, and see **His** works. They would witness His **suffering** and **death**. They would view His **empty tomb**. And after His resurrection from the dead, Jesus would prove to them that He was **alive** again, and He would **continue** to teach them what His resurrection **meant** - for **them**, and for **all** people. But **none** of those things could take place for them, unless they **first** followed **Jesus**. Jesus' disciples had their **work** cut out for them.

Did you ever stop to consider who the followers of Jesus **were**? Among the original 12 there were several **fishermen**, a **tax** collector, and even a political **activist**. Among **others** who followed Jesus, Luke was a **doctor**, while Paul was a **Pharisee**. They were just **ordinary**, **normal** people - people who had come from different **backgrounds** - people who had differing amounts of **education**. But, the one quality which **connected** them all, was that they all **followed Jesus**!

And with that in mind, we'll turn the spotlight back to **you** again. The Lord has given each one of you different **talents** and different **abilities**. He has brought you together into this Christian congregation from different **backgrounds**. But there is one common tie which binds us all **together**: Jesus has revealed Himself to us as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world - and so, **we follow Him**. Now the question remains, how will we **respond** to the Lord's invitation when He says, "*I will **make you** a fisher of men?*"

Now, I **realize** that not **everybody** is cut out to be a pastor or a teacher. But that **doesn't** mean that you can't serve as His **fisherman**. In more recent years, our Synod has been making use of a training program for **staff ministry**. The people who enter **this** part of the Lord's work will be equipped to **assist** pastors, teachers,

and the members of congregations in areas of ministry like **youth** work, **family** ministry, **evangelism**, and **administration**. It's just one more avenue which allows individuals to serve the Lord with the talents He has **given** to them.

Hopefully, some of you are at least **considering** full-time work for your Lord as a pastor, teacher, or staff minister. And even if you're not considering it for **yourself**, you might think about it for your **children** or **grandchildren**. But anyone who has **gone fishing** can tell you that there is a tremendous difference between **wanting** to catch fish, and actually **catching** them! A good fisher of **fish** needs the right **equipment** - and so does a good fisher of **men**. Fortunately for us, the Lord **supplies** us with all the right equipment. We **know** it's the right equipment, because it has already been **tested** by our Lord Jesus **Himself**.

This equipment comes in a **simple** and **compact** package. It is a **message** - a message of **Good News** - the message of the **Gospel**. In our text we hear that, *"After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the **gospel** of the kingdom of God. 'The time is fulfilled,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near! **Repent**, and believe in the **gospel**.'"* When God sent Jesus to the earth, the kingdom of God was **nearer** than it had ever been before. In Christ's **life**, **death**, and **resurrection** are found the key to **our** eternal life.

That is extremely **Good News** - and our **response** to that news is to **repent**. Dear friends, face the real **depth**, and the **extent** of **sin** in your heart and life. Look at how **far away** you are from the holiness and purity which God **demand**s. **Repent** of your sins, and **believe** the **Gospel**. Recognizing that we are sinners does **not** mean that we have to carry the **burden** of those sins. That's where **believing** takes over. We believe the **Good News** that **Jesus** is the Lamb of God who **takes away** the sin of the world. So, don't even **try** to carry the burden of your sin. Place it on the shoulders of **Jesus**, the One who wants to carry that burden **for** you, and let Him take your sins **away** - far, far away!

That's the **equipment** which Jesus gave to His disciples - a divine **message**, with the divine **power** to bring lost mankind the **hope** of eternal life. That's what it means to be **The Lord's Fisherman**. What about you? Would you like to help your neighbor deal with the greatest **problem** he faces, and do the **Lord's** work at the same time? Would you enjoy **comforting** a child, or **reassuring** an adult that God loves them dearly, and that in **Jesus** He has **forgiven** all their sins? The position is **there**, the equipment is **waiting**, and you have heard the Lord's promise, *"Come, follow Me, and I will **make** you fishers of men."* In conclusion, let's bow our heads in **prayer**:

Lord Jesus, we praise You for the sacrifice of **love** which You made on the **cross** for all mankind. We thank You for causing us to be **caught** in the net of the **Gospel**, which Your **fishermen** threw out to us in Your Word and Sacrament - bringing us to faith in **You** as our Savior. Do not allow the casting of the net of the Gospel to **cease** because of a **shortage** of willing fishermen. Move the hearts of young men and women throughout our Synod, so that they may begin **preparing** to join the ranks of Your fishermen - that in our **pulpits**, in our **classrooms**, and throughout the **world**, Your life-saving **Gospel** may be **shared**, and Your work may **continue**. Amen.