

Make Me A Fisher Of Men!

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the call to follow Christ and become fishers of men, drawing insights from Matthew 4:19. It highlights the patience and persistence required in evangelism, showcasing examples of faithful labor resulting in conversions over time. The speaker encourages a focus on imitating Christ's character, being bold in sharing the Gospel, and praying fervently for the salvation of others.

Scripture: Matthew 4:19, 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Corinthians 3:7, 2 Timothy 4:5

Topics: "Discipleship", "Evangelism"

Description

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Transcript

We'll go ahead and turn in your copy of God's Word to Matthew chapter 4, Matthew chapter 4. And some of you will, many of you were there when Don Kern at the men's time Friday night, he mentioned in order to become more like Christ, one thing that would be beneficial is to go read through the Gospels and make your own commentary on Christ, specifically reading through Matthew and stopping everywhere there's something about Christ and writing that down. And I tend to hear advice on Bible reading and I weigh it, consider it. A lot of times I don't apply it.

But with what Don shared, I thought I'm going to do that. I'm going to write my own commentary about Christ from the Gospel of Matthew. And so I've been doing that the last few weeks in my morning reading, just going to the next verses and thinking about what does this say about the Lord Jesus Christ? And so there's something in Matthew 4 that stood out to me.

It's a well-known verse, but I felt like it was something that God wanted me to bring. So for the last few weeks, this has been on my mind. So Matthew 4, we're going to learn something in Matthew 4:19 about the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're going to learn about what he is seeking to make out of his followers. Matthew 4:19, let's just read starting in verse 18. While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

And he said to them, here the statement is, Follow me. And what's he going to produce? I will make you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets.

They followed him. And going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in the boat with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets. And he called them.

Immediately they left the boat and their father, and they followed him. Let's pray, and we'll consider this. Father, Lord, we thank You for the life of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank You for the window into His life that You've given us in these Gospels. And Lord, we want to be like Your Son. We want to grow to imitate His person, His conduct, His actions, His life, His thoughts.

And Lord, here we've seen You've made, in a way, a promise that You're going to make these men fishers of men. Lord, You didn't tell them You're going to make them fishless fishermen, but fishers of men. And Lord, we want to, by all means possible in our lives, to see others come to know You, to know the Gospel, to have their sins forgiven.

And so Lord, I pray that You would even produce this in us. Lord, would You use this message right now to burden specific people and all of us just to have a renewal of a cry to You in our own prayer life to say, Lord, make me a fisher of men. Lord, I pray that that would really be the result here, that that would be something we're asking of You in a greater way in our lives and pleading for those that we have been evangelizing for years, pleading with You to bring those precious souls into the Kingdom.

And so Lord, I just ask for Your help right now. Lord, please strengthen me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

So I see right here in this text a promise from Christ that He is going to produce fishers of men. Fishers of men. And you saw He didn't just call the two.

He goes on and He calls two more. Now what would these men have thought Christ meant by fishing for men? They find out shortly thereafter. But where else does the Bible talk about fishing? And in what way does it talk about fishing? Thus far, the only thing in the Scriptures leading up to this point of Jesus' words are Old Testament verses that speak about many fishers rounding up the population for what? Destruction and exile.

When you thought about fishers in the Bible, that's what you thought. Gathering people for exile. Gathering people for destruction.

And whether or not they had an initial thought, what does Christ mean by this? They find out very shortly after in verse 23. Verse 23 records He went throughout all Galilee. So this seems to imply they're with Christ now.

And what is Christ doing? He's teaching and proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing. He's healing people. He's preaching the Gospel.

So right away, He's called them to be fishers of men, and they're following Him as He's engaging in this act of proclaiming the good news, of showing compassion, and seeking to bring people to Himself for life, to His Kingdom. And ironically, this is the opposite of what it is to fish for actual physical fish. Physical fish, you catch them.

Pete knows this very well. You catch them, you kill them, you cook them, and then you feed them to GCC to eat them. That's what you do with physical fish.

Why is Christ using this imagery? If anything, it was their physical task. They were fishers of men. And Christ is relating to their physical task of fishing and saying, you're going to go be fishers of men in another sense.

And this Gospel net that we cast is to produce a different result than destruction. We're not seeking to fish men for destruction, but for salvation. In this Gospel, it's going forth to every kind of fish, Jew and Gentiles.

And you've got people coming in and they're hearing the truth and they're professing. And we even read later on in Matthew 13, maybe a different sense with the similar imagery, but we find that one day there's going to be a judgment and angels are going to separate these fish. These professors of religion.

There's going to be a separation that day. So, a few observations. First, what has to come first in order for you and I to be a fisher of men? What's the first statement here from Christ that we should consider? And if you look at verse 19, He said to them, follow Me.

Follow Me. That's the first thing on the docket. That's the first thing to really think about and consider.

And what's follow Christ mean? I mean, this is a call to discipleship. It's a call to accompany Christ. It's a call to imitate Christ.

It's a call to walk behind Christ. And this is what you find throughout all the Bible is that the Christian life is modeled after Christ and His example. Even in the Epistles, Paul says, Husbands, love your wives as Christ.

Or Colossians 3, forgiving as Christ. The Bible constantly points us to Christ. Christ is our example.

Not just in how to love, but even in how to win souls. His evangelism in verse 23 and on, right after this section, it's not just the preaching, it's the compassion. He's got all of this together.

And it's no wonder that when we send missionaries out, we have both aspects happening. And where you don't have the compassion aspect and all you have is the preaching aspect, you end up hearing reports of what our brother shared in China. Nothing was happening.

But when they started showing compassion, when they started living out Isaiah 58, then they saw God coming in in a powerful way. So Christ is our emphasis, our focus. Am I following the Lord Jesus Christ? And think, what time did these men in Matthew 4, what particular time did they follow Jesus? What were they involved in doing when He called them? They were involved in their ordinary work, right? Ordinary work, just their employment.

Basically, someone stops by the office, so to speak, a messenger, and He calls them to follow Him and everything changes in their life. To me, that's an interesting reality because how many of you all were saved because of someone evangelizing you? In what context? Work. Or purchasing something on Craigslist.

And some of you were converted through that conversation. And Christ, He wasn't their coworker, but they were one to Him while they were at work. And we see this.

David was called by the Lord when he was keeping his father's sheep. Moses was out keeping Jethro's flock when the Lord appeared to him. And Gideon was busy at the threshing floor when God called him.

I mean, humanity is out there living real life, right? They're working, they're laboring, and we're coming to them. You're going to them as able in your own work environment and you're calling them to follow Christ. You're calling them to a life of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, how many men and women, they hear the truth from other believers in this context of work. Do not lose heart. If that's the extent of your fishing, don't lose heart.

Lloyd-Jones, he made the comment, when the local church has a spirit of evangelism, members tell others about Christ and through personal contact among friends, acquaintances, and business associates, they bring many into the church. And you find that right here in the beginning. People at work being called to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

And another thing to think here about these men, it's not just Christ takes this imagery, applies imagery to their physical work and says, here you're out there fishing for fish. Okay, you're going to go fish for men. But these men were out there actually fishing for fish.

They were working. They were engaged in this labor. And now they're taking the same physical energy they invested in physical fishing and they're using that for spiritual fishing.

You don't find Christ calling those who are lazy and doing nothing and all of a sudden they become effective in evangelism for the kingdom of God. We just don't witness that reality. But you do find the energy that you put into your work, even as a lost person, God comes along and when He saves you, that same energy there, you're now able to use it in a channel that is honoring to God.

I mean, that's one reason that I want my kids to be hard workers and disciplined at the moment they do follow the Lord Jesus Christ. They already have that zeal and that energy to invest in their lives, to be disciplined, and that's going to carry over into the spiritual realm. So the first thing here, before He's making you a fisher of men, you've got to follow Him.

And one of the main reasons many people who say they're Christians have no desire to evangelize is they've not done the first step. They've not followed Christ. They've not come to Him as a disciple.

They've made excuses. They've said other things and they've refused to come. So, second observation here.

Those who are following Him, He says, I will make you fishers of men. And as I was looking at this and wanting to apply it to myself and say, Lord, is this something I can take and make it for me? Can I take it and make this for me? Can I pray this to You, Lord? Well, I've got to define the you. If He says to specific people, I will make you fishers of men, an obvious question to ask, can I apply that to myself? Because there are certain statements made in the Scriptures to certain people that might not necessarily be for me.

And so, Lord, I'm following You. You said to them, You'll make them fishers of men. So let's think about this you.

Can I apply Matthew 4.19 to myself? Can I take it for myself? Or is there anything here where maybe I shouldn't? And we should ask this too because and this is key, what happens to these four men who

Jesus calls right here in these verses? They all became apostles. Now, I'd emphasize the key word is they all became apostles. They weren't apostles right here.

Even in Mark when He calls them and says, I'll make you fishers of men. Mark 3, at a later date, He says He called them out as apostles of Christ. These men were just following Christ's call to discipleship.

You don't find Him going to other people to follow Him and changing it and saying, well, you're not going to have a burden in your life or a desire to see other people one to me. And so, we need to be careful here to narrow all of this down. Furthermore, what does Paul assume is on the heart and the mind of a saved person as a lost spouse? You're saved.

Your spouse is lost. What does Paul assume is on that person's mind? Listen to 1 Corinthians 7. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? What does that imply? These Christians, what's on their mind? They're married. Their spouse is lost.

What do they desire in their life? Their spouse to be converted. You see, this is part of being a Christian is you want others to partake in this grace. This woman is trying to catch in this gospel net and fish be a fisher of her own husband.

Think of Jesus' words in Matthew 10. He says, everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I will acknowledge before My Father. That's something for all of us.

It's not just a select group. Well, that group better acknowledge Christ before men. That's for all of us.

What is acknowledging Christ before men? It's speaking about being witnesses of Him. And when Peter shrinks back and denies Christ, he misses out on an opportunity to witness and testify and evangelize to that little girl around that fire. Instead, he communicated to her Christ isn't really worth suffering.

What happened to that little girl? Maybe he didn't say she's a little girl. Did she ever get converted? Peter had an opportunity in fear he protected his flesh. And so, does this apply to you? All of us are seeking to acknowledge Christ before men.

All of us are called to be witnesses of His. According to Jesus, if you do not acknowledge Him before men, He will deny you before the Father. Those are very strong words from Christ.

Every believer is a witness. And yes, we see even to this point, you see in Mark 5, the demoniac, he gets converted. There's no evidence he became an apostle.

Jesus didn't say, I will make you a fisher of men. But what does Jesus tell them to do? Go home to your family and tell them of how I have had mercy upon you. You see, it's just implied in following Christ.

There's something in the heart of the one who's been saved where they want to see others brought into the kingdom. That there's this fishing that's seeking to happen. We're seeking to bring people in, not for destruction, but for salvation.

So I really think what Christ is saying to these people who are not yet apostles here, but who He's calling, He's not just saying something just for them. That they could say, well, Lord, earlier on, You told us You were going to make us fishers of men. Lord, bring that about as a reality.

I believe this is something that's true of all Christians to some degree that we're all seeking to be soul winners. This is a desire that all of us have. This is something that all of us should go to the Lord with.

The Lord Himself in Luke 19, He said, the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Christ's very purpose is to save the lost. And we're called to imitate Him.

Just two more verses on this point. Mark 8. Listen to this. Whoever would save his life will lose it.

Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's sake will save it. And so what does that imply? All believers are living for the gospel's sake. That's a call to all Christians for discipleship.

There's not this segmentation that's happening here where there's Christians who are fishers and there's others who have no involvement in that activity at all. Now, to this point, to kind of balance some of this out, is there a spiritual gift? A greater expression of the Spirit manifesting Himself in certain Christians with an ability to evangelize? Yes, that absolutely is true. Ephesians 4, verse 11, Christ has given gifts to men in the church and one of them is He gave evangelists.

Acts 21, they entered the house of Philip. But He doesn't just say Philip. He adds a description of Philip.

And what is that description? Philip the evangelist. The evangelist. So these designations made about the believer's emphasis, that's something that's important for us to be doing in the life of the church, right? Years ago, we supported a few men to do local evangelism.

You're looking out and seeing if God's given a certain portion of the Spirit to specific men in the church to evangelize and to be soul winners, they're going to be fishing to an extent that might be greater than other people in the church. And we want to identify that. And we need reminders to be evangelistic.

2 Timothy 4-5, you've got a church. You've got Paul facing the end of his life. You've got a church at Ephesus that has all manner of problems.

And Paul, he says to Timothy, as for you, always be sober-minded. Endure suffering. Do the work of an evangelist.

Fulfill your ministry. So part of Timothy's specific design is this work of evangelism. He's part of Paul's missionary team.

He's actively engaged in the proclamation of the Gospel to a great extent because the Spirit of God is upon him in a unique way for that endeavor. So all that to say, here you're following Christ, and He says, I'm going to make you fishers of men. And I think all of us can take this promise in Matthew 4-19 and not just look at it and say, oh, this is for men who became future apostles.

But look at this and say, Lord, I followed You. I've done what You said. You said to follow.

You're going to make me a fisher of men. Not a fishless fisherman. Not someone who just sows seed and nothing ever happens.

Lord, You've made a statement that makes my heart feel like I'm expecting results from this endeavor. Think of this. This statement, I will make you.

How many times does the Lord say something like that to us in the Bible? What's another time He says, I'm going to make you something? It's not often stated. If you have verses like 2 Corinthians, He says, I will make My dwelling among you. Hebrews 10, I will make with them a covenant.

Revelation 3, the one who conquers, I will make him a pillar. There's not a lot of those statements being made. But here Christ says to these disciples as He says, follow Me, I'm going to make you fishers of men.

I'm taking you from this physical task of fishing. Come, follow Me. I'm going to proclaim the Gospel.

I'm going to show compassion. People are going to be brought in with this Gospel net. And it's going to lead not to their destruction, not to their exile, but bringing them into heaven.

And this is something Jesus has to make. You can't bring this about in your own life. It's, Lord, work this in me.

Give me the wisdom, the guidance, the right opportunities. Lord, this is something You said You were going to produce and make in me. So a fourth observation.

Jesus says right there in v. 19, I will. I will make you fishers of men. Notice how certain the Lord is that He's going to turn these men into fishermen.

It's kind of like the father saying to his sons, you're going to be fishermen when you grow up. They might get to the point where I don't want to do dad's business. Well, that's not what's going to happen to these men.

Because this isn't some pick and choose. Do I want to be an engineer when I grow up? Do I want to be a fisherman when I grow up? No, this is part of following Christ. It's acknowledging Him before men.

It's being His witnesses. Though to different degrees, we will have various opportunities and gifts. This is something that we're all involved in because we've all lost our lives for the sake of the Gospel.

So He says I will. This gives me confidence in asking the Lord about this reality. And you know, one question I thought of.

Here Peter is getting called to be a fisher of men. When did he get his first catch? And when is his first catch ever recorded? Again, there's a lot that's not said. But you know what you find? Okay, I will make you fishers of men.

What do you find in Peter's life? Oh Lord, don't go to the cross there. Don't go suffer. Get behind Me, Satan.

You're setting your mind on things of earth. You find Peter's denial. What's my point? In Peter's life leading up to Acts 2, leading up to conversions, what led up to that? Christ making him someone in his character.

Right? The Lord disciplining him. The Lord humbling Peter. The man who said, I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death sounded zealous.

He sounded bold. But underlining all of those bold statements was arrogant pride that God had to root out of his life. So what's happening in both of these cases? Youthfulness might not happen, brethren, as fast

as you hope it will be.

Right? There might be a slow process to get to that point. Eventually, Peter saw a massive catch in the book of Acts. For long you might labor and catch nothing, and then you might put your nets on the other side of the boat, and the Lord, He brings the men.

But he says, I will make you fishers of men. It really does imply to me that you can live your Christian life expecting to see people converted. Expecting that.

Not the opposite. Expecting no one is going to be converted. The rate and the frequency by which that happens, there's a whole lot of questions you could ask about that.

And I'll think of that in a little bit. But one evening, Peter caught 153 physical fish. I mean, the Lord can work in that way in the spiritual realm as we saw in the book of Acts.

You know one thing this reminds me of? 1 Corinthians 3, verse 7. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God. But only God who gives the growth. Now what a statement.

But only God who gives the growth. We're really cast on the Lord. We're really cast upon the Lord to see people saved.

This is His idea. It's His idea there's a harvest. It's His idea to send laborers into the harvest.

It's His idea for us to be witnesses and acknowledge Him before men. You be faithful in that. And you take a stand for Christ.

And you proclaim His truth. Your expectation should be that will lead others to know the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Another question here.

How did Jesus fish? And you could have five sermons under that title. How did Jesus fish? Because He said He's going to make them fishers of men. And I already pointed out in the context here, right away, He flows into proclaiming the Gospel and healing.

You've got this preaching and compassion that's happening at the exact same time. And that's not always what you find. But right there, that's what you find from Christ.

There's a proclamation. There's not just the compassion and there's not just the proclamation. How did He fish? He fished by preaching the Gospel that pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

We don't have to alter the message. We don't have to come up with something new. We can preach Christ and Him crucified.

But think of a few cases of conversion. What led to Zacchaeus' conversion? What happened there? Hospitality. That's how I look at it.

He had Zacchaeus. He said, Zacchaeus, hurry, come down. I must stay at your house today.

What an invite! Have you tried that downtown? Gone up to some rich man and said, I've got to stay at your house tonight. Who knows? Maybe that's exactly what they need to happen. But hospitality? He didn't just go up to him outside and lay it all out.

He went to his home, was in the home, and he's proclaiming the truth to this man. And the Lord saves him. D.E. Host, the missionary who took over for Hudson Taylor, has always struck me.

He remarked that the natives in China would not believe that God had an open door to receive them if the missionaries themselves did not have an open door to the Chinese. That's the right deduction. Here, come to this Christ.

His door is open. And then they come to your house. It's like, well, y'all are dirty.

They're going to believe your message about God having an open door to His enemies? When you don't have an open door to them? It's not going to happen. Hospitality is mightily used by the Lord to draw people to Himself, to give an opportunity to show Christ. How did Jesus fish? He hammered home on people's idols, right? This is what you see in Mark 10 with the rich young ruler.

Christ, He's discerning specifically the idol in a man's life and He just lays right into it. And if God gives some of you the discernment to almost see into someone's heart and to read their thoughts, and there's that spiritual discernment given by God, don't waste that by not saying anything, but drive certain things home. Yes, in a sharp way at times.

Yes, in a gracious way at times. You've got to discern what case it is that's before you. God's able to use that.

You go read Ichabod Spencer's pastor's sketches. That's what happened. He was trying to find the one thing.

Jesus did that in Mark 10. That's not some random methodology of fishing. That's like Christ fished.

So we could go on and on with examples of Christ. But Jesus, He's sending us to fish for people. This is something He makes every believer to various degrees, a fisher of men, a witness of Him, an acknowledger of Him before people.

Some will be gifted and designed by God in a unique way to do that. They ought to be recognized and supported to do such. But many of you keep being faithful in the workplace, with the family, with those who come into these four walls.

Look beyond that with whatever open doors you can find. And so we should pray. Father, I'm following Your Son.

He said You'd make me a fisher of men. I've labored hours and I've caught nothing. Lord, provide for me souls.

That's what this verse makes me pray to the Lord and what I have been praying to the Lord. Lord, You said You'd make me a fisher of men. Not just fishing with no catch, but actually seeing men come to Christ.

Lord, I've been trying to catch this one person in Your Gospel net. Would You save them this year? We should be praying bold statements like that to the Lord. What time have we got? We're halfway.

Okay, those are some thoughts on Matthew 4.19. But I want to give some examples and some quotes that have really struck me in this area and I hope they will edify you as well. Who's heard of Thomas Boston?

Yeah, a handful. He wrote a book called The Art of Man Fishing.

How old was he? Anyone read that book? He wrote it when he was 22 years old. I didn't realize that. 22 years old he wrote this book.

Listen, it's based on this verse. This is his comment. My soul cried out for accomplishing of that to me, making me a fisher of men.

I was very desirous to know how I might follow Christ so as to become a fisher of men. And from my own instruction in that point, I addressed myself to the consideration of it in a manner. And indeed, it was much on my heart in these days not to preach the wisdom of my own heart or produce my own gifts, but to depend on the Lord for light that I might, if I could have reached it, be able to say of every word, Thus saith the Lord.

That's Boston at 22. He's not seen anyone converted in his life that he's aware of. The Lord saves and you don't even know it.

But here he cried, Lord, accomplish this in me. You said to these men, you're going to make them fishers of men. Lord, do this in my life.

He says in that book. Many preachers are shamed by the devil and the devil's zeal. The devil goes out like a roaring lion.

He seeks who he can devour. While these preachers, they're set upon saving souls by creeping about slowly like a bunch of snails. The devil is in earnest when he tempts you, yet to the opposite, some preachers are unconcerned whether people hear or forbear to hear their invitations and reproofs.

The devil's agents that handle his business, how concerned are they? In order to gain one convert, they will travel across sea and land. Should preachers of the Gospel be unconcerned? You see, he's contrasting the zeal of Satan. It reminds me of one comment my father-in-law made to me that always stood out.

He said the one thing to imitate from the devil, and he referred to Revelation where it says the devil knowing his time was short, what did that produce in Satan? He had great zeal. And Bob's point was if Satan could recognize his time is short and he has great zeal, we as Christians should recognize our time is short. It's but a hand breath.

And we should have great zeal likewise. So here Boston is in 1699 expressing these things and wrestling with these things in his heart. Now, make me a fisher of men.

Do not have the imagery, the Lord's thinking about me with a fishing pole at Lion's Lake. We'll go by Lion's Lake, that lake by our house. Tons of people are fishing.

Fishing to them is they've got a pole in their PVC thing they've stuck in the ground, and they're drinking a lot, and their pole's just sitting there. Is that fishing according to the Bible? Is that what these men were doing? No, no, not at all. In case you have some wrong imagery here of what Christ is pointing at and what they're asking of, He's talking about some serious labor.

This is with a net, not a pole. The imagery of using a lure and a line and waiting for the fish to strike, that's foreign to what's happening here. Rather, this is the imagery of straining of long hours and often little

results.

We labored all night. Caught nothing. How many times have we gone downtown and we come back? We labored all night.

Apparently, we caught nothing. Now, you never know, because you left a bunch of silent messengers, the tracks, and they're in people's pockets. They're in their cars.

You never know what's going to happen. But there might be toiling all night. We don't catch anything.

There's storms. Some get frightened. They go back to the shore.

And others venture out. They don't want to lose any fish in the deep. Listen, when you think about where to go fishing, listen to Luke 4. This is not the ESV.

I think it's the KJV. Listen to how it renders it. When he had stopped speaking, he said to Simon, launch out into the deep.

Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. You could stretch that statement. What does that sound like? Launch out into the deep.

There's some people, they go launch out into the deep. They cast that net in the storm, in the trials. They labor all night.

They labor for year after year. They catch nothing. And they stay.

They don't lose heart like Judson. It's incredible. I'm going to look at some of those examples that have really stood out to me over the years in a little bit.

But some are called to launch out into the deep. To go out into the deep. Listen to this.

A.J. Gordon wrote a book, The Holy Spirit and Missions. Has anyone read that? The Holy Spirit and Missions? About halfway through on the last few days. But listen to this.

Think about launching out into the deep. Think about the difficulty of evangelism. I know part of this is thinking about global missions more than it is local evangelism.

But bear with me. For 33 years, this is Adernheim Judson Gordon. His dad was John Calvin Gordon and he named his son Adernheim Judson.

So it's A.J. Gordon. He was alive when Adernheim Judson was alive. That's a side note.

For 33 years, the Moravian missionaries had toiled on 33 years amidst such discouragements seeing almost no one converted for 33 years. 33 years. That they had begun seriously to consider the abandonment of their primary station in Massachusetts.

But one day in 1804, as a missionary was preaching from the text, the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost. 33 years, brethren, of faithful labor. Toiling all night.

33 years. Not because they did anything, but God sovereignly chose to come. They did do something.

They remained faithful. The Son of Man seeks to save that which is lost. The words took powerful hold of a wretched, abandoned woman so sunk in every evil that she was despised and shunned even by her degraded countrymen.

And what a person for Christ to save, right? I mean, the worst of the worst. She was filled with the deepest anguish on account of her sins. She spent the night in the huts occupied by the dogs as though unworthy to associate with human beings.

It sounds like the demoniac getting converted all over again from Mark 5. The great word of the preacher, however, proved a source of life to her soul. She entered into sweet peace. Immediately, she began to praise the Savior in the most exultant manner for what He had done for her.

She became as a live coal in her village. Go home and tell of how I've had mercy on you. That's a live coal in Mark 5. You've got it right here.

From which the whole community became set on fire. Old and young were brought under powerful conviction. In every hut, the sound of singing and praying was audible.

And the churches could not contain the numbers who flocked to hear the message of salvation. Those converted were moved at once to become missionaries to their heathen countrymen. Again, Mark 5. Burden to go home.

And so the work spread throughout the land. This was Labrador's Pentecost. It was ignited by a single verse.

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost. It is not My word like fire, saith the Lord. Isn't that amazing? Now many, they don't have the stanima.

They have faith in God for 33 years of laboring and seeing no results. And you know what struck me? They're insecure. After 30 years, there's a sense they have this insecurity in their heart.

Maybe God's not with us because no one's been saved in 30 years. You let that little insecure thought of unbelief into your heart, you're going to abandon the work. You're going to just... that's it.

You're going to let results dictate your faithfulness to the work. Imagine 10 years, hardly any results. 20 years.

30 years. Imagine what people were even saying to them at that point. Maybe that's written somewhere.

I'd love to read all of that. How are these people processing that? And they kept on. Brethren, don't get some insecurity in your heart that God is not with you just because there's no results after 33 years.

You and I need to be faithful to God in the sphere He's put us in, regardless of results. Results can be an evidence of the hand of God. At the same time, no results are obviously an evidence of the hand of God too.

But is it the evidence of the hand of God on judgment upon us because we've sinned? Or is it the evidence of the hand of God testing His workers? You see, how you interpret that is going to be a massive difference on what you conclude and how you respond. And so these Moravians right here after 33 years, it's not just the Lord started to save. These people then were burdened for their heathen countrymen and

all of a sudden you just have this revival that's spreading.

It's absolutely incredible. And it's a reminder that man sows, but who gives the growth? God. I mean, you look at so much through history.

And it's something when you look at history because you can already see these men weren't compromised. They were being faithful and yet there were no results. When you're in the midst of it, it's easier to wonder, maybe these guys are really compromised and that's why they're not seeing any results.

But, you look at history and you realize they were God's men. And God was testing them. Listen to this.

Gordon, he goes on in this book. He says it was seven years before Cary baptized his first convert in India. It was seven years before... Seven, not 33.

Right? These guys have got nothing on those Moravians. It wasn't that they didn't have any converts, but hardly anything. So this was first converts.

It was seven years before Judson won his first disciple in Burma. Does it stop there? Morrison toiled seven years before the first Chinaman was brought to Christ. Does it stop there? Nope.

Moffat declares he waited seven years to see the first evident moving of the Holy Spirit upon the Buchanan's of Africa. Henry Richards wrought seven years on the Congo before the first convert was gained at Banza. It had almost seemed as though God had fixed the sacred biblical number of seven as a term of a missionary's apprenticeship.

As I found it reoccurring again and again in the story of the planning of the Gospel. But how rich is reward who has waited patiently till the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. God has seasons of delay, and glorious indeed are the seasons which often follow His delays.

We are now seven years in this land, wrote Brother Botch of Gosner Mission among the Indians. But through these long years, it was but the trial of our patience and endurance. Everything seemed to be in vain.

And many said the mission was useless. Then the Lord Himself kindled a fire before our eyes, and it seized not only single souls, but spread from village to village. And from every side the question was raised, what shall we do to be saved? See, Gordon's book is six lectures that he gave.

They founded Gordon Conwell Seminary after him. Lecture 2 is very good about the Holy Spirit and missions. But these are from that book.

It's amazing as he's making these observations. But this is connected to fishing because missions is a massive fishing trip of evangelism and seeking to bring the Gospel in the deep, right? Now, I want to look right here at the end at a fisherman whom God has really used much lately and who's still alive. I've never personally met this brother, but in the last few years I've kept hearing about him.

I heard about him from Mack Tomlinson recently when Don Kern was here. I heard about this brother again. And his name is Dave Story.

In 2017, Michael Durham had a post about Dave Story and this is what Michael said. This is six years ago. Eleven years ago, the Lord brought Dave and Lisa back to his hometown in Canada to plant a church.

David, burdened for the perishing in the area, would pray and weep over a long list of people he knew. In the ensuing years, God has done a steady work of saving sinners. Although DeCotown has a population of only 793, he goes there, he plants a church.

This is six years ago. Six years ago. The church now runs on an average of 175 people with visitors almost every Sunday.

There have been multiple conversions in the past 13 years since the plant begun. And that was part of what Durham said. This is from the HeartCry missionary site.

In November 2013, I think this is Dave Story writing himself. Another young lady named Melita, now my daughter-in-law, was on her way to another church before deciding to stop at her church that Sunday. She came under strong conviction of the Spirit that morning.

Realized she was a false convert. She was gloriously converted. As a result of her conversion, four months later, her brother was also born again.

Now he's my son-in-law. Their uncle Dave, when he saw the change in their lives, realized he was lost. He came to Christ in June of 2014 on a Friday.

And his wife Rhonda was converted the next day. They've been attending our services for about four weeks when this took place. Dave's son and daughter Cassidy came to Christ within a few weeks after that.

As a result of this, Melita's grandfather Winston was also awakened. Then her mother Angela was converted the next fall. Followed by Angela's father Glennie.

It's like God's just sweeping them all in. Then Cassidy had a strong witness to her other grandfather. I too went to him several times.

He was a very hard man. But after sharing the Gospel with him for several months, he too was converted. He has since gone to be with the Lord.

Finally, in the last year, Melita's father Richie has been truly converted. I will baptize him and others very soon. At least seven of those converted in this family were previously convinced they were heaven-bound when in fact they were lost.

This is the Lord saving professing Christians who were deceived. This one after another. Obviously, what's a massive part of being a good fisherman is following Christ in His character and godliness and holiness and not having character that is hypocritical, right? That's not going to help your ability to convince someone of Christ.

He goes on, Last summer, my wife Lisa and I went to a local restaurant and I witnessed to a man named Peter for over an hour. I saw him a week later and reminded him of our former conversation. I then prayed urgently for him for a whole week.

The next Sunday, he showed up to church. Five weeks later, he was gloriously converted. And like the others, he continues to walk with Christ and boldly declare what Christ has done for him.

There's another post on the HeartChrist site. Changing gears. These are people who we prayed for.

This is still Dave's story. This gets more behind this man, Dave's story. These are people who we prayed for their conversion daily.

We repeatedly witnessed to them repeatedly. You hear that? We begged them to repent. Didn't ask them.

Begged them to repent. Be reconciled to God through Christ. Many times it was in tears.

We keep the language plain, very direct, like Jesus in Mark 10, and we repeatedly visit them. Some of them he was visiting for ten years. Mitchell was one of those who I witnessed to regularly and prayed for for ten years.

He was converted on a Sunday two years ago when Mack Tomlinson was preaching at our church. His wife Anita was converted a few months before. They were both walking faithfully and serving Christ.

By grace, Mitchell's father and mother were then converted through this ministry ten years ago. You just see again the Lord saving and then saving more in the family. And this is a more newer update from 2017.

In these last years, several years ago, another young man, a young woman named Beth, started coming to the church. At the end of a church service, she cried out that she wanted to be saved. I immediately started discipling her and her live-in boyfriend who was the father of their two children at the time.

They now have four kids. During a period of nearly 20 weeks, he was also converted. She had no further union with him until after his conversion and they were married.

They were both faithful followers of Christ in her training and instructing their children in the ways of the Lord. We go to several people each week. We pray for them.

We constantly plead with them to repent and believe the Gospel. We go until they are either converted or until they tell us to never come back. Does this sound like a fishing pole? This is like throwing a net.

We went to their house again. We threw the net down. We caught nothing.

We went again. Ten years. Same fishing spot.

Caught nothing. Or maybe it looked like we caught the fish and then it got out of the net. You go hear this man's sermons.

If you had not heard all this, you hear his sermons, you would never think God's used him in this way. You wouldn't. It's like the Apostle Paul in a way.

He's not an eloquent speaker, but God has used him in such a mighty way. The last update serves as a laborious update. To me, it's just incredibly encouraging.

The last update from 2022. Again, just plead the Lord. You're making fishers of men and seeing... I hate to even use the word results, but seeing these fruits in this way.

Lord, bring something of this in a greater degree even here among ourselves. The last one. He says, Joshua, an 11-year-old boy, attended one of the chapels at our Christian school.

He was converted early last fall. Despite his age, he has a real zeal for the Gospel and wants to see people come to Christ. He's 11 years old.

A few months back, he began to read the Bible to his grandfather, Wayne, who is a professing atheist. An 11-year-old boy reading the Bible to his granddad. I know a lot of the kids are in the back.

One of the things I even think with my own kids, if you're going to say you're a follower of Christ, and he says he makes you fishers of men, is there not any type of desire there to tell others? If there's no desire there, to me that's very discouraging about whatever profession someone's making. They don't even know. It's like I don't even think about telling others about what Christ has done.

Well then, has what Christ's done really gripped and changed your own heart? To me, that's a valid question to ask. I don't want to wrongly condemn the child in that area, but it's something for them to think about. Take to heart.

Where was I? Oh, Joshua would read while in Wayne's bedroom. All the while, burdened to see his grandfather saved. And guess what? Wayne was gloriously converted a few months ago.

And I believe the Lord has saved Joshua's twin sister, Sophie, as well. They're a wonderful family and we love them tremendously. Thank God for sending them to us.

They will be baptized next month with a few others, Lord willing. And that last update is from the HeartChrist site in 2022. The first two Sundays in September we baptized 12 people.

They went public for Christ. That's someone to pray for. Dave Storey.

It could be nice to have him come down sometime. Yeah, all of that was happening at one church in a small town of 800 people. Look, it's easier to have a captive audience in a town of 800 people to follow up with people, right? I mean, you know everyone.

There's certain people you see downtown and you never see them again. I mean, they're probably a tourist. I don't know.

Do I have any more excuses I can come up with? The Lord clearly has gifted this man as an evangelist. It's just obvious. The Spirit of God is upon this man in a unique way.

Again, I say that because as we're all involved in taking forth the Gospel, there's some who have an exquisite manifestation of the Spirit of God in their life and the wisdom to woo souls to Christ that others just don't have. And that's just the Spirit operates in that way. But if you don't sense that in yourself, don't lose heart and say, well, I don't think I have that gift, so I'm not going to see fruit.

No, no, you're following Christ. I'm following Christ. Pray that God would save.

Well, one last thought. 2 Peter 3:9 says, God is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but all should reach repentance. And to quote Ryan Fullerton, I really appreciated what he shared on this a while back.

On that text, he said, the reason today, because here God's waiting to come back, right? That's his point. The reason today exists is that God wants more people to be saved than are currently saved. And He's willing to prolong human history to get them into His kingdom.

Which means that every time you rub the sleep out of your eyes, there ought to be this awareness that today exists for evangelistic purposes. Because of God's patience, the heavens have not been destroyed.

The final judgment has not yet come.

You see, you look at life that way. You look at it in that perspective. God could come and bring destruction.

He's not because He still has people He wants to be saved. And oh, we get to be the hands and the feet to bring the good news and the glad tidings to the nations, to the neighborhoods, to our family members. So may it be so.

May the Lord help us and make us all more fishers of men. Let's pray. Lord, You looked at those men who were there engaged in their job.

Lord, they had no idea what was ahead of them. We don't even know how much they knew about You at that point. But Lord, You looked at them and You said, follow me and I will make You fishers of men.

Lord, we're grateful that You've not just told us to follow You aimlessly. We're not just people beating against the air with no purpose. But Lord, You've given us a purpose to be Your witnesses, to acknowledge You before men, to seek to see our lost spouses saved, children saved, our countrymen, our hearts' desire for them is that they might be saved.

Lord, we want to have a burden like Paul and unceasing anguish in our hearts that people would be saved. Lord, I pray that You would make me and make my brethren more fishers of men. Lord, there's areas that we've toiled.

We've not seen results. And Lord, forgive us if there's some idolatry at times of results. Lord, we want to be like those Moravians, faithful for 33 years even if it seems like nothing happens.

Lord, give us the faith to know we're in Your will, to not question ourselves in a wrong way. But Lord, at the same time, if there is something in my own heart or our own hearts that's keeping someone or something about our character that's keeping certain people from Christ, Lord, reveal that to us. Lord, we don't want Your name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles.

We don't want our conduct not being hospitable like Host said to be a reason the pagans don't believe Your offer that they can come to You. And so Father, I thank You for Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank You for sending Him.

Lord, I thank You for 15 years ago saving me. Lord, I thank You for the men I saw downtown preaching the Gospel. Lord, I hated them.

I was offended by them. I apologized for what they were doing. And then here, Lord, You saved me.

And You put me right there in front of that Alamo proclaiming the good news of Christ. Lord, I'm thankful that You make men fishers of men. I'm thankful, Lord, You give us opportunities.

And so Lord, would You continue to do this work in us, to bring this production about. Lord, we look at our degree paper and it's not some random thing that's stamped on there. It says for all of us, Lord, fishers of men.

Acknowledgers of You. Witnesses of You. And Lord, I pray You'd be with those who are out there, Lord, laboring like Vess and Lord, even Tim and everything in Manchester.

And Lord, everything in Nepal and the Wilkinsons and the Florises. Father, Lord, we want to see the Word of God speed ahead and be honored. And Lord, I think about the discouragements that some people have encountered and faced.

Lord, I pray You'd encourage their hearts wherever they're at this morning. Would You even save in their meetings? Lord, maybe this morning in Nicaragua or this morning even in Ecuador. Now, Clayton's not there, but Lord, there's a man there sharing.

Lord, would You not use even a verse like Jesus came to seek and save the lost to lead to massive amounts of conversion? Lord, You're able to do that. Your arm is not short that it cannot save. And so, Lord, we pray that Your arm that's so long, that's able to reach down even to the North Sentinel Island and bring out those pagans into the Gospel.

Lord, we pray that You'd do that work. Lord, be with those out there in the field. Be with us here.

Lord, I think of that little boy that my daughter talked to on Friday. Lord Haven, I pray You'd save that kid's soul. Lord, that the Gospel wouldn't be confusing to him.

But Lord, that he'd know the truth. And so, Lord, we want to be those who see souls saved. We want to, by all means possible, save some.

And Lord, what a comment from Paul to say that he's involved in the saving of some. Lord, help us to not lose heart. Help us to pull in the nets.

Help us to cast them. Lord, help us to speak in a plainer way to sinners that we could make sense and that You would empower our words. Lord, would You raise up in our own church evangelists.

Lord, who among us is gifted in a unique way with a manifestation of Your Spirit, a measure of faith to operate as an evangelist? Lord, I pray that You would identify those people. Lord, approve their worth. Lord, and use them in that way that sinners might come and bow the knee to Christ now and Lord, not then in eternity and in judgment.

And so, Lord, we just commit ourselves to You. Help us, please. Lord, we thank You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/8zb3dMI-Rkc.mp4>

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