



northminster presbyterian church

2400 old alabama road
roswell, georgia 30076

04-Feb-2007 Youth Sunday

SCRIPTURE: Luke 4:32-5:11

SERMON: Goin' Fishin' (Northminster Senior Youth)

Eric Thompson, Part 1 9:00 AM & 11:15 AM

A missionary was walking down a trail in Africa when he heard the ominous padding of a lion behind him. "Oh Lord," he prayed, "Grant in Thy goodness that the lion walking behind me is a good Christian lion." And then, in the silence that followed, the missionary heard the lion praying also, "Oh Lord," said the Lion, "I thank Thee for the food which I am about to receive."

For those of you who check the Lectionary before church or know it well, you may wonder why we added the first four verses onto today's selection. Well, the reasoning behind it is that at the first sermon writing meeting we decided that those four verses add an important dimension to the passage. They allow more insight into why Jesus did some of the things he did. It also helps us understand what Jesus means when he tells Peter that he will be "fishing for people".

The first part of the passage is pretty straightforward. Jesus had just healed many people. The next day he went to a "solitary" place, where he most likely prayed. However, the people of the area were searching for him and eventually found him. They did not want him to leave because they realized he might be the Messiah.

In his response to the crowd, Jesus gives us his purpose for coming to Earth, and that is "to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God." This gives us the reason why he has done everything he has up to this point, and why he continues his ministry.

Then Jesus went on to preach throughout Judea, which is the southern part of Israel, just to give you an idea geographically of where he is. As we move into Chapter 5, Jesus is now by the Lake of Gennesaret, or the Sea of Galilee, or the Sea of Tiberias, whichever you prefer to call it. So some time has passed since Chapter 4 because Jesus has now passed through Samaria and is now in the very north of Israel.

When I hear that Jesus came to "proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God" I have to ask: Well, what exactly is proclaiming? Well for starters, I think it is safe to assume that where God is king, that is where His kingdom is. So, Jesus was proclaiming the good news of God's realm essentially. Well then, why was it so important that he do this?

Think about the Lord's Prayer for a second. One of the lines is "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done... on earth as it is in heaven." Hmm... interesting. In Jesus' own prayer that he taught his disciples, Jesus was praying for God's kingdom to come and that God's people would do God's will on earth the same way that it is done in heaven.

This is not an easy task for anyone to do - to bring about God's kingdom - but this is what Jesus has called everyone of us to do. One of the ways you are doing it already is simply by being here right now. You have all come together to worship God; to give honor and praise to God. Even more, you are opening up your minds to a different form of worship than you are used to and you get to see how we as all of the youth worship God on Sunday nights at youth group. This year at youth group one of the focuses has been to make youth group a place where anyone can come and feel accepted. In focusing on this, we hope to bring a little of God's kingdom here on earth.

My own way of proclaiming Jesus' message has been through Montreat. As many of you all know, Clay Boyles served as a Co-Director for one of the Montreat Planning Teams last summer. Well, this coming summer I will have a similar role. I am a youth member of the planning team and my responsibility is to work with one of my co-directors, one adult planning team member,

our preacher, and our music leader to plan the evening worship services.

The whole process is something that is amazing to witness. Around 100 people came together over a year and a half ago to form a community of people with a common goal to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God through the Montreat Youth Conferences. This summer that community is going to grow to about 12,000 people. They will converge on Montreat to learn as well as share their beliefs and stories of how God's kingdom has entered and affected their lives.

It is somewhat rewarding to know that all the hard work I've already done, and the work that is still to come has been for the purpose of proclaiming the word of God; to present God's message in a new and different way than can be normally found at their home churches. As a planning team we hope to create an environment that will allow youth to grow in their faith as they encounter new experiences. Small groups at Montreat are unique because they allow youth to meet people from all over the country that often have different opinions, stories and backgrounds than our own.

I would have never considered myself a "fisher of people" before my experiences with this church and with Montreat. Discussions at youth group as well as my small groups at Montreat have encouraged me to grow in my faith.

And now I have been asked to help lead a youth conference for thousands of youth as a part of the planning team. I hope that through this experience I will be able to pass on Jesus' purpose "to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, to help create a community that lives according to God's values, and to instill in others the desire to become fishers of people. **Amen.**

Catherine Bixler, Part 2 9:00 AM

Jesus was NOT a fisherman. He was a carpenter, and he was a teacher, but he was NOT a fisherman.

Put yourself in Simon's shoes here. You're a fisherman, you've been a fisherman your whole life; it's how you were raised and it's all you've known. One night you stay out all night fishing in the same spot you've always fished in, and you catch nothing. Not a single fish. Probably your worst night of fishing ever.

The next morning, you're cleaning your nets (which involves more hours of tedious labor) and this huge carpenter-turned-rabbi you've heard all about commandeers your boat to teach the people on the shore. And after he's done, tells you to go deep, and let down your nets. Again. In the water you just spent a whole, long, fruitless night in. With the nets you've just finished cleaning. He's crazy, right??

Or maybe you are. Because you do it. You put your nets back in the water, even after telling this man "Hey, I haven't caught a thing all night, and I'm pretty sure I know more about fishing than you do, but I'll humor you and put my nets back in the water."

Think about it. Do you even expect to catch anything? Or are you just dropping your nets back in because you know how huge this guy is and you've heard so much about him and this might be your one chance to impress him or get your name in some of those stories you've been hearing?

As soon as you put your nets back in the water, though, you can barely lift them up. Your friends come help you pull the nets in, and they're teeming with fish. Where did all these fish come from?? How did you miss them??

So now you're probably kinda freaked out. This guy, this Jesus, just performed one of his famous miracles. For you. Why?? Did he want to prove that he could? Did he do it to spite you? Did he do it to show off? Did he do it.... to provide for you?

Are you scared? Are you afraid of this man? He just did you a huge favor: He performed a miracle and you don't deserve it at all. You don't deserve what he just did for you because you're a sinner. And he knows that you're a sinner. And you know that he knows you're a sinner.

So you fall on your knees, begging him to go away from you, to stay far away from you, because you are a sinner, and he knows that. He is holy, he's a rabbi, he has the power of GOD, and you're a sinner. A dirty, sinning, fisherman.

We've all had times when we didn't want Jesus. Times when we kinda just ask him to turn away so we can sin real quick. And when we figure out he's still there, we cry "Lord, don't come near me! I am a sinner," or "Jesus! I told you to turn away," as if we really expected him to leave, and as if we really expected him to walk away when we asked him to.

At times like these, it's not that we don't want Jesus in our lives at all... we just don't want him to see certain aspects of our lives: the parts of our lives that we know Jesus would not be pleased with, but that we want to do anyway. And we don't want Jesus to see those parts of our lives, so we push him away... just for a little bit, so we can get our fix and then ask for forgiveness and go to church and whatnot.

When Jesus sees those aspects of our lives, though, it can hurt. It can hurt when we realize that God sees everything we do, everything we think, and everything we feel. It hurts because we know we've hurt God. And we know he has exposed the darkest, most hidden, most sinful parts of our lives. And it hurts. The emptiness and vanity of our lives is exposed; the emptiness of our actions is exposed; the emptiness of our desires are exposed; and we are afraid. So we ask God to "not come near us" or to "go away from us," just like Simon Peter did; rather than face the exposure and the pain.

We're human. We don't want to feel pain. And we don't want the true nature of our existence to be revealed to someone so holy, even though we're fooling ourselves by thinking it won't be.

But just like parents ground us "for our own good", just like teachers fail us or give us bad grades to "teach us a lesson", and just like people who love us, watch us fall and then pick us back up and dust us off; God exposes our darkness and unworthiness in love. And most of the time, it's because God wants to use us- he has a purpose for us, and a plan for us that was crafted just for us. We are exactly who God created us to be, even if we're not acting like it.

When Jesus performed a miracle for Peter, Peter knew his sins had been exposed, and he was afraid. He was only afraid of what Jesus had just done, though. Think about it. He had no idea what Jesus was about to do - tell Peter to follow him - he was only afraid of the miracle Jesus had just performed, and afraid because Jesus had just proven himself to Peter, and Peter knew that that meant his sins had been exposed. And that terrified him. Can you blame him, though??

Think of your deepest secret, or your deepest sin. Right now. Think about it. Got it? How would you feel if you knew the person next to you had just heard you thinking? If the person right next to you could hear everything you were thinking? (Let's hope you didn't think anything bad about their choice of apparel!) But seriously. Your deepest, darkest secret has just been exposed to a complete stranger. Oh, and also... that stranger represents God; He has the power of God.

I don't know about you, but if some complete stranger knew my deepest secret and my worst sins, I wouldn't want that person to stay near me for too long, either. So I can't really blame Simon Peter for being afraid and having the impulse to send Jesus away.

But Peter was still willing to put his nets in the deep water and fish. As tired as he was, as dirty as he was and as sinful as he was, he was willing to go deep for Jesus and expose his darkness.

After Peter freaks out, though, and tries to tell Jesus to go away, Jesus reassures him with the words "Do not be afraid," (He already KNOWS that Peter is afraid and what Peter is afraid of). He says, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching people." And with that, Peter's darkness was exposed and Peter's emptiness was filled, and he became filled with a new purpose and meaning.

He wasn't aware of this yet, but he was about to set out on the greatest and most meaningful journey of his life; one that would give him reason to leave everything. All the fish that he had just caught could have earned him enough money to keep him comfortable for weeks! But he left it all to catch people. He didn't even know what it meant to be catching people or to be a fisher of men, but he knew that Jesus was a pretty trustworthy guy after what he had just done. And he knew that Jesus could save him from his sinful life and fill his emptiness. **Amen.**

Chris Patterson, Part 2 11:15 AM

Ok so here's the story so far, so Jesus was teaching near the sea of Gennesert. The crowds were too much, so he goes out into a boat to teach. Next, after he teaches, he tells the owner of the boat to go out a ways and drop his nets.

The fisherman, Simon, says that he was out all night fishing, but if Jesus asks him to, he will. So he goes out and drops his nets. He catches so many fish that he calls over his partners and when they finish, they have so many fish that their boats are sinking. Simon then exclaims, "Get away from me lord for I am a sinful man."

There are two things that can be taken away from this story.

First off, the story tells us about being too tired for God. Have you ever been too tired for God? Let me explain what I mean.

Simon says that he had been out all night fishing. Now Simon was a fisherman, he knew all the fishing spots, knew all the techniques. His father was probably a fisherman; Simon had been raised fishing. He had been out fishing with nets all night and had caught absolutely nothing. Even with all his fishing expertise, even though he had worked hard all night, he had caught nothing.

After this frustrating and back-breaking night, he had spent all morning cleaning his nets, which means more hours of exhausting labor. Then, after all this, he is asked to go out again. And he's asked by a rabbi, a carpenter's son and a carpenter by trade himself; someone who has probably never fished a day in his life; to go fishing.

Even after all this, he still said "OK, I'll go out." I'm not entirely sure why he went out, but he did. And it changed his life.

Are you too tired for God? Are ya running on empty? Too tired to set aside a couple of minutes for praying and reflecting before you go to bed? Too tired to get up every Sunday morning and come to church? Peter said 'Yes' to Jesus and had the biggest "fish story" of his life.

Peter's response to the greatest fishing day of his life is interesting. Jesus performed this miracle, and the fisherman experience the catch of their lifetime. But instead of thanking Jesus or God or thinking about how wonderful this miracle is, he falls to his knees and says "Get away from me lord, for I am a sinful man."

It's kinda a weird response. Why does he respond so negatively? He knew he wasn't worthy. Simon realized that with all his imperfections, he is not worthy of this miracle. He believes that his sins make him unworthy for the love of Jesus and the love of God.

Yet even in his unworthiness Jesus offers him words of acceptance; words of assurance. And Jesus lays before him a new path, a new opportunity for a new future. That is why Jesus came. No one was worthy, and I'm willing to bet that nobody is worthy now. I'm certainly not worthy. As Presbyterians, we believe that one cannot earn the love and forgiveness of God. It is a gift. When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, that gift was made available to us. And now Jesus asks us to go out and share this gift with others.

Last year, I got my first job. I was a bagboy at Kroger. Because of school, I couldn't work weekdays, so I ended up working 16 hours most weekends on Saturday and Sunday. I really didn't have time for church. I'd have to get up too early for church and when I got home I'd be too wiped for Youth group.

Well, I finally quit the job and came back to church. Six weeks later, I was asked if I wanted to be a Junior Leader. I felt unworthy. There was a nine month span where I had had nothing to do with the church, and suddenly I'm asked to be a Junior Leader? But that's the way it seems to work. Just remember that no matter what the action is, because of Jesus Christ, you are always worthy. **Amen.**

Taylor Vaughan, Part 3 9:00 AM

First thing Jesus says to Peter is “Do not be afraid.” God knows our fear, and knows why we are afraid. He knows that, like Peter, we don’t think we’re worthy to follow him but he still calls us and wants to use us anyway.

Then the next thing Jesus does is tell Peter “From now on you will be catching people.” One weird thing about this version of it is that in the other gospels, it’s a choice. “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” But Jesus doesn’t ask Peter to follow him at all, he just says “From now on you will be catching people.” And it’s true. Even though these guys have just made the biggest catch of fish anyone’s made since anyone started fishing here, they just leave it and follow him.

It’s easy to say that Jesus’ fishing metaphor was just used because it was something Peter and his friends understood. But if you look a little closer at it it’s still a good comparison today. The disciples probably used nets to fish. Nets can gather a lot of fish at once, but they do so by trapping the fish in and forcing them to be there. Some people try to “fish for people” in that way. They tell people that if they don’t turn to God, they will burn forever in Hell.

These kind of people really do more harm than good. Non-Christians get so burned out by all these hellfire and damnation Christians that they assume we’re all like that and don’t listen to what we have to say. I have several non-Christian friends who have been surprised to find out I’m a Christian, because I hadn’t been stuffing my beliefs down their throats.

Today when we think of fishing, we think of a pole with bait. But these kinds of Christians aren’t really using bait. Their tactics are more like having a shark behind you and a hook in front of you, and choosing the hook over the shark.

So the question is, what is the bait that Jesus wants us to use to fish for people? For some people, it is salvation. At first this seems like a good reason but if you look a little deeper, it’s still fear. These people come to God because they are afraid of the alternative.

So what is the bait we should use to fish for people? Well, maybe the bait we have is the kind of changes that a life with God can bring. Some people don’t want to hear about God, and the only thing you can do is try and live your life in a way that shows them what living with God is like.

In this passage, Jesus didn’t proclaim the good news of Salvation, he proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom of God. When most people think of the Kingdom of God they think Heaven, but maybe the Kingdom of God can be here on Earth too.

So what should this Kingdom of God look like? Well, I think for the most part you can look at the society of the world and assume that a godly society should be the exact opposite. In the world, greed and revenge are key, but a Godly community has charity and forgiveness. In the world, people are excluded. You’re either “in” or you’re “out.” The church community should be all-inclusive to everyone.

Among your friends and everyone you meet, both those in church and those not in church, you should be forgiving and caring and not hold grudges. To be kind to everyone, including being friendly to people you don’t know.

Is our church this way? Are we living this way? I know I’m not. I hold grudges. I exclude people. I can be selfish. What hope do I, or anyone for that matter, have? If I was Peter I’m sure I’d be saying “Lord, get away from me for I am a sinful man.”

But Jesus says to Peter, to me, to you, “Do not be afraid.” He knows we’re not worthy, but he still calls us to leave behind the stinking fish boats of our former lives and go on to fish for people. He calls us to live according to these values, and to create communities based around these values. Not just for us, but for those who are watching us.

If we are just like other people, caught in the everyday worries and personal warfare of life, where’s the bait? Being a Christian becomes just like being anyone else except that you can’t sleep in on Sundays.

This isn't what God wants. If our lives are no different from the lives of those around us, we don't have any bait. And how can you fish for people without any bait? You can't. You can spread the good news of the Kingdom of God, sure, but if your actions don't back up your words, you're not going to make a large catch.

There's a lot of good stuff in this passage. Jesus' words were not just to Peter. He's talking to you and me, too. From now on, you will be catching people. **Amen.**

Erin Cotter, Part 3 11:15 AM

"Don't be afraid. From now on you will be catching people." Jesus said this to Simon. "Catching people" may not be such a comforting thought for some of us especially if we think that "catching people" means talking to people about our faith. But "catching people" is a lot more than that.

What we learned from Jesus in Eric's sermon was that 'catching people' is about "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God" and not just about 'talking to people about salvation'. We proclaim this good news about God's kingdom more with our actions than our words. "Catching people" is not just about talking to people about our faith; but how we live our lives. And even this is scary for many people.

Many of us don't want to have to think about how we're supposed to relate to people as Christians because some of us aren't ready or willing to change the way we live. It's scary to make this change. Many of us are afraid to leave those things we know we shouldn't be doing behind because we enjoy them; like drinking too much; eating too much; or doing drugs; or looking at pornography; or being promiscuous; or flirting with a someone who is not your spouse; or talking trash at football games or hockey games. We don't want leave these things behind because we're afraid that we'll miss out on life. And so allowing God to really transform our lives is difficult.

Many of us don't feel able to change - don't feel able to turn our lives around; we feel that we don't have enough strength or will power to do it. But I think that's the great thing about God, you don't have to have enough power to change, because God will provide us with that power and God will provide us with the people in our lives to encourage us to live a better way. That's what so great about the church. All of us are here to support one another. All of us are here because we realize that we all have these problems or not necessarily "these" problems but some problems. And we all can be used by God to help one another.

The problem is many of us don't feel good enough. We look at our lives and we see how we're living and we know that we're not living the way we should. And when we recognize that we don't match up to the "Christian standard", we shy away from claiming our faith and the call to change and the call to help others. And so what happens is we only see the church as something that can help us, rather than realizing that we are the church and we can be used to help others. All the problems we have can help us relate to others and give us insights into the problems and pain that others are dealing with so that we can help one another.

That's why we shouldn't be afraid to reveal our problems to one another in a church. We're all here to help and support one another so that together we can be the type of community where love and forgiveness and fellowship grow the type of community that lives according to God's values and not the world's values.

The world tells us to look after ourselves, to do what makes us feel good; never caring about how it affects others.

When I was in the seventh grade, my life took a bad turn. My friends and I got sucked into the world's values and experimented with really bad things; things we never should have done. My relationship with my parents was getting worse every day. My relationship with my sister was really bad. My family and I were always yelling at one another and nobody was happy. I would leave the house and not tell anyone where I was going and freak my parents out really bad.

But one day, my friend asked me if I believed in Jesus. I said, "Of course I believe in Jesus" because I did. I just didn't listen to what he said. Then she asked, "Well do you call yourself a Christian?" And I said, "No, how can I; I'm not living as one." And then all of a sudden I think God just said, "Oh no you don't!" And one morning, I woke up and told my mom I wanted to switch

schools. I wanted to get away from all my friends and all of the bad stuff that I was into. I saw how Catherine was happy at Mt. Pisgah, so I decided to try to get in there. Then came the hard part. I had to break off ties with all my friends and try to mend my relationship with my family. It was hard. I had to figure how to live without all of the things that I used to do. I stopped caring about guys so much and tried to strengthen relationships with Christian friends. I had to learn how to have fun in a new good way.

Four years later, thanks to all the wonderful support I've had from all of you guys here at Northminster; with all of your problems, I can say that my mom is my best friend, I love my sister very much, my relationship with my dad is better than ever - I love learning new things from him - and I have begun to find joy in caring for people besides just myself. When I was in eighth grade, no one would have guessed that by the time I was a senior, I would be a junior leader at church... but here I am. I hope that as a junior leader, I am able to help younger teens deal with temptations and other problems at school. I hope one day to be a missionary.

For a long time I felt like I was scared; like I wasn't going to be able to change. And for a while, I didn't feel good enough to share my story or try to encourage others, but God gives us all strength. And God sends people into our lives to help us grow and develop into the people God created us to be. We can all be fishers of people if we can get past our fears and doubts about our own abilities. Together, we can spread the good news of the kingdom of God by the way we live our lives together and the support system we offer others. I've seen this church provide food for the hungry (through Angel Food and NFCC), give shelter to the poor (through our Mexico mission trip), and clothe the needy (through our clothing drive).

We can transform the lives of others if we let God do God's work in us. We can change our community when we begin to live together according to God's ways. We can change our world when we begin inviting others to join us in living according to the values of God's kingdom.

The actions of a few can have far reaching affects. We might not think about the affect our life has on others, but whether we realize it or not, the way we live affects the world.

When you throw a rock into a lake, the rock only comes in contact with a very small amount of water, but the ripples it causes can cover the entire lake. What kind of ripples are we giving to the world through the way we live, both individually and as a community? My hope is that we will leave from here today, being more intentional about the ripples we cause in the world so that our ripples will have a positive affect not only in those places where we come into contact with others, but also around the world.

You've already transformed my life. I know you can transform others. And there are a lot of fish out there in that ocean we call life. **Amen.**

Luke 4:32-5:11

32They were astounded at his teaching, because he spoke with authority. **33**In the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, **34**"Let us alone! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." **35**But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" When the demon had thrown him down before them, he came out of him without having done him any harm. **36**They were all amazed and kept saying to one another, "What kind of utterance is this? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and out they come!" **37**And a report about him began to reach every place in the region. **38**After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. **39**Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them. **40**As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. **41**Demons also came out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah. **42**At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them. **43**But he said to them, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." **44**So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.

5Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, **2**he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. **3**He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. **4**When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." **5**Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." **6**When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. **7**So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. **8**But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" **9**For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; **10**and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." **11**When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

The New Revised Standard Version, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.