

Sermon Mark 1 14 20 3rd S after Epiphany

Sermon: 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Mark 1:14-20 – Jesus calls His first disciples

Theme: Fishers of men

Goal: How do we catch people to Jesus

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Do you like fishing? One of you told me that he went to fish every day during the holidays. Although he didn't catch any fish, but he went, just for fun. It's a nice hobby. My father loved fishing and he took me sometimes with him as a child on his old motorcycle. Good memories...

What if it is your job? You are a professional fisherman. Your income depends on what you catch. Your family depends on what you catch. This was the situation of the first disciples when Jesus called them to be His followers.

I – The call

Jesus was raised up in the north of the country, in Nazareth, Galilee. He had gone to the South, to Judea, to be baptized by John the Baptist and to begin officially His ministry. There He met some of John's disciples. Andrew, brother of Simon Peter, was one of them. When Andrew heard John the Baptist pointing to Jesus and saying: “Look, the Lamb of God” (John 1:36), Andrew and another disciple (maybe John the Evangelist) followed Jesus immediately and spent the day with Him.

Andrew gives us a good example how to testify about Jesus. We read in John 1:41-42: “The first thing Andrew did (after his meeting with Jesus) was to find his brother Simon Peter and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.”

“And he brought him to Jesus.” When we bring our children to the Holy Baptism, we are bringing them to Jesus. When we bring our children and grandchildren to the service and to the Sunday school, we are bringing them to Jesus. They cannot come alone; they need us. - Do we have a brother, a sister, a friend, a closer relative to bring to Jesus? It is usually more difficult to bring an adult to Jesus than to bring a child. But don't miss the opportunity. Give a good testimony of your faith in Jesus in words and in deeds and invite them. Jesus will accept them and talk to their hearts.

From this report in the Gospel of John, when Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus, we know that when Jesus called the fishermen at the Sea of Galilee, it was not the first time they meet each other. After the first meeting along the Jordan, in the South, all of them went back to their home cities in the North. And when Jesus saw them there, fishing with their fathers and other companions, He called the brothers Peter and Andrew first, and after them He called the brothers John and James. And they followed Jesus immediately, leaving everything behind them: the boat, the nets, the fish they had caught, their job, and their fathers and families. - We hear from further reports that they came back to their families several times, and Jesus was hosted at Peter's home; it was like His headquarters. Peter even took his wife with him later on his missionary trips, as we read in 1 Corinthians 9:5. But Jesus' call was unconditional now.

A disciple is a follower. A disciple is not just a student, sitting in the class and listening to the Master. Being a follower means to be in constant activity: walking behind Jesus, observing what He is doing, listening to His teachings and putting them in practice, serving Him, helping people who are on their way. – During the second stage, Jesus sent His disciples to do what we can call “an internship”. They were sent two by two to preach and to help people in Jesus' name. And they came back radiant with their good experience in sharing the Gospel! – As the third stage, after Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus sent them

as His apostles to the entire world, to preach, to baptize, and to make new followers, who, in their time, made more disciples. And we are now in that line. We are called to make new disciples.

II – The message

When Jesus called His first disciples, He promised that they would be “fishers of men”, and that they would catch people (Luke 5:10). The disciples were fishing with a net. Jesus compares His kingdom to a net catching fishes (Matthew 13:47). This means: Wherever the Word of God is shared, it's like a net which is thrown into the water to catch fish. You never know how many fish you will catch; but if you don't throw the net, you will never catch a fish.

The result of the fishing doesn't depend on us. Sometimes you have good equipment, but you don't catch any fish. It is frustrating. - We are committed by Jesus to throw the net, to preach His Word. This is our task. If we don't see the result immediately, don't give up. - If you like fishing, you know that you have to have patience, lots of patience. And if you are fishing with a fish-hook, much more patience is necessary. It is just one fish at a time time, sometimes after hours of waiting.

Jesus' strategy to catch people doesn't change. The time and the places change; the fishermen change; but the message is always the same, as He Himself began His ministry: “Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God: 'The time has come,' He said, 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.'”

The world is full of bad news. When we switch on the radio or TV to listen to or watch the news, it is very seldom that we hear any good news. It is always news about wars, riots, inflation, political crisis, corruption, and so on. Jesus has a good news to share with everyone. This good news calls people from their wrong way and from the darkness, to His love, to His forgiveness, and to His light. The call to repentance is always necessary. Everyone needs to return from his

wrong way, to recognize that he is far from God, following his selfish thoughts; and everyone needs to believe in God's grace through Jesus Christ, who died on our behalf and rose again to open the gate for us. This is the way to enter the Kingdom of God, - a new reality full of hope and new life!

And “the Kingdom of God is near”, says Jesus. It is near in space: Wherever Jesus is, there is the Kingdom of God. He is the King, we are His citizens. He comes in His Word; He comes in the Sacrament of His body and blood. The Kingdom of God is here, now! - And the Kingdom of God is near in time: Every day that passes is one more day in the direction to the end of the current reality and to the beginning of the new reality: the a eternal life with God, far from all bad news and events of this world, in the presence of God and all His children.. This is the goal of our faith and of our hope.

Conclusion: When Andrew found first his brother Simon Peter and shared with him that he had found the Messiah, the Christ, - and when Jesus called the first disciples to be “fishers of men”, this is all connected with St. Thomas watchword for this year, taken from the same Gospel of Mark (5:19): “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.” - Who do you have at home that is not following Jesus? Children are easy to bring; don't leave them at home, don't miss the service because of them if they are noisy. Jesus loves them and they will feel the love of Jesus as well. Be persistent with them and give them a good example of faith and of life. God will complete His work in their hearts. - If they don't see you coming to the church faithfully, they will not come when they grow up. - I know that some of you are coming alone to the church, without the husband or wife, or without the grown up children. Never get tired to pray for them. Share the Word of God with them. Share with joy your experience at the service. Take a copy of the sermon with you (just ask me or my wife for a copy) and leave it at the some visible place in your home. Throw the net! God will catch the fish! Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle
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