



***Theme: Good, Good News!
“Good News and Big Fish”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber
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Weekly Memory Verse:

17 Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” 18 And they left their nets at once and followed him. –Mark 1:17-18

Scripture Readings:

Jonah 3:1-5, 10 and Mark 1:14-20 and Luke 5:1-11

VIDEO Sermon Bumper

SLIDE “Good News and Big Fish”

My name is Jeff Huber and I’m Lead Pastor at Summit Church and we are so glad you have joined us for this time of worship. Today we continue in a series of sermons on the good, Good News in which are understanding from Jesus what it means to experience life and have it to the full. To do that, we turn our attention to two great stories in the Bible, the calling of the first disciples and the story of Jonah being swallowed by a big fish. Believe it or not, these two stories are meant to connect to each other in a very powerful and profound way that tell us why the good news that Jesus brings is so good

for all people.

Let's start with the calling of the first disciples as we find it in the gospel of Mark, chapter 1.

BIBLE

¹⁴ Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. ¹⁵ "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"

Last week we learned that this phrase that Jesus uses comes from the Greek word euangelion.

SLIDE Euangelion (U-an-gelion) = "Good Announcement or News"

We also talk about that Good News as the Gospel. This idea of the gospel is simple and yet profound. Jesus tells us that the time promised by God has come, and the Kingdom of God is near, so repent, meaning turn your life around, and then you can experience and believe this Good News.

Have you ever wanted something really bad and had to wait? People in the time of Jesus had been waiting and waiting and they wanted something more in life so badly. They all were living in a time of political oppression from the Romans and longed for a new kind of kingdom. Jesus comes to offer that, which is good news. The challenging thing is that this new Kingdom of God was one where they would need to learn to love their enemy and do unto others and care for the least, the last and the lost. It's a Kingdom where the first are last and the last or first.

The idea is that the Good News was for EVERYONE, and let's be honest, that's hard to swallow sometime. Jesus came to proclaim this upside-down kingdom which sounds great but often means turning around, repenting, going in a new direction with Jesus. Let's jump to Luke's telling of the calling

of the first disciples as it builds on this idea of a new kingdom which is Good News and what that has to do with fish.

SLIDE

1 One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. ² He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets.

GRAPHIC Google Earth Holy Land

Let's stop here for a moment to get our bearings straight. Here is a Google Earth image of the Holy Land. The Sea of Galilee is in the North and the Dead Sea is in the South. Down here on the Jordon River is where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, that we talked about two weeks ago. Jerusalem is off to the right and the Mediterranean is West. Most Jews had traveled down here from the North as they had heard about John. It was like a Billy Graham crusade and my guess is that most of the disciples had been down this way and been baptized. John then points to Jesus and says that he is the Messiah, and so the disciples begin to be intrigued. This place is called Bethany beyond Jordan and is where the disciples meet Jesus for the first time.

Jesus is tempted for 40 days and then returns to the Galilee where the disciples begin to take an interest in him. When you piece all this together from the Gospels, it's clear the disciples knew who Jesus was before they were called to follow.

GRAPHIC Google Earth Sea of Galilee

The Sea of Galilee is 8 miles across and 13 miles long. The deepest point is 450 feet. It roughly would fit in the Animas River Valley.

GRAPHIC Google Earth North Shore Sea of Galilee

As we zoom in, this Sea of Galilee where the Jordan River flows into it from the north. Bethsaida means, “house of fish,” and used to be on the edge of the water but the shoreline is changed in the last 2000 years. Most of the disciples will probably from this region. Capernaum on your left was the home base of Jesus and the disciples eventually. Most fishing occurs in this region on the north edge of the Sea of Galilee. Here’s a photo of what this area looks like, and where we pick up, again in Luke’s gospel.

GRAPHIC **Sea of Galilee North Shore Sunrise**

BIBLE **(Use graphic above as background.)**

³Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So, he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

Two things to note in this part of the story. First, Jesus has Simon and the others as captive audiences who **MUST** pay attention. They can’t sit behind Jesus and fall asleep after all! The reason we are sure Jesus knew the disciples before he called them, was partly because of this story where he says, “Hey guys, help me out and let me borrow your boat!” The water acts as a sounding board so people can hear him. We learn in the next verses they had been out all-night fishing already, so they probably were exhausted!

This leads to the second thing we should note. Jesus has this way of drawing people in by asking them to help. I think Jesus has his eye on these fishermen and he’s going to give them a taste of what it means to serve, and how important they will be to the Kingdom of God coming. This is **GOOD NEWS** because they have a purpose! Here’s another way of looking at this.

SLIDE **Jesus likes to borrow our stuff!**

Jesus likes to borrow our skills and abilities and whatever we have to help build up the kingdom of God. My task as your pastor is not to do all the

work but to equip you as the saints to serve God and to experience good news by allowing Jesus to use your stuff. Many of you have experienced that even during this pandemic as you have joined in our Native Hope ministries. We still need a few more families to connect with families on the Navajo nation and that is a way for Jesus to borrow you to bring about the good news.

Jesus didn't ask those fishermen to build him a platform or a sanctuary, because they were carpenters. They were fishermen and Jesus asked to borrow what they had, which was their boat. Jesus calls us to use what gifts and abilities that we have to accomplish his work of building up the Kingdom of God. We hear Jesus asking for help through our e-newsletter each week that you get which lists ways that you can help and serve.

Other times we can feel a nudge because we are reading the Bible or in a small group. I believe God longs to speak to us and bring us the good news of how we can be a part of doing God's work in the world through prayer. I was moved by some of you sharing what it was like for you to pray during the day leading up to the inauguration, and how God spoke to in those moments. Sometimes, Jesus speaks to us as we see people and they come across our path.

Our children's director Celia was driving home from Ohio back to Colorado when she was caught in an ice storm. She stopped at a hotel which was full and there was a 75-year-old man who was also stuck there and needed a ride. She put her friend on speakerphone while they got in the car and she drove him to the next place in the next and the next. They eventually called his wife and his daughter and talk to her on the phone. I thought it was especially humorous when she shared that his wife wanted to know why she, Celia, as a young single woman was picking up a strange man at a motel. By the way, I don't recommend you doing that unless you feel like God is

speaking to you in that moment because Jesus wants to borrow your car. Everything turned out okay and the man whose prayer was answered.

The problem I have in my life is that it is full all the time and I have little margin for answering those prayers when Jesus wants to borrow my stuff. I am tired and out of time and I want Jesus to find someone else. I hate telling that to you as your pastor, but that is sometimes how my prayer life goes. I imagine the disciples felt the same way on that day when Jesus asked to borrow their boat and they had been fishing all night.

I think of Brody who has helped to turbo charge our Native Hope ministries. He felt God leading him as he spent time on the Navajo nation to do something about the extreme poverty we see where families are living without electricity or heat or any sort of regular communication. He owns his own business and loaned his truck to be used in the winter to take supplies to where they are needed. Eventually, he helped secure a grant so we can purchase this truck that is used almost daily. He, and those of you volunteering with that ministry, have changed the lives of hundreds of people because you have allowed God to use your boat.

GRAPHIC Native Hope Truck

Let me ask you this question:

SLIDE What is your boat that Jesus can use?

Are we willing to let Jesus use our boat? Or, do we complain about being too tired or too busy and asked Jesus to go find someone else? What I found in my life is that when I actually do the thing Jesus is asking me to do, even though I may not want to and I do it begrudgingly, we feel my heart is touched by that and I feel joy.

As we read on in Luke, we find out just how bad the disciples were at

fishing! It's interesting the Luke does not tell us what Jesus taught! With the Son of God preaching, wouldn't you think that you would record this message that seemed to change the disciples from interested and intrigued to being willing to drop everything and follow? The message in this story is actually not the sermon that Jesus preached, but how we interacted with the disciples and the response of Simon Peter.

BIBLE

⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.”

Let's pause again to remember that the nets had just been cleaned and they were drying. They had fished all night long and it was their livelihood and they had caught nothing. They were most likely exhausted and discouraged and tired. They are cleaning their nets and ready to head to the pub for a beer, when Jesus commandeers their boats for preaching and then has the audacity to send them back out! I'm guessing their thinking something like, “You're the preacher and teacher, and maybe a decent carpenter. Leave the fishing to us please! We have just cleaned our nets and we have been out all night and there is no reason any fish or run or crawl into our net during the day. We sat out in the hot sun while you preached and were exhausted and now you want to stay fish again? Are you crazy?”

It does not say that in Luke, but I imagine this is what they are thinking because they are only human. It's important to remember that there is a reason that the disciples are fishing at night. I have been to the Sea of Galilee several times and on one occasion talked to a fisherman who said they fished at night, so the nets are not seen by the fish.

GRAPHIC Fishing on Sea of Galilee at night

Here's a photo that is overexposed so you can see even today the fisherman go out at night. This was taken at 9:30 PM and you can see the

lights in Tiberias which is a large city on the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee. They place of flare or light out on the water and it draws the fish up to the surface and they are able to throw their neck out and catch them.

BIBLE

⁵ “Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing.

I imagine there is a pause after this line because this next line may be the most important one in the whole story.

BIBLE

But if YOU say so, I’ll let the nets down again.” ⁶ And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! ⁷ A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

They go fishing when you shouldn’t be able to catch fish in the hall is so great that it overwhelms their boats, to the verge of sinking. The disciples cannot see this big blessing which is going to happen in their life. All they can see is that they are tired and ready to go home and they are asked by this person who knows nothing about fishing to do something out of the ordinary. As a result, something extraordinary happens.

SLIDE But if YOU say so...

When I look back as a pastor, it seems like every single week something happens that I really don’t want to do, but because I do it, something amazing happens. I don’t know about you, but I have 1000 excellent excuses of why I don’t want to do what Jesus lays my heart. There is usually only one good reason to do something out of the ordinary, it’s because Jesus says so. Because you say so... There is this saying that was taught to me by one of my mentors when I was first starting out ministry.

SLIDE The interruptions to your ministry are your ministry.

I can't tell you the number of times when I have gotten a phone call about someone who needs a visit or is in crisis and I sigh and wonder why our caring ministries can't cover it. I end up going spend time with an individual or family and when I'm done, I am alive like never before and realize this is why became a pastor. It happened twice this week and I'm not going to share the details because they are confidential, but I know those interruptions to my week made my week as I get to represent Jesus and be his presence in those moments.

Yes, it means that some things don't get done and I simply tell people, "Sorry, Jesus needed me!" I also don't want to get 100 phone calls this week telling me that Jesus spoke to you and Pastor Jeff need to come to your house!

Here is where we are meant to make a connection to a story in the Hebrew Bible. Most of us are familiar with Jonah, who was asked by God to go to Nineveh and preach to the people there. Instead, he goes the OPPOSITE direction, and gets on the boat towards Tarshish. A storm comes up and Jonah is swallowed by a big fish (not a whale, even though that's how most of us learned this story!) He's then spit out on the shore of Nineveh and here's what happens.

BIBLE

**Then the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time: ² "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message I have given you."
³ This time Jonah obeyed the Lord's command and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to see it all. ⁴ On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!" ⁵ The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and**

put on burlap to show their sorrow.

BIBLE

¹⁰ When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.

BIBLE (Chapter 4)

1 This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. ² So he complained to the Lord about it: ² So he complained to the Lord about it: “Didn’t I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. ³ Just kill me now, Lord! I’d rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen.”

Not only do we resist what God asks of us, but like Jonah, we have our idea of what should happen and get angry and upset when God’s plans are different. The good, GOOD NEWS, is that God is a merciful and compassionate God, and that God is the one in charge of salvation, not you and I. God sent Jesus to bring that Good News, asking people to turn around (like both Jonah and the people of Nineveh) because that new direction is what leads to life.

Let’s see what happens next for the disciples.

BIBLE

⁸ When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.” ⁹ For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. ¹⁰ His partners, James and John, the sons

of Zebedee, were also amazed.

The disciples realize that whoever is in the boat with them is more than a mere mortal. He commands the fish of the deep to come to the surface by the thousands during the day. Jesus is the one who creates the fish themselves and calls them to himself, which is why he tells them they will fish for people, his children that he made to love.

BIBLE

Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!” ¹¹ And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

Jesus asks us to follow in fish for people. Jesus is starting a movement and when we are willing to follow, our task is to wake up in the morning and say, “Here I am Lord. What do you need to borrow from me today?” Then we try and live so that we are the presence of Jesus Christ in the world, inviting people to follow. We don’t always get that right. We sometimes repel people because of our behavior. But our task, should we choose to follow Jesus, is to repent and turn around and know that we are forgiven so that we can become the tastiest worm God can use.

During the time of us being away and not gathering in person for worship, we have lost two saints that were tremendous fishers of people. Dave Trautman and Jim Aubrey were faithful, longtime members of this church, and I found myself thinking of them this week. Dave and Jim both served at our Thrift Store for many years. Dave volunteered in too many places to number, but one of his loves was Adaptive Ski Association. Even as he was older and caring for his ailing wife Connie, Dave still would meet up with students from all over the world and help them ski. Jim helped start a Hooked for Life ministry here in which he taught young people how to tie flies in fish on the rivers in our community. They both allow God to borrow

them in their skills, understanding that you don't retire from being a follower of Jesus. You do graduate, and they both have done that, and my hope and prayer for each of us is that at the end of our lives we might hear those words of Scripture, **"Well done, good and faithful servant, fisher of people, enter into your rest."**

Let's go to God in prayer...

SLIDE Prayer

I invite you to simply pray this prayer if you're willing. Jesus is inviting us to come and follow. I invite you to this one-word prayer...

"Yes. Yes, I will follow you. Yes, I want to receive and share your good news. Yes, you can use my boat. Yes, Lord. Yes, I want to fish for people."

Lord, I pray you would use us as a congregation. Those who have gathered for worship today have friends and family and people who look up to them. We have influence in many places. Help us to be fishers of people. Help us to faithfully follow you, even when we don't feel like it. Help us to be grateful when people turn to you, and not be insistent on our own plans. Help us to be the presence of Jesus Christ in the world, serving you faithfully every day. In the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, we pray. Amen.