

FISHERS OF MEN
Matthew 4:18-22

Intro: Obviously this was not our Lord's first contact with Peter and Andrew, James and John. Luke probably gives us the setting for this in Luke 5:1-11.

It is interesting that the Lord used this figure of speech to describe the work which He was calling them to do: fishing for me; or, as we have it in Luke's Gospel, catching men. It is important for us to see that this is not the way the disciples decided to describe it, but this was the Lord's way of picturing the work. This shows our Lord's love for figurative language--to simplify what He was seeking to teach them.

The statement contains a command and a promise.

Spurgeon states it this way: There is something for us to do, and then there is something for the Lord to do.

Although this was a command given with authority by our Lord, yet there must have been a warmth, a kindliness about the very tone of His voice which we cannot reproduce on paper. But He won the hearts of all four of these men. They knew what was involved in their fishing, and therefore would have some idea as to the work the Lord was calling them to do.

These words of our Lord have never been superceded. The task which we face with respect to the world requires the same preparation, and no one can be truly effective in reaching men with the Gospel who ignores this.

Let us seek to understand what the Lord said.

I. THE COMMAND: "Follow me."

This is a different word from that which the Lord used on most occasions when He said, "Follow me." This is a verb which mean to come to me, regardless of the person who is speaking.

The woman of Samaria used this with the men of Samaria when she wanted them to come with her to see the Lord. Cf. John 4:29. The angel at the tomb used it with the women who had come looking for the Lord. Cf. Matt. 28:6. Our Lord used this word in Matt. 11:28-30.

So it means that, if we want to serve the Lord, if we want to do His work, we must, first of all, go to Him!

It seems as though we go to books, and we go to seminars, and we talk to others, but we do not go to the Lord when

that is what He told these men to do.

But the words that the Lord used here mean to come after Him, and so the translators have used the word, "follow." And this is a good translation. What does this indicate--to come after Him.

A. It means that we are to look to Christ alone.

How rare it is to see someone who really does this. It does not mean that others cannot help us, but they must be instruments of the Lord if they are to really be a help to us.

CF. MATT. 16:24-26 "Life" and "soul" are the same word in the Greek: ψυχή.

B. It means that we must be with the Lord, watching Him, learning from Him.

C. It means that we must be obedient to Him. Through obeying the Lord we not only do what He would have us do, but through obeying Him we become like He is.

For us this means that we acquaint ourselves with the Gospel records, and observe carefully how the Lord dealt with people.

And always remember that true obedience is an expression of our love for the Lord--and so we follow the Lord because we love Him, and want to do His will.

D. It means also that we will allow ourselves to be led by the Lord.

Think of the ways in which the Lord guided the Apostle Paul in his ministry. There are people to be reached, and the Lord knows who they are and where they are. So, as we follow Him, He guides us and opens doors that we might bear witness for Him.

So one who is to be profitable in fishing for men must trust the Lord, must be with the Lord, must learn from Him, must become like Him, and must obey Him.

What a wonderful illustration of this very thing we have in what is considered to be Luke's account of our text in Matthew--Luke 5:1-11.

And now we come to the second part:

II. THE PROMISE.

Note that this all came from the Lord. Not a part of it was suggested by the four men.

Mark's words are, "And I will make you to become fishers of men"--make you what you could not make yourselves, and make you what you are not now!

Now this is the promise of the Lord--and it is not just a promise that they will be busy working with people, busy living for the Lord, busy talking about the Lord, but never seeing any results. THIS IS A PROMISE THAT THEY WILL FISH AND CATCH MEN. THIS IS THE PROMISE OF AN EFFECTIVE WITNESS. Again, note Luke's account.

Why is it that with so much going on in witnessing, time will show that most people who make a profession of faith do not really come to Christ, that they are not really saved. Does it not mean that something is wrong, that we are leaving something out? We are seeking to do the Lord's work, but not in His way! Therefore, except for the occasional manifestation of the grace of God, we fail.

What does it take to be a good fisherman?

- 1) He must go where the fish are. The command is to "go."
- 2) He must be trusting and patient.
- 3) He must use the right means for catching them. In our Lord's day they used nets. It is very clear from Scripture that we are to use the Word of God--the very Word of God, not just our statements about it.
- 4) He must be diligent and alert.
- 5) He must be courageous and unafraid.

Concl: The question is: What are we doing about this command of Christ?

Would you want to be among those who say that this is not for us --that this was only for the original Apostles? What is there in our Lord's words that is contradicted by the rest of the NT? However the Lord or the Apostles spoke of our witness to the world, it always involved coming to the Lord, trusting Him to teach us and to make us ready to do His work, and trusting Him also to give us the results that He wants us to have.

What is the Lord's work? It is to reach the people throughout the world whom the Father has chosen, has given to His Son, and whom He has sent us out to reach. They must hear. They must believe. And they will not hear unless they are told.

Oh, let us daily come to Christ in the Word, seeking to learn of Him and from Him, trusting Him to make us true fishers of men, granting us the results which He is pleased to give. Such is entirely in harmony with the doctrines of God's sovereign grace.