

When my father taught me to fish, it was with a rod and reel.

Fishing, I learned from him, was a discriminating activity – to catch certain fish, you had to use certain bait or lures;

to catch other fish, you needed different bait or lures.

Net fishing, as I learned in Africa and Israel, is indiscriminate.

It catches anything that swims into it and cannot pass through the openings between the knots.

In the Sea of Galilee, or Gennesaret, as it is also known, tilapia, carp, and sardines might all be caught in the net together.

Or the net may catch nothing at all, if no fish are swimming in that area.

That was the situation for Simon Peter on the day Jesus showed up on the lakeshore preaching.

In fact, Simon, and the others with him were not even paying attention to Jesus – they were washing their nets.

Jesus faced a problem – a crowd that was eager to hear his preaching was forcing him into the water and it is hard to preach sitting in the water!

So Jesus asked to use Simon's boat as a pulpit and he sat there to teach them.

In the world of the Bible, sitting to teach is a sign of authority.

Luke does not tell us how long Jesus taught the people, but it was probably longer than 15 minutes and I can feel my stomach rumbling.

I think about another time there was a crowd gathered to hear him teach and he told his disciples to come up with food for the people to eat.

But on this day, he does not have disciples – he is by himself in this ministry.

And that is about to change.

Jesus has a fishing boat and crew, so he tells them to go out to fishing waters and cast the nets for a catch.

Luke tells this story to an audience familiar with the military language of the Roman Empire.

Simon Peter says, “Commander, we have been fishing out here all night and caught nothing, but since we are now under your orders, we will do as you say.

The results are astounding!

Simon Peter suddenly knows that this man who has commandeered his boat is the Lord God in their midst.

And he is in no position to be in the presence of the Almighty who judges all people.

He does not deserve to be treated favorably by God.

So like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, he tries to hide.

With his face to the ground, he tells Jesus to go away because his sins are too great for him to look into the face of his Lord and live.

What Simon Peter did not realize in that moment

was that the great catch of fish was not for him,

but to feed the people;

and the effective net was not the one that tore,

but the one that caught Simon Peter— and James and John —
and their crews

**-- the net of God's grace in Jesus Christ that forgives
sinners and calls them to follow and serve him.**

Simon Peter cannot look Jesus in the eye. He is ashamed. He does
not deserve this abundant goodness.

But Jesus says, "Do not fear."

These words to Simon Peter have the same effect as

- "Your sins are forgiven." Or
- "get up and walk" or
- "your faith has made you well" or
- "Peace be with you."

They are words of grace, words of mercy,

words that free the person in bondage to sin who cannot free
himself;

words that restore relationship.

They are words that allow Peter to lift his face and look into the eyes of Jesus and see the love of God for him.

And such love it is! It transforms the heart.

There is nothing Peter and the others would not do for Jesus.

And the next thing Jesus says is just as amazing:

“From now on you will catch people.”

Jesus has called these fishermen to send them on his mission.

Isn't this truly the beginning of what we in modern times call networking?

Jesus binds people together in relationships that

- tell the story of God's redemptive purpose
- share God's covenant of love
- show grace and mercy, and
- take more and more people captive to the redemptive life and work of Jesus,
 - who gives his life and rises from the dead as the greatest sign of God's love for us.

This apostolic net is the Church and its story is the Bible.

We are part of this network that builds relationships with people we don't know so that they might come to know Jesus and his love for them.

We are part of this network that is created not of the weak knots of our good works,

but of the strong knots of Jesus' perfect works:

- his preaching and teaching,
- healing and forgiving,
- obedient suffering and dying
- and faithful rising from the dead.

We are part of this network called, gathered, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit

to be building relationships in Jesus Christ

who **takes people captive for life rather than death.**

When Jesus and Simon, James and John and their crews bring the heavy boats ashore, they leave everything and follow Jesus.

They learn not only what he said

but also who he spoke to,

how he spoke, and what he did.

So I wonder what happened to their boats and nets and all those fish?

That crowd had the makings of quite a meal!

The crowd was in the same position as Simon Peter on the boat – unworthy and yet abundantly blessed -- captive to the life Jesus offers.

We, too, are unworthy and yet abundantly blessed.

And we know the story of how such gracious and abundant love comes to us.

And we have been called to share in this wonderful sign of God's love by Jesus – who, after forgiving us and feeding us sends us out as the network that catches others to share this eternal life.

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

BONUS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhIwTU9RbxY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsrOhEzikeU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poNuGusSX5c>