



Central Peninsula Church

...to make and mature more followers of Christ

Catalog No. 1337-3FC

Luke 4:42-5:11

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May 3, 2009

SENT

SERIES: *The Living Church*

This is our third week in our church series on evangelism. Now, it is not my aim to make you feel guilty, discouraged, or burdened. My aim is to encourage and equip you with a fresh vision of evangelism as we listen together to an old story. God wants to do a fresh evangelistic work in your life today.

“And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.’ And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

“On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’ And Simon answered, ‘Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.’ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.’ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him” (Luke 4:42-5:11).

Jesus is on the move in Galilee meeting with people, preaching and healing.

I. Jesus was sent to preach the gospel.

“And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, ‘I must preach

the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.’ And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea” (4:42-44).

It’s early in the morning. At sunrise, Jesus travels to a desolate place, probably to catch his breath and get a bit of time away from the people. But the people flock to Jesus. The people love to be with, love to be taught by, love to be touched by, love to be loved by Jesus. They don’t want Jesus to leave. But he must. **“I must preach the good news (the gospel) of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose”** (v. 43).

I’ve titled this message SENT. Jesus was “sent.” At the beginning of this message on evangelism what we must see is that God is the great evangelist. Do you know this? All evangelism begins with God, our sending God. God sent Jesus to us. God sent Jesus into our lost world to do evangelism, to preach the gospel.

“Evangelism” < “evangel” = good news/gospel. Jesus was sent to us to do evangelism, to preach good news.

And so Jesus must leave these people. He must go to the other towns and preach the gospel. He must. He was sent for this purpose. Jesus moves on. What happens next?

II. Jesus preaches the gospel from a boat.

“On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat” (5:1-3).

Jesus stands on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, a good sized lake: 13 miles wide, 7 miles long, 700 feet below sea level. The crowd presses in on him “to hear the word of God.” This new set of people flock to Jesus. They want to hear his preaching, they want to hear the gospel. How can Jesus do evangelism in this setting? The crowd presses in on him, he’s almost in the water, the people can’t hear him. Jesus needs a pulpit. Jesus finds a pulpit—Simon’s boat, this 20-30 foot wide fishing boat becomes Jesus’ pulpit. They put out a little from shore and preaching from the boat-pulpit the voice of the evangelist carries over the water and the people hear what the Sent-one has to say.

Will you hear what Jesus has to say to you this morning?

III. Carpenter Jesus guides the fishermen.

“And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets

for a catch.' And Simon answered, 'Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.' And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink" (5:4-7).

Simon Peter fills Jesus in on the situation: he and his friends fished all night and didn't catch anything. These men are professional fishermen. First century fishing was backbreaking work; only the strong could do it. Out in the sea you cast your heavy fishing net in a semi-circle over a span of 100 ft. Then you drew back in your heavy, water-logged net hand over hand, your arms and back burning with each pull. Then you did it all over again: rowing your boat to a new location, casting your net, hauling it back in.

They had been at it all night, but nothing. So Peter and his friends sit on shore in the morning sun tending to their fishing nets. They're mending the tears in their nets, they're cleaning, arranging, and drying their nets for the coming night when they'll go at it again.

Then Jesus shows up.

Jesus shows up and everything changes. The plans of the fishermen change. Soon Jesus uses their fishing boat to preach. They listen. Jesus finishes his sermon. And these fishermen now know that this man can preach. Perhaps they know of his background as a carpenter. But suddenly, the preacher, the carpenter's son, tells the professional fishermen how to fish.

These fishermen know the sea. They've been fishing it their whole lives. They know the fish. They know what all fishermen know: that at any given time typically 100% of the fish are dwelling in 10% of the water and the key to fishing is locating that small spot of sea where the fish are.

Peter protests. "We've been fishing all night Jesus and we didn't catch anything. We know what we're doing. You stick with preaching, we'll stick with fishing." But there's something about this man. Peter sees it in his eyes, or he hears it in Jesus' voice. And so Peter lets the preacher be his fishing guide and they cast their nets into the sea.

The minutes pass out there on the deep sea. Eventually Peter and his friends begin to haul their nets back into the boat. Jesus looks on. Quickly the fishermen discover that their nets are heavy. Their nets are full of fish! Their nets are so full of fish that their nets begin to break. They fill both boats full of fish. There are so many fish in their boats, fish spilling over the sides of the boats, their boats start to sink.

The preacher can fish! The carpenter's son, the man sent from God to preach the gospel to the people, also knows where to find fish in the sea.

IV. Peter's confession.

"But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon" (5:8-10a).

Peter knows fishing and he knows what this catch means. Peter's standing in the presence of the great fisherman. Peter knows that this man who can stare into the sea and find all the fish can also stare into his heart and find all his sin. Jesus sees right through Peter and Peter knows it.

Do you know that right now Jesus sees into you?

It's too dangerous to stand in this great man's presence. This is Jesus! This is the long awaited Messiah. This is the sinless Son of God. He is holy, holy, holy. Peter sees the holiness and beauty and supremacy of Jesus and he can't take it. He snaps. He collapses and cries: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." This is what always happens when sinners have a real encounter with the living God. **"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips"** (Isaiah 6:5).

Peter can't handle the presence of Jesus, the presence of the man that sees the dark depths of his heart, so he cries, "Depart from me..."

V. Jesus calls Peter to fish and follow.

"And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him" (5:10b-11).

As a sinner, Peter feels he has no chance with Jesus. The gap between himself and sinless Jesus looks so big, it can't be bridged. He thinks he doesn't have a chance with Jesus. Yes he does! What Peter doesn't know is that sinners are the only ones who have a chance with Jesus.

Listen to Jesus. Hear his words. To the man collapsed on a pile of flapping fish in the middle of the sea, to a man who has suddenly snapped at the sight of the Savior and the weight of his own sin, Jesus says **"Do not be afraid."** How can Jesus say this? Why can Jesus say this? Like you and me, Peter deserves to be punished for his sin. Peter should be very afraid; the truth is out: Peter is a sinful man deserving of a holy God's wrath and judgment. Peter should be afraid for his life, his eternity, his everything.

But Jesus says, "Do not be afraid." How can he say this? Because, standing there, floating in this wooden boat, Jesus knows he will soon hang from a wooden cross, paying the price of Peter's sin. Jesus says to Peter (and he says to you): "You are right, you are a sinful man. But don't be afraid, God has sent me to atone for your sin and make you new." Do not be afraid.

The second half of Jesus' sentence was: **"from now on, you will be catching men."** Peter's life just changed. This is the turning point of Peter's life. Peter will no longer be concerned with fish; his new job is people. Jesus summons Peter to a different kind of fishing. He's catching for life, not death. Peter will no longer catch living fish that die in the boat. Peter will catch dead men and women that come alive through evangelism. Jesus gives Peter a new life and a new mission. Peter and his friends leave behind the greatest catch they've ever seen to follow Jesus. They're disciples of Jesus now: followers of Jesus, fishers for Jesus, the first members of the first church.

That's our story. What does it teach us about evangelism? Two conclusions.

Conclusion 1

Followers of Jesus fish for Jesus. There are many gospel accounts of being simultaneously called to follow and fish. Christianity revolves around two words: “come” and “go.” Matt. 11: **“Come to me and I will give you rest,”** Matt. 28: **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”** CPC’s mission statement is “to make and mature more followers of Christ.”

The Christian faith exists for the benefit of its non-members. If we see the full picture of what the Bible says about the Christian life, about the local church, we see this: the church that follows Jesus fishes for Jesus. God is the great evangelist who sent Jesus into the world to do evangelism. And just as Jesus was sent, we are sent (individual disciples and the church). **“Jesus said to them, ‘As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you’”** (John 20:21).

The first conclusion about evangelism from this passage: the church that follows Jesus fishes for Jesus.

Conclusion 2

So how do we do it? How do we catch men and women for Jesus? What’s our bait? We use the same bait Jesus used, the same bait Jesus taught Peter to use. Peter left behind his old tools—his boats and nets—and began to fish for people with the bait of the gospel. The church that follows Jesus fishes for Jesus with the bait of the gospel.

Jesus was sent to speak the gospel, and so are we. Doing evangelism is not telling your story or sharing your experiences or following a program, though it can include that. Evangelism is proclaiming the evangel, the gospel, the good news. It’s the bait of the gospel that God uses to hook men and women out of death and cause them to be born again.

So what is the gospel? What is this powerful message that we bait our hooks with, that God uses to save sinners? **“Now I would remind you brothers of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved...For I delivered to you of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve”** (1 Cor. 15:1–5).

News, not advice! We must know this news and be able to express it clearly. Martin Luther said: “The church is God’s mouth-house.” “Here’s the church, here’s the steeple, open up the doors and hear God speak to his people.” On Sundays God speaks the gospel to us through the preaching of the Word. Dispersed throughout the week we are God’s mouth-house to a lost world. No matter our professions, as we leave this building today we hang “Gone Fishing” signs on the door until next Sunday.

It’s the church that stands as God’s great mission strategy to a lost world. God didn’t send the world an evangelism tract, God sends us, the church, the fishing church. And we will be successful in our mission. Jesus said, “the gates of hell will not prevail” against my church! What began with a handful of fishermen in Galilee has grown exponentially and globally.

Lamin Sana, a professor at Yale University, wrote, *Whose Religion is Christianity?* Here are some statistics:

North America: 260 million followers of Jesus

Latin America: 480 million

Africa in 1900 under colonial/Western rule: 8.7 million Christians; 9% of the population; Muslims outnumbered Christians 4 to 1

Africa in 1962, after most western control was gone: 60 million Christians.

Africa in 1985: estimated that 16,500 Africans converted to Christ per day; 6 million per year

Africa in 2006: 380 million followers of Jesus; 40% of the population; ratio of Muslims to Christians 1 to 1.

It began with this handful of fishermen and Jesus’ words on the lake. Today it’s estimated that there are 2 billion Christians in the church body. How did this happen? God and a means of evangelism by the church. That’s why we exist as a church. Praise God that 40 years ago a small band of fishermen and fisherwomen planted Central Peninsula Church with the vision of doing evangelism on the Peninsula. Praise God that that original handful of people has grown to a church family of over 2,000 people who love Jesus. Praise God for people like Joanna, Alicia, and Victor, three friends of mine who’ve met Jesus through CPC in the last two years. The church that follows Jesus fishes for Jesus with the bait of the gospel.

Now, let me give you eight helps to equip you.

1. Preach the gospel to yourself before you preach it to anyone else. You must be an effective evangelist to yourself in order to be an effective evangelist to others. Paul Tripp said: “Since no one is more influential in my life than me, and because no one talks to me more than I do, what I say to myself about myself is very important.” Do you speak the good news to yourself? Have you built your identity on the good news? Do you know that you don’t have to be perfect? You’re perfect in Christ. This is the only way you’ll see what a privilege evangelism is. **“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”** (Matt. 12:34). What’s in your heart?

2. Tell the good news to other people. St. Francis of Assisi said: “Preach the gospel. If necessary, use words.” Wrong: the gospel is good news that must be verbalized. (I’ll address this later) **“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?”** (Rom. 10:14–15).

You are sent to speak the good news. Choose your verb: preach, speak, tell, share, articulate. How can we keep this good news, the best news in the world, to ourselves? If you really grasp this Jesus who stares straight into broken sinners and says “do not be afraid...,” you’ll naturally find yourself telling this news to others.

3. Trust the power of the gospel. Believe what Paul believed. **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”** (Rom. 1:16). Have confidence in the gospel, have confidence in God’s power to transform lives through the gospel. You are not the Holy Spirit. Conversion is not your job. Results are not your job. You share the gospel, then trust God to work. As

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, **“You must be born again.”** That’s not work you can do.

A decade ago, based on the sales techniques of the time, C.S. Lovett wrote a book, *Soul Winning Made Easy*. It’s a book on how NOT to do evangelism!

“You are in command...the trained soul-winner can bring his prospect to a decision for Christ. There is no middle ground as he moves with surety and deftness right up to the point of salvation. It is his conversation control that makes this possible....The controlled conversation technique is something new in evangelism and represents a real breakthrough in soul-winning.

“Lay your hand firmly on the subject’s shoulder with a semi-commanding tone of voice, and say to him: ‘Bow your head with me.’ Note: Do not look at him when you say this, but bow your head first. Out of the corner of your eye you will see him hesitate at first. Then, as his resistance crumbles, his head will come down...Bowling your head first causes terrific psychological pressure.”

4. Be yourself. Some of you think God can’t use you because of your sin or your past. God used Peter! Peter’s awareness and confession of how sinful he was was precisely what made him so useful to God. God can use you! Some of you think God can’t use you in evangelism because of your personality. Not true. Don’t get paralyzed thinking you must be somebody else. In evangelism, just be you.

5. Show off the good news with your life. St. Francis of Assisi said: “Preach the gospel. If necessary, use words.” People must see with their own eyes that Jesus has transformed you, they need to see that you know a Savior they don’t know.

John Stott said: “All Christians should be able to say something like this, especially to unbelievers, namely that we are so satisfied with Jesus Christ, with his freedom, joy and salvation, that we want other people to become like us.” Do you want people to become like you? Do you take hold of satisfaction in Jesus?

6. Be a conversationalist. Evangelism is best done in conversation, through relationships. Find people interesting. Ask questions. Hear their story. Be their friend. Fishing is thoughtful work; you must know the fish; so is evangelism, you must know the people. Jesus did this with Nicodemus and the woman at the well. Listen for people’s “god” and speak the good news at their false god. Their god is killing them, enslaving them, letting them down. Is it money? Success? Relationships? Tell people about Jesus, the only lover that will never let them down. Connect the gospel to their false god.

7. Use the church. We’re in this together, sent together. Invite them to church. Expose them to community and relationships.

8. Understand the urgency and pray. Hundreds of thousands of people in the Bay Area have never heard the good news. It’s urgent that we share this news. **“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him”** (John 3:36). Pray that God would use you and use our church to fish/catch men and women to life in Christ.

CONCLUSION

Followers of Jesus, fishers for Jesus, do not be afraid, hear the good news: Jesus has paid for all of your sins.

For those of you here who are not followers of Jesus: I’ve been doing evangelism throughout this message. The Bible says that you must be born again. God’s Word says that you are not alive until you’ve been born again, until you swallow the bait of the gospel. Take the bait. The sea that you’ve been swimming in, you will die if you stay under there. But above the surface is a whole new life that you didn’t know was possible. All of your sin can be forgiven, you can be made right with God, you can know a lover who will never let you down. You can experience true life.

Take the bait. Like Peter: see Jesus; confess your sin; and place your faith in Jesus. **“And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness”** (Acts 4:31).

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.