

Scripture Reading: Matthew 4.12-22; Luke 5.1-11

Text: Matthew 4.19

Missions Seminar

30 July 11

Beloved, Jesus says to you, “follow me and I will make you fishers of me”. Do not reverse the order! The first thing for us is not to be fishers of men, and then to follow Christ. But rather, follow Christ and then Christ promises us that He will make us fishers of men. Our one heart’s desire is to be fishers of men, through following Christ. At the very beginning of the Jesus’ earthly ministry, He faced serious trials. He was tempted of the devil. Then, John the Baptist, the lone voice of the gospel was silenced when he was imprisoned. Jesus went to Capernaum and fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, “the land of Zabulon and Naphtalim which is in darkness has seen the great light”. Christ is that light when he began to preach, saying, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. And he began to call men to be his disciples: First, he called Peter and Andrew his brother. Then, James and John. And Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, “follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”.

Jesus sets forth the calling of the disciples, “follow me”. He promises the fruit of the calling, “and I will make you fishers of men”. Here then is the point of this text: God will make us fishers of men in the way of being disciples of Christ. Notice the theme, “Are you fishers of men?” 2 main points: The command – “follow me”. And the promise, “And I will make you fishers of men”.

ARE YOU FISHERS OF MEN?

I. The Command – “Follow me”

What does it mean to follow Christ? To follow Christ is to be a houseman, e.g. like a medical student who does internship to become a fully qualified doctor. As a houseman, you are attached to a qualified doctor in order to learn to be a doctor. You will learn to cut up bodies, diagnose diseases and prescribe and learn how to deal with patients. So in that in time to come, when people see you work, they can see and know who is your mentor – doctor who has worked these techniques in you. So, is the one who is a follower of Christ. We are to follow the footsteps of Christ. Learn how he preached and taught the people; how he answered the questions of his disciples and the religious leaders. And we emulate or Master in all these things, that is revealed to us. The goal is that we will be more and more like Christ, so that Christ will be formed in us (Gal. 4.19). In Acts 4, the priests, the captain of the temple and Saducees were upset with Peter and John for they preached Jesus, the resurrection from the dead. And after hearing their preaching, they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they perceived that though the disciples were unlearned and ignorant men, they had been with Jesus. That is, they were followers of Christ. And this must be our desire: to ask the Lord to mould us and change us until Christ is seen in us.

To whom is the command addressed? His disciples. Christ calls those men to be apostles of Jesus Christ. When Jesus calls you to be a minister of the gospel, your calling is to obey. This is illustrated in Luke 5: the disciples were very experienced fishermen and after toiling the whole night, they caught nothing. But at the command of Christ, they let down their nets and they had such a great catch that their net broke! And at the call of Christ, Peter, Andrew, James and John immediately left their nets and followed Christ. For these simple fishermen, it meant that they had to leave their jobs as fishermen in order to follow the Lord. Today, Christ still calls men, not to be apostles for

this office has already ceased with the closing of the canon of Scripture, but to be ministers of the gospel. Their primary calling is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be followers of Christ. And this command, “follow me” can also be applied to Christians who are not called to be ministers of the gospel. The call of God means more than leaving your job or career but it is a call to follow Christ. Not all Christians are called to be ministers of the gospel but all Christians are called to followers of Christ. Therefore, hear the call of Christ, “follow me”. And in the way of following Christ, He promises that He himself will make you fishers of men. And the basis of that call comes from the crucified Christ who died for his people on the cross. He died for those whom the Father has given unto him in order to redeem them. Before He ascended into heaven, He gave them authority to preach the gospel to all, baptising them and teaching them to observe all things. Oh, beloved, this is a great encouragement for our work in evangelism. There are many books teaching us various techniques how to be powerful witnesses for Christ and we can be weary of trying all these methods but the good news is that Christ has given us the secret to be powerful witnesses of Christ: “follow me and I will make you fishers of men”.

II. The Promise – “I will make you fishers of men”.

Christ promises us that we will catch men. That is, catch men so that they believe in Jesus Christ and become citizens of the kingdom of heaven. When the fishermen goes out into the sea in the early morning, his one aim is to catch fish. And if he catches nothing, then, he has failed in his mission and for a fishermen that is very depressing. When you wife expects you to bring back some fish for dinner, it is not good enough to say to her, that the fishes are on their way to be caught because the fire is ready and she is ready to fry the fish! So, the goal of every disciple is to catch fish: not merely to influence them, or I am giving them Bible Study but to be the instrument by which men come into the kingdom of God. The attitude that we must have in order to fishers of men is that we must be active fishers of men. Though Christ promises that he will make us fishers of men, that does not mean that he will bring the fishers to us – that would be hyper Calvinism which implies that we just fold our arms and the fish will just into the net. I have seen jumping salmon but I have not seen fish jumping into the fishermen net. And where must we go to catch fish? Naturally where fish is found. Therefore, pray to the sovereign Lord who will lead us to the place where He wants us to catch fish. Pray for open doors. And to the followers of Christ, Christ promises that He will make them fishers of men.

It is a great privilege and honour that Christ will make us fishers of men. Christ could easily catch men without us. But it is his good pleasure to use as His instruments to do His will to save His people. What a privilege! This promise of Christ that he will make us fishers of men, implies, first, that we lack the ability to be fishers of men. We are impotent. We cannot catch men; we do not know how for the work of saving men belongs to the Holy Spirit; He is the one who regenerates a sinner, restores in him the image of God, sanctify him and fit him for heaven. Secondly, we need to be equipped to be fishers of men. When Christ calls us, he also equips. He equips us with the knowledge of God; the doctrines of the Word of God; experiential knowledge of the work of grace in the heart of a sinner. Therefore, know and understand the Word of God in its length and breadth; know how to interpret it, know the Reformed Faith well, so that you are to be fishers of men.

Beloved, may this Word ring loudly in your consciences, “follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”.