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“ ‘Marking’ Time: Calling”
Mark 1:14-20

Now, this instrument, in my hand, may not look very strange to most of you. In fact, probably the sight of a man holding a fishing rod may be a VERY common sight to some of you guys... and gals! But ask my wife how often **I** have held a fishing rod. Not much! Even though I grew up in South Louisiana, I’ve never been a fisherman or a hunter. Remember, I grew up in that ‘cosmopolitan’ city of Baton Rouge. More importantly, though, fishing and hunting are habits you usually pick up from your father, or extended family. My Dad owned a drugstore, and when he wasn’t working... which was only Sunday, and even that wasn’t always the case... he never wanted to stray farther than the backyard. The only time I remember going fishing with my father was with a long-time friend of his who dragged us both out into the Gulf... a trip of which my most lasting memory involved Dramamine!

Holding this pole in my hand, it seems like some wise fisherman once told me, ‘it’s all in the wrist.’ Or was that basketball? Or maybe he said, ‘Just throw the line out there, and then slowly reel it in. It’s that simple...

Anyway, many of you are in a much better position than I to know about the vocation of some of those first disciples of Christ... fishing. Now I know that Simon and Andrew, and James and John, did not use anything like what I hold in my hand. We fish for **sport**. One fish at a time. These guys fished for a **living**. To feed their families. They used nets, not a hook and a line. It wasn’t about the size of the fish (or fish *story!*) like it is for us... it was about the size of the **catch**. And even though there are the basic differences of equipment, and of vocation vs. a-vocation, there are also similarities between the two types of fishing.

For one, whether in 12 A.D. or 2012 A.D., fishing takes TIME. Rarely do you ever hear the word “fishing” accompanied by the phrase “in a hurry!” Whether for sport or profit, any fishing expedition requires a serious investment of time.

And if that ‘investment’ is to show any sort of reasonable ‘return,’ it also requires a good bit of KNOWLEDGE. You need to know the right PLACE to go. That special little ‘honey hole’

that no one else knows about. The right TIME to go. (Usually somewhere around 'O-Dark Thirty'!) And not only the right time of day, but sometimes the right time of year.

It is also important to have the right equipment. In doing some 'research' with my fishing 'consultant,' David Landreneau, I was amazed at the various fishing **lures** that he had. And that so many of them were for specific types of fish. If he were trying to catch bass, it was this particular lure; if sac-a-lait, another. Redfish, Speckled Trout, Flounder... they all had their own special types of lures best suited to catching them. ... Heck, I just thought you picked out these things by which one was the prettiest.

Of course, there is a lot more to proper equipment than the lures. The right tackle, and line; the boat has to be running properly. And it was no different in Jesus' day. Those fishermen were always working on keeping their boats in good repair, or giving meticulous attention to mending their nets. In order to be **successful**, good fisherman must take **care** of and be well-acquainted with the '**tools of the trade.**' Regardless of whether or not their fishing results in *making* money, or merely *spending* it, fishing takes **dedication** and **determination**.

It was to these smelly, grimy, tired fishermen that our Lord walks up to on the shore of the Sea of Galilee... to recruit them for a very different activity. TO FOLLOW HIM. Have you ever stopped to think about that? About *who* Jesus chose to be His first disciples? Who did the Savior of the World, the Son of God, pick to begin the most revolutionary religious movement in the history of the planet? FISHERMEN! NOT priests, religious leaders, prominent businessmen, highly-educated philosophers, rulers or heads of state. Simple, uneducated, sweaty, dirty fishermen. WHY?

Well, while only Jesus and His Dad (and their partner-in-power the Holy Spirit) have the answer to that question, I have a few thoughts on why Jesus chose 'men who fish' to become 'fishers of men.' One is their **Work Ethic**. They were definitely not afraid of hard work. Long hours with low pay... gee, isn't that everyone's dream? ☺ Jesus knew how demanding it would be to follow Him around the Galilean countryside, traveling from town to town, being out in the hot Middle-eastern sun, and enduring long cold nights. Jesus needed to have followers who were willing to put their 'muscle' where their 'mouth' was...

Not only did fishermen know how to **work**, they also knew how to **Wait**. They had to be patient. Fishing required TIME. Time to travel out to just the right spot, and wait for the fish to come. There was the painstaking time necessary to mend nets, and make repairs on boats. Just like it would take time to walk those dusty trails with Jesus, time to listen and talk with Him, time to **wait** on their Lord.

But perhaps the most striking quality of these humble fishermen was their **Willingness** to follow Jesus. It might be easy to overlook the first word used to describe their response to Jesus command to ***“Follow me.”*** ***“Immediately.”*** ***“Immediately they dropped their nets and followed him.”***

Think about that! Presumably these guys had never met Jesus before. That, borrowing from that old saying, they didn't know this mysterious Nazarene from *Adam*! They've been working on the job for the better part of the day, and were probably looking forward to getting back to their homes and families. Yet when this stranger says in his curious way, ***“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men”***, they dropped everything and did just that! What was it that was so **compelling**, so **powerful**, so **'magnetic'**, that *'hooked'* those guys?

Again, we have very little in-depth description of this 'recruiting' experience. So we can only speculate what was going on in the minds of Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John. But to have such an 'immediate' response, their look into the eyes of Jesus must have been a powerful, captivating, life-changing experience. As they heard His voice... ***“as one who speaks with authority”***... as they gazed into His eyes... catching a glimpse of eternity... they 'immediately' knew that their lives would never be the same again. When the Master says 'come'... his servants must 'follow.' When the 'fish' takes the 'bait', it's 'hooked.'

Friends, God wishes for you and I to have the same experience as those fishermen. A powerful, captivating, life-changing experience of 'the man from Galilee.' We need to be 'hooked on Jesus.' And as we become more and more 'hooked on Jesus,' we will find that *our* lives will never be the same again! AND, that we realize that this compelling, moving, magnetic individual is One that must be shared with others. As those first disciples were transformed from 'fishermen' to 'fishers of men,' so too must we.

Being a disciple doesn't require special prerequisite skills or training. In fact, I sometimes think that too much education is a *handicap!* Those first followers of Christ were simple folks, who had some basic abilities and attitudes that He could put to use in service to the Kingdom. They took **time** to do things right, committing themselves to do what was necessary to be successful. How much TIME do you spend on things that will last... on sharpening up your 'tools of the trade'? **Waiting** on God in Prayer. **Working** to grow in knowledge and wisdom through Bible Study. **Willing** to talk with others about their faith. How much time a week do you **dedicate** to God?

And aside from your own personal growth, what about the growth of the fellowship of believers? Fishermen will go to great lengths to go to just the right place to catch that big bass, or red snapper... but will we be just as **determined** to bring someone to THIS 'right place' to be 'caught' by God? Are you willing to go where the 'fish' are... those who 'hunger and thirst' for God?

You and I are also called by Jesus to be 'fishers of men.' To be successful in the eyes of the 'Master Angler,' it's pretty simple: Put in the **Work... Wait** on the Lord... Be **Willing** to follow. But perhaps most of all, make sure you 'just throw the line out there'...