

The poster read: If you want to feed a man for a day, give him a fish. If you teach a man to fish—you can sell him your old fishing equipment on eBay. Not quite the ancient proverb we may remember. Thinking about this though, fishing is complicated. If you do not think so you haven't visited a fishing website or been in a fishing/tackle shop lately. Diane (I don't know why) gets whole catalogues from LL Bean with nothing but fishing equipment and gear. And, this is just for recreational fishing!

Matthew recalls for us the call of four disciples of Jesus. It is both a call and a challenge. Both Matthew and Mark have them immediately answering the call to follow after Jesus. Luke's version (Luke 5) expands the call a little with the miraculous catch of fish. Either way, there is something in Jesus that causes these men to immediately leave the business, their families and home and become followers. They are called from fishing for fish to become fishers of people. There is little reward for catching people (hard to sell on open market!).

Can you visualize the scene? The call of John and James? They are sitting in the boat cleaning and repairing their nets along with their father. They have fished all night. They are tired. Now they are inspecting and repairing the nets before another long night of fishing. It is a must part of the job - a torn net means lost fish, lost income. Jesus walks by, sees them and says, "*Follow me.*" They immediately leave dad alone in the boat and start following Jesus. What did Jesus say? Would you follow?

They begin a journey with Jesus. A journey that will challenge their world view every day. Their world will be turned upside down. The ideals they have been taught will be challenged almost every day. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, will say, "*You have heard it said(taught)...but I say...*" (Matt 5:21). Rather than an "eye for an eye" they will be told to turn the other cheek. Jesus will interact with women and welcome them into the journey (Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41; Luke 8:3). He will take children in his lap and say that they are important in the kingdom of heaven. He will have dialogue with Gentiles and will comment on how great their faith is (Matthew 8:5ff). He will eat with sinners, tax collectors and fishermen and enjoy it. (Have you ever eaten with someone and you can tell that they wish they were somewhere else, eating with someone else? - Not with Jesus. He was happy to be eating with them.) He will not be so concerned about the "law" - he will touch lepers, the unclean and those outside the circle. He will celebrate with them at weddings and cry with them at funerals. He will enjoy their parties. He will turn their world upside -down.

They will slowly become like Jesus. Each day will be a challenge. They will stumble and fall and misunderstand what he is about. Their motives will be challenged - they want seats of authority in the coming kingdom. But, in the end, they will be changed and will become "fishers of people."

People are harder to catch than fish, though easier to find. Our world is becoming more and more technical. Most of you have some type of cell phone. Grandparents are now calling their 6 and 7 year old grandchildren for technical advice on laptops and cell phones. They may even be texting! Do you remember flannel graphs? Once a staple in any Sunday school classroom - they would now only hold the interest for a moment, but they are not visual enough for this generation. A cartoon I saw recently shows two images, one of yesterday and another of today. The yesterday image has mom dragging a young boy by the ear from outside playing into the house. The image of today has mom dragging the boy by the ear from inside to the outside to play!

One of Wings kids described for us his recent bout with the flu. He said it wasn't so bad because between episodes of being sick (at night) he could play his video game!

Have you been in a school room lately? There are no longer rows of seats and children sitting quietly being taught. It is more like controlled chaos. Now, I work better when there is music in the background. It does not take long before I cannot tell you what is playing, etc. But, if the room is quiet I hear every little moan and creak of the building (and this building does a lot of creaking!).

The world is changing. I have talked with people recently who have never held a hymnal (pros and cons on that, some say it stops people from learning how to read the notes, etc). But where they worship they project the words on a screen - no books needed. The times they are changing - the bait needs to be changed.

We adults have also changed along the way. We may not even notice the change has been so gentle. We saw a movie yesterday about two middle schoolers. The girl said she would like to go to church with the boy's family. He responds that she wouldn't like it, she would have to wear a dress! She tells him, she does have one.

There was a time when Senior Centers were a place where "seniors" would gather to play cards, knit and gather over coffee and gossip. Many seniors now are looking for more than that; they want activities that challenge them, walking, skiing, cruises. The fish are getting harder to catch and there are more of them!

This recent MLK, Jr. holiday is now more than a holiday - it is becoming a day of service. Beside the marches and sermons people are volunteering by the thousands to paint, weed, clean, feed, etc. It is a time to be active and improving communities. Each week I get an email from International Ministries listing the volunteers in missions around our world. These are not mission trips where people head out to see mission but are individuals and groups involved in building schools, digging wells and laying pipes for villages so they can have clean water. This past week there were 5 individuals and 10 groups volunteering overseas. The list grows longer and longer — people want to serve - get their hands dirty. People no longer see the need of committees and boards that meet and talk and talk and talk. They want places to serve — they want to change the world.

Why? They are challenged in a way to become "fishers of people" - and there you don't get many fish in meetings!

Jesus asks, "Follow me." Are we willing to follow Jesus? Are we willing to cast our nets on the other side of the boat (Luke 5)? We cannot dismiss the call of Jesus. It is a radical call for us to change the world and change the thinking of the world. As this group began to follow Jesus they saw their world being changed and were challenged to think in new ways. As they sought to become "fishers of people" they had to learn a new way of fishing... but, oh the results. They turned the world upside - down!

New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988