

Sermon: February 7, 2010

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-13; Psalm 138; Luke 5:1-11

Title: "The Difference Between Catching Fish and Catching Men"

Call to Worship: adapted from Psalm 138

I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart

Before the "gods" I will sing your praise.

I will bow down toward your holy temple

And will praise your name

For your love and your faithfulness.

For you have exalted above all things

Your name and your word.

May all the worlds leaders praise you, O Lord

When they hear the words of Your mouth.

May they sing of the ways of the Lord

For the glory of the Lord is great.

Though the Lord is on high, he looks on the lowly,

But the proud God knows from afar.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble you preserve my life

You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes

The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;

Your love, O Lord endures forever

Do not abandon the works of your hands.

Hymns: #263 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

#2254 In Remembrance of Me

#441 I Love Thy Kingdom Lord

Prayer of Confession:

Lord, like the disciples who followed Jesus, we are called to follow him also. They followed Him without reservation while we have followed within bounds of our own limitations. We have not left the nets and fishing boats, nor have we left behind our homes and our families. We accommodate the call of Christ to our culture, rather than allowing His Call to amend our lifestyle. We want to become fishers of men, but we do not want to make the sacrifices necessary to become fishermen in your kingdom. Forgive our half-hearted commitment and awaken us to the many opportunities to touch others with your Love and Grace. We pray in the name of the Greatest Fisherman, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-13; Psalm 138; Luke 5:1-11

Title: "The Difference Between Catching Fish and Catching Men"

Today, all across America, Churches are celebrating Boy Scout Sunday. I make no apologies for it: I am an old time Boy Scout. I believe that Scouting is one of the most effective ways to impact the development of young men (and now young women) that has ever been developed. I am the assistant scoutmaster of Troop 326 in Martinsville which meets at Broad Street Christian Church. And if there had been a scout troop here at Altavista, I would have become an assistant scoutmaster here. Now, just for the record, how many old scouts do we have in the congregation this morning. I'm going to be real upset if no one puts up their hand. How many scout leaders and den mothers?

This year, 2010, is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Scouting Movement in America. You know the story: _____, a businessman was visiting London and on the way to a meeting in the misty streets he got turned around and lost his way. A young man in a uniform asked him if he was lost. That young scout guided him to the building he was headed for. When he offered to give the youngster a tip, the scout simply said, "No sir, we are taught to do a good turn daily." _____ asked about the scouting movement in England and discovered that it was founded by Sir Baden Powell after he returned from the Boer War in South Africa. Baden Powell was the most decorated general of that war. At one point, in the city of Mafeking, he kept a force of over 4000 Boer troops at bay with a small force of less than 800 British soldiers. Powell invented ways to trick the Boer army into believing that he had thousands of troops and lots of firepower. It is an amazing story. He wrote a book on how to be a scout for the army and to live off the land and survive in the face of difficulty. This book became the first handbook of the Boy Scout movement.

When ----- returned to Chicago, he introduced the Boy Scout movement into the YMCA program in that city. And today we know the rest of the story. Thousands and thousands of young men have camped out, cooked over an open fire, hiked rugged trails, canoed down rivers and scaled mountains. There is no end to what Scouting has challenged young men to accomplish. Over 200,000 young men have achieved the Eagle award. I look back and wish that I had made that last effort. I needed only three more merit badges and I would have been ready to do my Eagle project. But alas, it never happened. My son, Rob did, and I am hoping that all three of my grandsons will. It is an achievement that is recognized around the world. Indeed, if you achieve the Eagle Award, you can enlist in the Armed Forces and receive an immediate raise in rank. In the Marines you don't start out as a Private, you start as a PFC which puts you about six months ahead of your peers.

Now, why am I going to all this detail about Scouting? Because Scouting is a perfect example of knowing how to fish for men. When you inquire about becoming a Scout, you don't join an organization. You join a philosophy. You join a way of life. You become a member of a fellowship of travelers, all headed in the same direction, with

stated goals and beliefs and code of behavior. It becomes a lifestyle that remains with you as long as you live. What does a Scout believe? How does a Scout live?

**BE PREPARED
DO A GOOD TURN DAILY
ALWAYS LEAVE A CAMPSITE BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT.
A SCOUT IS TRUSTWORTHY, LOYAL, HELPFUL, FRIENDLY, COURTEOUS,
KIND, OBEDIENT, CHEERFUL, THRIFTY, BRAVE, CLEAN AND REVERENT.**

**ON MY HONOR I WILL DO MY BEST TO DO MY DUTY TO GOD AND MY
COUNTRY, TO OBEY THE SCOUT LAW, TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE AT ALL
TIMES TO KEEP MYSELF MENTALLY ALERT, PHYSICALLY STRONG
AND MORALLY STRAIGHT.**

I look back on my Scouting experience and I realize that the tie between the principles of Scouting and the tenets of the Christian Faith were so strong. It was more than the fact that Troop 2 in Winchester was sponsored by First Presbyterian Church where my family belonged. It was that we had Scoutmasters who saw their involvement in Scouting as part of their commitment to God. We didn't just see our scoutmasters at Monday night meetings. We saw them on Sunday morning in Sunday School and at worship. And when we went on a weekend hike, Fred would stop us along the trail and we would have worship. It was about 25 years after I went off to college that Fred came for a visit and opened his wallet and handed me a note I wrote to him when I was about 13 years old, telling him that we didn't want him in our troop.... It was then that I came to understand what Forgiveness and Acceptance is all about. Fred never gave up on us guys, even though we rejected him at first.

Jesus told his newfound disciples: 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.'" Look at that story closely. It was early in the ministry of Jesus. He really hadn't had time to astound the crowds. He had made his hometown people angry. They wanted to stone him. He had healed a few folks: in the synagogue he had commanded a spirit to come out of a demon possessed man; and at Simon's home he had healed Simon's mother-in-law of a high fever; and when word got out, others from Simon's village began to bring the sick. Jesus healed them, but refused to allow them to call him SON OF GOD.

After escaping into the wilderness for rest, Jesus ends up on the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret. We can read that as The Sea of Galilee. More specifically it is the coast line on the North West shore of the Sea of Galilee. He sees two boats belonging to fishermen. He asks to be put out to sea and, keeping close to the shore he is able to speak to the crowds. When he has finished speaking he instructs the fishermen to go into deeper water and set their nets. Simon lets Jesus know that they had already fished that part of the sea, but because it was Jesus who asked it, they would do so. I can imagine that they thought this was a useless exercise. Fishermen are ruggedly independent people. They know where the fish are and they do not cotton to some outsider telling them how to fish,

especially the son of a carpenter. But, because Simon has experienced a little bit of Jesus' authority, he follows the directions. The catch is unbelievable. It takes both boats to haul it in and still they are threatened with being swamped.

Only now are we introduced to Simon's full name. It is Simon Peter. The one Jesus later named: Peter, the rock. Could it be that some later scholar went back and penned in the name of Peter to identify this Simon as the same one whom Jesus branded as the Rock?

Right at this moment, Peter looks like anything except a Rock. He is a jelly fish. He is a scared chicken. He is an insecure and fearful and he gets down on his knees and begs Jesus to leave. All those fish could mean only one thing. Either Jesus was a worker of magic and could conjure up fish at his command, or..... or Jesus was indeed in tune with God Almighty. And in this case, Simon knows that he is a sinner and not worthy to be in the presence of God. And the scriptures record that Simon wasn't alone in these feelings. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's fishing buddies were equally astounded.

God has an amazing way of catching us off guard. Just when we think we know all the answers. Just when we think we are the experts at fishing, or banking, or manufacturing, or cooking, or whatever.... Along comes someone who does it better. And God uses this person to teach us a lesson. But sometimes the lesson can be frightening. Because it forces us to recognize our own inadequacies. And it was after this self realization, expressed by Simon and James and John that they are ready to become a different kind of fisherman.

"Don't be afraid!" Jesus tells them. "From now on you will catch men." And the rest of the story is familiar to us. These three become the vanguard. Nine others join them. Together with Jesus, they walk the dusty roads of Galilee and Judea, spreading the good news of God' love and forgiveness. Men and women gravitate to these men. Young and old, rich and poor seek them out because the message they bring is radically different than that which the Religious practitioners of the day were spewing out.

You don't have to be a great orator to catch men and women for God's Kingdom. All you have to be is honest and humble. Acknowledge your sinfulness and just try to beg your way out of The Call. That is precisely when God will say: "Follow Me, I will make you fishers of men."

We need to take a page out of the Scouting Handbook. Have you ever heard of a non-Christian recruiting someone into the Church? Of course not. And a non-scout will never convince anyone to become a Scout. That is why each Scout is challenged to bring another along with him. Each year, "Each Scout Bring One" is the way that the boat is filled to overflowing.

There is only one way that the pews of this Church will ever be filled to overflowing on a Sunday morning. You need to do some fishing. You and I together need to acknowledge that we are not worthy of the calling, and then turn right around and follow Christ's command to carry the good news of God's Love to everyone we see. And that is

not always done with words. It is done with actions. Scouts do it by using the buddy system to teach camping skills. Scouts know that if a new scout shows up at meeting he will not likely come back if he is not welcomed, made to feel at home and assisted in learning the Scout Oath. Can we do any less in Christ's Church.

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