

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered.

⁶ He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.”

¹¹ Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, but even with so many the net was not torn.

¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. (NIV84)

Theme: Fishermen for the Risen Lord

1. He shows us what to do
2. He blesses our endeavors

It’s that time of year again. Suckers are being caught in Omer. Pounds and pounds of smelt has been served just down the street. I’ve been told that the big day is April 27—the opening day for fishing. It’s somewhat appropriate, then, that today we see the disciples

fishing. Peter and the some of the other Apostles knew full well what to do—they were fisherman before Jesus called them. And they would remain fishermen the rest of their lives—only they wouldn’t catch fish. They became fishermen of the Risen Lord—just like us. Jesus shows us what to do and he blesses our endeavors.

On that first Easter night Jesus said to his believers, **As the Father has sent me, I am sending you...Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.** Christ sent them throughout the world to spread the message of his death and resurrection. And as the gospel was spread, so would the forgiveness of sins. This is a message the disciples would have been more than happy to spread. Their Savior was dead, but now he is alive! Because he lives we know that we too will live. Through his work we are the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. This is the best message anyone could share with anyone. By the time our text for today takes place it has been at least a week and a half from when Jesus gave them this command. The disciples were now in Galilee, as Jesus had commanded them. They had nothing better to do—waiting further instruction by Jesus, so they decided to go fishing—for fish. It’s what they knew how to do.

But that night, they weren’t very successful. Back then you fished by dragging a net in the water—hoping just simply to scoop up some fish as they came to the surface to eat. They fished all night, but came up empty. By dawn they were tired and exhausted. Not to mention disappointed. Then a man on the shore yelled out to them: **Friends, haven’t you any fish? No. Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.** So they did—although it made no sense they did. And what do you know? Their net was so full they couldn’t even lift it up in the boat. It was an amazing miracle.

One that happened before. It was very early in Jesus’ ministry. He was in a boat with Peter. Jesus told him to go out to the deep part of the lake and let his net down. Peter told him that they had fished all night, but caught nothing—nevertheless he did as Jesus said. And they caught so much fish that the nets began to break. He had to call his companions, James, and John to come with their boat. Both boats were so full they began to sink.

Peter was afraid that he was an unworthy sinner standing before the Lord. So Jesus said to him, **Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.** Peter made his living by fishing—and he would throughout the rest of his life. But he would be fishing for men. He would catch men for Jesus—and the gospel was his bait. John was there that day. Now about three years later Jesus performed the same miracle. And John remembered it right away. **It is the Lord,** he said. And Peter dove into the water to meet his risen Savior.

You will catch men. You—not just Peter and the other disciples. Not just the pastor or missionaries—but you. It is the duty of all members—men and women, pastors and lay members, adults and children to share the message of the gospel. Every member is a missionary—every member is to spread the Word of the risen Savior. And you can't catch a fish if you don't have anything in the water. The same thing stands for men. You can't catch men without spreading the gospel. They cannot be brought to faith unless they hear the Word. As Paul says in Romans 10, **how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?**

But what do we often do? We get scared. We hesitate. “What will people think of me? What if they mock me or look down upon me? What would I say? I'm not good at talking to people—I'm just not that comfortable talking about my faith with others.” So we may shy away from the sharing the gospel. We don't even go fishing. Thus no fish our caught. No one hears the gospel and no one is brought to faith.

Look at Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He was concerned about his disciples' catch. “How's the fishing going?” He is concerned about the same thing with us. Of course, Jesus' concern is really if the Walleye are biting. He cares about souls. For Jesus **wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** He wants everyone to hear the gospel. He desires that they all hear the Word and receives the sacraments. He wants to bring them to faith and strengthen that faith until he takes them home forever. But that happens through the gospel that we share. From the shore he told the disciples, **Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.** He told them what to do. And when they did it

they caught more fish than they could handle. Jesus also tells us how to catch men. **Preach the Word,** Paul tells us in 2 Timothy. Shortly before he ascended into heaven Jesus told his believers, **Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.** Jesus tells us how to fish. He gives to us his gospel. We don't have to worry about not knowing what to say. For we know what Christ has done for us. All we have to do is share the message of his death and resurrection. Share the joy of sins forgiven and eternal life forever. For our Lord is risen with power and majesty.

Jesus shows us how to catch men because he is concerned about our catch. And because of this, he will bless us our endeavors.

The disciples had to drag the net behind them because it was so full with fish. When they got to the shore they counted the fish. 153! 153, just by dragging a small net through the water. And they weren't some small type of fish—like smelt. They are describes as large or great fish. God certainly blessed their catch. They wouldn't have done this under any sort of normal circumstances. This is purely the work of our Savior.

Jesus would also bless them as they fished for men. Soon the disciples would move on from Israel. They would travel throughout the known world. Some down to Africa. Others toward India or even China. Still others traveled the Mediterranean. They reached places like Rome and Spain. They went spreading the gospel. And wherever they went, the fishing was good. For God blessed their work. The Holy Spirit brought people to faith again and again through the word. Again, not by what they did, but it was purely the work of the Lord.

The disciples left their homes. They gave up their possessions. They dedicated their lives. At times they put their lives on the line. Some were even killed for spreading the gospel. It was hard work. And required much sacrifice. The same still stands today. To share the gospel takes hard work. Much may need to be sacrificed. We may need to give things up to go fishing for men.

So why would we do it? Why would anyone want to give up much of their lives? Why would they willingly suffer and die for the gospel? Because of the Risen Savior. Because Jesus lives and so do we. The disciples basked in the joy of eternal life through the resurrection of

Jesus. And so do we. And not just today—two weeks after Easter, but every day. For we celebrate daily the eternal life that our Savior won for us through his resurrection from the dead. And that leads us to share his Word with others.

Just as Jesus blessed the work of the disciples he also blesses our work. For wherever the gospel is spread the Holy Spirit is at work. Through it he brings people to faith. Through it keeps us in the one true faith. As the Writer to the Hebrews says in chapter four, **The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.** We spread the gospel because it works—it is the power of salvation for all who believe. Through it the Holy Spirit saves us. And it always gets the job done. As Isaiah once said, **As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.**

The work may be hard. But he supplies us with all we need. We don't ever have to worry about not having enough. We don't have to fret about not being able to make it. God will take care of us. He will provide and protect us wherever we may go just as he provided and protected the disciples. It may be hard. But it's worth it. You know that feeling you get when you catch that big fish—how good it feels? Even more so with men. We rejoice and thank God that he has brought another to faith through his gospel.

There are many ways we can go fishing. First and foremost we tell others we know about Christ. We share the message of the Risen Lord. Perhaps you know someone who is feeling down because of health problems or financial woes. Or someone who is afraid from everything they hear on the news—from the violent crime in America to the leaders of North Korea. Maybe you know someone who has a great feeling of guilt. Or someone who doesn't know their Savior. We have many great opportunities every day to share the comfort of the gospel. To tell those in need of the Lord who paid for their sins

and gave them eternal life. For he rises and lives with power and majesty.

We can also go fishing for men through our Synod. Part of our offerings go to send missionaries throughout the world. This Saturday some of our ladies will learn about one of our missionaries in Indonesia—spreading the gospel in a Muslim hotbed. Preaching the message of Christ to those that do not know him and hate him. They go to start congregations in places where we are not. To spread the message of the Savior to people we do not know and who do not know Christ. There are many opportunities to spread the message. The work is not always easy and it is not always fast. But we gladly do it. For we love to tell others of the message of forgiveness and eternal life. We love to tell others about our Risen Lord.

April 27th is when fishing season starts—some fish you can't catch year round. Not so with men. Whenever and wherever we spread the Word the Holy Spirit is at work. So we fish for men whenever we get the chance. And we pray that through the gospel all whom we might may see and believe the power and majesty of our Risen Lord. Amen.