

"Fishers Of Men For The Kingdom of God"

Sermon Text: Mark 1:14-22

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him. And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.” (KJV)

Fellow Redeemed in Christ,

What is your most urgent need? What do you desire most from God?

You confess that Jesus is the Son of God, what do you expect of Him?

You may, indeed, expect great things of Him. For St. Paul tells us in Romans 8:32, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

Yes, we may confidently expect Him to grant us all our needs, and especially our most urgent needs.

So, what is your most urgent need?

As Christians, we must confess, our most urgent needs are very often not what **WE** believe to be our greatest needs, but rather, those things our gracious Heavenly Father knows are our greatest needs according to His gracious good will and purpose for us.

For He is the omniscient God. He alone knows what is best for us, as well as what would bring us harm. He alone knows what, when, where, and how to bless us with both temporal and spiritual blessings.

In the sixth chapter of Matthew, Jesus reveals to us that those things we with our worldly mentality may believe are our most urgent needs, are in reality, nothing compared to that which we truly need, something more precious and lasting than anything this world has to offer.

This is why in the thirty-third verse of the sixth chapter of Matthew, He tells us to “seek **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

Heeding this admonition of our Lord Jesus, we consider our text and so find these three lessons in this account of Jesus' appearance in Galilee.

Firstly, What is the true nature of God's Kingdom,
 Secondly, The proper perspective the Christian has of this life, and
 Thirdly, Right judgement in matters of our Christian life.

(PRAYER) Heavenly Father, Sanctify us through thy Truth, Thy Word is Truth. Amen

What exactly *is* the true nature of God's Kingdom, the kingdom that Jesus has told us to seek?

The first verse of our text tells us that Jesus appeared in Galilee and there preached the good news of this kingdom.

But a majority of the Jews did not accept the good news the Messiah brought, nor did they accept Jesus as the Anointed One, the One promised of God in the book of the Prophets.

No, the Jews rejected Jesus Christ because the good news of the kingdom He preached was not what they were looking for. He and His message of salvation were not what they believed to be their most urgent need.

Rather, they expected God to establish a secular or political kingdom by which He would restore to Israel the magnificent power and grandeur, which was hers during the reign of King David and King Solomon.

Had they not been so willingly blinded by their sinful pride and self-righteousness, they would not have had such a narrow view of the nature of the kingdom of God.

And there are similar misconceptions of the true nature of God's Kingdom today.

The Zionist Jew of today, with the willing, some would say "militant", support of many who claim to be Bible believing Christians, look for the establishment of a physical kingdom of God on earth.

By means of military and coercive political pressure, the Zionists are active in attempting to bring about a virtual restoration of King David's Israel with Jerusalem as its capital.

It is from this geographic point that they believe they will eventually rule the entire world as the chosen people of God.

And there are some professing to be Christians, who teach and believe that the Kingdom of God consists of a future One World Government. They expect a world where peace between all nations is a reality. Where racial strife, war, crime, and poverty are all a forgotten thing of the past, and where there exists a virtual utopia of economic and social justice for all and the establishment of but One World Church, comprised of all the religions of the earth.

These millennialists view recent advances in science, technology, and the existence of the United Nations as proof and infallible assurance of the coming of this kingdom.

Pretending to be wise, they are become as fools. Because none of these things are God's Kingdom, neither shall these fools have any part in God's Kingdom.

For, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

No, Dear Ones, Christ's Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, is something far different than and far removed from any of these. God's Kingdom is as different from what the world expects and desires for itself as light and life is from darkness and death.

Jesus said, "The time has come and God's kingdom is here. Repent and believe the good news."

You see, all the prophecies of the true Messiah, the Savior who would save His people from their sins, found in the Old Testament, from Genesis 3:15,

("And I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed and it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise His heel...")

to Malachi 4:6, ("And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.")

These are now to be seen as having their complete fulfillment in Him, Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

To become a member of God's Kingdom requires a change of heart.

It is a change worked **in** us, and that **not** by anything we say or do.

Neither is it a change which we might formerly have imagine we accomplished ourselves by anything we deserve in whole or in-part, but it is a change worked in us **solely** by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God.

It is a change that results in our no longer being the willing enemies of God, but rather loving, obedient children of God.

It is a change worked in us, without any merit or worthiness on our part, by God's wondrous Gift of Grace; His Word, which offers and freely gives to us the Forgiveness of our Sins, Life and Salvation. And this, whether in the hearing of His Word alone or by His Word of Grace connected with the water in our Baptism into Christ's death.

But the Word of God does not stop there. It brings forth genuine growth in our faith-life in Christ through the regular hearing of His Word.

And more... The Holy Spirit also works in the Christian a heartfelt appreciation of the free gift of the forgiveness of all our sins, true peace with God, and the sure hope of eternal life.

And these cannot fail but to produce a sincere dedication to serve not our own self-interests, but God and our fellow man. Fulfilling the Law of Love by the power of the Holy Spirit, doing no harm knowingly to our neighbor's physical or spiritual welfare.

It is a change accomplished in us and for us, but NOT by us.

For, as we are humbled under the mighty hand of God and must acknowledge our many sins before Him who is our Creator; we gladly proclaim with St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (chapter 2 verses 8-10) that it is by Grace Alone, through Faith Alone, that we are forgiven all our sins, and born again, a new creation in Christ, dead to sin and conformed to the gracious will of our Heavenly Father.

And so, self-pride and self-righteousness have absolutely *no* place in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus tells us in Mark 8:34 and 35: **“...Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s the same shall save it.”**

Materialism and living for the pleasures of this world have absolutely no place in the Kingdom of God.

We read First Timothy 6: 9 and 10: **“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”**

And being a friend of the world has absolutely no place in God's Kingdom.

Witness I John 2:15-17: **“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”**

Clearly, from Scripture we see that those who reject the Christ... those who do not trust in the suffering and death of the Son of God for the full atonement of their sins, life, and salvation, but rather hold to any vain philosophies of man... remaining unrepentant to the death of their mortal bodies here... these are condemned by God and sentenced to spend an eternity hereafter tormented in the unquenchable fires of hell.

For those who are yet without Christ and without belief *by faith* in His Gospel message are **NOT** in His Kingdom!

And so it is, that along with our call to Christ by the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, we also have an urgent call to be Fishers of Men.

Hear Jesus' Words to you and me today: **“Come, follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”**

True, We are not all given the same gifts with which to serve our Lord and King, but as our the hymnist so eloquently put it:

"If you cannot speak like angels, If you cannot preach like Paul, You can tell the love of Jesus, You can say He died for all. If you cannot rouse the wicked With the Judgement's dread alarms, You can lead the little children to the Savior's waiting arms.

If you cannot be a watchman, Standing high on Zion's wall, Pointing out the path to heaven, Offering life and peace to all, With your prayers and with your bounties You can do what God demands, You can be like faithful Aaron, Holding up the prophet's hands,"

Likewise our text serves to give us the proper perspective of our lives as children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

In verses 16-20 of our text, we are told of Simon and his brother, Andrew and of James and his brother, John. Most if not all of these men had met Jesus before. This we learn from John 1:35-42.

After having met Jesus and spent some time with Him, these men had returned to their occupations as fishermen. They surely considered this job of theirs important and, if they were like most fishermen, they also considered it an enjoyable one.

In addition to this, James and John also had a serious responsibility to their family, for their father appears to have been the head of the family business.

Yet, when Jesus calls to them to follow Him and that He will make them fishers of men, they immediately drop everything and follow Him.

Thus our Lord would impress upon us the proper perspective of life which a true child of God possesses.

Yes, our professions, our occupations, and our incomes and our leisure time activities are important to us.

And there are countless self-help books and video and audio tapes available that seek to instruct us on how to be the top man or woman in our chosen field... how to "win friends and influence people", and ...how to increase one's gross earnings potential. But these earthly things are **not** to be the most important things in our lives.

No, Dear Ones, following Christ and being Fishers of Men for God's Kingdom is a much higher calling and goal for all Christians, no matter with what gifts and talents you have been blessed.

The church today needs to understand that gainful employment and leisure time are also gifts from God and as such, in and of themselves, are not bad things.

However, we also need to be aware that any job, any hobby, or really any activity at all, which consumes so much of our time and energy, that we fail to follow Christ... that we persistently neglect to take advantage of the opportunities He provides us to grow in His Word and truly be "fishers of men for the Kingdom of God", has ultimately usurped the place in our lives which rightly belongs only to God.

In such a case that thing has, indeed, become an idol to us just as much as if it were the golden calf of the rebellious Israelites of the Old Testament.

I now ask you to examine yourselves. Have you allowed something or someone to become more important in your life than God and seeking first after His Kingdom and His righteousness?

I dare say, we have (probably all of us) on account of our sinful flesh, allowed this to happen in our lives, have we not?

If this be true in your life, I beseech you to humbly confess and repent of this sin.

Pray the Holy Spirit would strengthen your heart and guide you to be more wary of this temptation, which comes from the Devil, the world and our own sinful flesh.

Let us endeavor with God's help always to keep the proper perspective with regard to worldly matters, the pursuit of material gain and God's Kingdom.

Let us always remember that it is God who blesses us.

And this so that we might make use of those blessings to take the Gospel message to others and so become the passionate fishers of men our Lord desires.

The last two verses of our text shows us Jesus appearing and teaching in the synagogue.

Now the synagogue was the place where the learned men, the scribes and rabbis gathered to conduct sessions of religious inquiry and debate.

Unfortunately, these sessions often included gross distortions of the teachings of the Old Testament along with the introduction of many new laws governing religious observances which were not required by God's Word.

But when Jesus taught, His hearers noticed a difference.

His words were convincing. For He taught "as one who had authority".

Today, many false teachers are gone out into the world. And they find many willing students.

Such false teachers will latch onto a congregation of itching ears, a congregation that has lost its first love, a congregation that no longer wants to hear the truth of God's Word.

And these wolves in sheep's clothing will preach a spiritually worthless "social gospel", teaching their followers they may rightly pick and choose what parts of God's Word they will accept and which they will reject.

They will promote adherence to politically correct doctrines and vain philosophies created by men; such as we see today in the overt practice and advocacy of the homosexual lifestyle, abortion on demand, religious unionism and what is now called "economic and social justice".

Still others will work as willing carriers of the poisonous leaven they bring. They privately scoff as the slow but steady erosion of the congregation's resolve and adherence to the whole truth of God's Word begins, and then watch in demonic glee as chaos ensues and rapidly progresses until the congregation's practice is woefully inconsistent with its written doctrinal confessions.

The words of Elija recorded in First Kings 18:21, fit these well.

"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him."

Dear Ones, If we are Christ centered and Christ-taught, if we seek God's Kingdom first, we need not be confused, misguided, or halt between two opinions.

For God's Word is even today the *only* faithful and true guide for our lives.

His Word *alone* is the only Source and norm for a true Christian life.

His Word *alone* is the acid test for everything that is preached, taught, confessed and practiced.

For by His Word *alone*, by Grace Alone, through Faith Alone we are called to be the Children of God, heirs with Christ and successful fishers of men for the Kingdom of God. Amen.

And now may the peace of God, the love of Christ and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.