

Matthew 4:12-25 | “What is a Disciple? Part 2”  
*Preached on April 30, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 4, verse 12. *[pause]*

We have been looking at “what is a disciple?”

Last week, we saw that a disciple follows Jesus, and we explored what exactly that meant.

Now today, we will once again be looking at the same passage, but this time, we will be looking at the second part of what Jesus said.

He said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

So that means this morning, we will be talking about fishing. *[pause]*

Some of you here are thinking, “Yes, this is awesome, I *love* fishing!”

Others of you are thinking, “Ugh, not fishing! I don’t like to fish, and that’s all my husband thinks about and does.”

But don’t worry, this isn’t your normal talk on fishing.

We aren’t going to be learning how to put an actual worm on a hook, or where the best spot is to go in Clearfield County.

This isn’t some fishing seminar in that respect. *[pause]*

Also don’t worry, you won’t need to be an expert fisherman to understand this passage.

You don’t even need a certain amount of hours of experience in fishing to comprehend what Jesus is talking about.

But all you need to know is the basics of what fishing is, and a desire to follow Christ.

Any of us could meet those qualifications. *[pauseeee]*

Let’s get the passage back on our minds by looking at it once again. *[READ PASSAGE]*

Jesus has started His public ministry, and as the Light of the World, He is shining and bringing light to the spiritual darkness of the world.

He is also preaching, teaching and healing, and people are starting to hear about him and gather around him.

But in the midst of those two passages, we see the call of 4 of His disciples in verses 18-22.  
*[pause]*

Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee, when he sees these fishermen and says, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

They immediately leave their fishing, and follow Him. *[pause]*

*So last week we saw that being a disciple of Jesus means following Him, but now we will see that...*

**A disciple is someone who fishes for men.**

Now let's first tackle, what does it even mean to fish for men?

First off, this doesn't mean only males, but it's using men in the general way of talking about people or humanity.

And it's using the imagery of fishing to illustrate what they would be doing. *[pauseeee]*

Think of normal fishing, what do you do?

You throw a line or put out a net to catch fish out of the water.

Well now replace fish with men.

Instead of catching fish, they would now catch men, but there's a big difference.

You catch fish in order to kill them and eat them, but you catch men in order to save them.

*[pause]*

Think of the water as a picture of being in the world and under condemnation, but now there are those who fish and catch people out of that water in order to save them. *[pause]*

Or think of it in the sense of two kingdoms.

The water is like the kingdom of darkness, the realm of sin and death.

But when you are snatched out of that kingdom, you are rescued and placed into the kingdom of light and life.

Now you become subjects of Christ's kingdom. *[pauseeee]*

So the disciples used to gather fish out of the sea, but now they would be gathering followers of Christ out of the world.

The disciples would still be fishing, but fishing for something different. *[pauseeee]*

This is essentially talking about sharing the Gospel and leading others to Christ.

There were people out there who needed to be saved and rescued, and the disciples were now called to play a part in leading them to that salvation. *[pause]*

What love of Christ!

He looks at the world and sees a world full of people, who He desires to save!

We don't deserve anything, yet He provides the way, in Himself, to be saved from condemnation and eternal death. *[pause]*

He could have just ignored us, He could have just left us to our own devices, and He would have been perfectly just to do so.

Yet, He came with a mission to save men and women, forgiving them and giving them eternal life. *[pauseeee]*

Before we even get to our role of fishing, we must see the love of Christ in His desire to save.

Because if we are ever going to be good fishers of men, we must be captivated by His love for people. *[pause]*

Like fishing for fish takes a determination for a result, so fishing for men must start with a determination of love for the result of seeing people saved.

And our love for people only comes because we see Christ's love for us...

He loved us and saved us, so how could we not love others and desire for them to be saved? *[pauseeee]*

So that's what fishing for men means, but let's look closer at Jesus' call of His disciples when He says, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

*From that short, yet powerful statement I want to bring out 3 points that it shows us...First...*

### **I. He calls us to follow *and* fish.**

Just think about what He said, "Follow me, *and* I will make you fishers of men."

There's a strong connection between following and fishing, isn't there?

Jesus uses a conjunction, which connects and binds the ideas together. *[pause]*

There is a logical progression given.

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

So following Him is the first act, which is followed by Jesus making us fishers of men. *[pause]*

So it doesn't just say, "Follow me."

It doesn't just say, "I will make you fishers of men," as if they could be severed.

And it doesn't say that he will make us fishers of men and *then* followers, but followers who are made fishers. *[pause]*

What is this all to say?

You cannot separate following from fishing.

Following Christ means being made into a fisher of men - that is one of the results of following Him! *[pause]*

You see, Christ doesn't just call us to merely learn from Him and that's it, but we follow and learn from Him, which results in us going out on mission, like Him.

There would not only be active learning, but active doing. *[pause]*

It's kind of like an apprenticeship.

An apprentice doesn't just learn to learn and that's it, but they learn so that they can then go out and do. *[pause]*

This reminds us that our Christian lives cannot be about knowledge alone.

Knowledge is certainly the foundation, but our knowledge and learning of Christ must be then lived out in our lives. *[pause]*

Though we would never say it out loud, so many of us live as though fishing for men was just an optional part of the Christian life. *[pause]*

Sometimes we think, "Yeah, witnessing is for those people over there, who are just so good at it. But me? I just don't have the knack for it."

But that's not true!

Every follower is a fisher of men.

We are not to be sitting on the sidelines, only being spectators of other fishers, but we are to join in the fishing! *[pause]*

This is what Jesus has called us to!

To be a disciple is to become a fisher of men.

That's why at the end of Matthew you have Jesus commanding His disciples to go and make other disciples.<sup>1</sup> *[pauseeee]*

We must reshape our thinking about what we are.

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 28:18-20.

Yes, we may know that we are disciples of Jesus, who follow Him, but have we lost sight of the second part about being fishers of men?

We must remember that to be a disciple *is* to be a fisher of men. *[pause]*

He didn't say, "Follow me, and then sit down and watch others do ministry."

He didn't say, "Follow me, and I will just get the fish all by myself."

No, He wants and has chosen to use *us* as a means of bringing others to Him! *[pauseeeee]*

How do you view sharing the Gospel with others?

Do you view it as optional, or as an indispensable part of being a follower of Christ? *[pause]*

May God help us and mold our thinking to remember: a disciple is someone who fishes for men.

So we follow *and* fish.

Everyday that we wake up, the sign on our life should say, "Gone fishin'." *[pauseeeee]*

*As we think about Jesus' call here, we also realize that...*

## **II. He calls us to a high calling!**

That the King and Savior of the world would ask us to do anything is astounding.

That He would call us to join Him in His mission in the world is even more mind-boggling. *[pause]*

According to verses 12-17, this is truly the promised One, who is the Light of the world, who gives light to those in darkness.

According to verses 23-25, this is truly the great preacher, teacher, and healer, with a life-changing ministry.

And this very One calls us to join in His mission? *[pause]*

You would think He would take one look at us and think, "Eh, I don't know about this. I'll just do it myself."

I mean just look at us: we are failing, flopping, and stumbling sinners.

We sometimes feel like we can barely keep our own lives together.

Yet He says, "I want to use you for a world-altering task." *[pauseeee]*

You see, He doesn't call us to some small, menial task, like shoe shining in the kingdom, but He has called us to a high calling!

He has called us to be participants in a mission that has an eternal impact. *[pauseeee]*

Just think of the disciples here.

Their job was to fish for fish and that's it before Jesus came along.

It fed some bellies and lined their pockets, but that's about it.

Yet now Jesus would radically change their lives and their vocations into ones that would reverberate through eternity.

They would no longer be fishing for fish, but fishing for men. *[pause]*

Talk about a high calling! *[pause]*

And let me tell you, if you are a true disciple of Jesus Christ, no matter how menial or small your vocation is in this world...

You may clean toilets, you may flip burgers, you may hand people a tray of food, or change diapers...

No matter how small that vocation is in the eyes of the world, you have another high, eternity-impacting, more important vocation from God Himself...

...You are a fisher of men! *[pauseeee]*

If you think you have a menial task in this world, remember your high task of fishing for men, and stand in awe.

And if you think you have some important tasks in this world, humbly lower them in your mind by thinking of your more important task as a fisher of men. *[pauseeee]*

Just think about *who* Jesus was calling to join in this high calling.

It wasn't the high up religious elite, but the ordinary people of the day.

And this reminds us that Christ chooses ordinary people to do extraordinary things! *[pause]*

Who are we to be asked to take part in this mission?

Yet in grace, God desires to use such people as us.

We would have never been chosen first by the world, yet we are chosen by God to do great things through His powerful working in us. *[pauseeee]*

Do you realize that Jesus has called you to such an eternally important task?

Do you stand amazed that He would use little ol' you as a participant in His mission? *[pause]*

God has called us to join in and play a part in His wonderful mission of saving souls in this world!

His mission is a great catch of people saved, and we get to be used as fishers in that great catch!  
*[pauseeee]*

Yes, it will take effort and toil, and it won't be easy.

Yes, it will take patience and some skill, but it's worth it!

To be able to stand before God someday, and for Him to say, "You were a faithful fisher."

Or to someday look around in eternity, and see all the people that you fished for Christ, what a joy!

There's nothing better. *[pauseeeee]*

Last summer, my father-in-law and I took my two sons fishing for the first time.

And it was interesting to see them experience fishing. *[pause]*

They had to learn that it took a little bit of work to fish.

We had to first make sure that we had all the needed equipment, pick the right spot, and put bait on the hook. *[pause]*

They also learned that it took great patience to fish.

They came to realize that you had to be quiet (which they weren't good at), and it also took a lot of waiting for the fish to bite (which they were also not good at). *[pause]*

They also found out that it took some skill to throw the line out, and also to know how to reel the fish in. *[pause]*

But what was truly special to watch was the joy on their faces when it all paid off, and they caught their first fish.

The work, patience, and skill needed was all worth it when that fish came up out of the water, hanging on the line. *[pause]*

And the work and patience needed to fish for men will be worth it all, for even one soul saved, and the joy it will bring. *[pauseeee]*

What a high calling, what a privilege, what a responsibility, but what a joy and honor!

We get to play a part in helping people see their need to turn to Christ to be saved, and they are impacted for eternity. *[pauseeee]*

There are necessary tasks in this life that need to be done to function, I get that.

But how could we waste our time, money, and energy on other needless tasks?

If we were honest, our social media time, our hobbies, our TV time, or our other leisurely activities often are higher priority on our lists than sharing the Gospel.

But how could we elevate unnecessary things that have no eternal value, and lower a task of immense value such as this?

We need to get back to our priority lists and evaluate them in light of a text like this.

For we can remember that there's nothing more important than playing a part in God's grand mission in this world. *[pauseeee]*

If you consider where we have been so far this morning, you will notice something.

We saw that fishing for men is a responsibility, for those who are followers are to be fishers, so we can't just neglect it, for it is what we are called to.

But we also saw that fishing for men is a tremendous privilege, for we get to participate in something amazing.

Yet hearing the responsibility and privilege of fishing for men can lead us to feel a certain way.

It can lead us to feel the weight of it all, and feel inadequate.

Like, "How can I do this? I want to do this, but it just seems so important, daunting, and weighty. I don't feel up to it." *[pause]*

If that's you, don't fret, for in Jesus' call, He has given us the answer to these feelings.

The answer is found in Him saying, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." *[pause]*

Did you notice the answer to our feelings of inadequacy for the task?

*Point 3...*

### **III. He *makes* us fishers of men.**

In military boot camp, the goal is to transform a group of civilians into soldiers, and usually they are yelled at and pushed hard to be made into soldiers.

Thankfully Jesus doesn't act like a drill instructor with us, but he does transform and change us into something: fishers of men. *[pause]*

This is such a refreshing and encouraging truth.

It means that it's not in our own effort that we become fishers of men.



The weight of becoming a disciple-maker is not just bearing down on our shoulders.

But the weight is lifted off, as we find out that it's Christ who makes us fishers of men.

*[pauseeee]*

So often I hear people talk about sharing the Gospel, and they say, "I don't know if I can do it."

Or they think they are too incompetent and not knowledgeable enough.

Well you may be right to some degree - in yourself, you can't do it, you can't make yourself a fisher of men.

But that's why He says that *HE* will be the one to make us fishers. *[pauseeee]*

To 'make' is the idea of producing, creating, and crafting.

It's the idea of changing and transforming us *into* something.

The Creator of Heaven and Earth who made the world is the very One who makes us fishers of men! *[pause]*

How could we doubt His power?!

He is the great Creator, Crafter, and Changer.

He is the great Equipper and Empowerer.

It is HE, the master Craftsman, who forms us into fishers of men.

He causes us to become what we never were before.

He transforms us, changes us, and molds us into what He desires, like a potter shaping the clay. *[pauseeee]*

What great news!

When He says, "Follow me," He doesn't put responsibilities on our shoulders that we could never do, but He trains us to accomplish those responsibilities.

He calls us, equips us, and sends us out.

From beginning to end, He gives us what we need. *[pauseeee]*

In many ways, a person is either hindered or empowered by the skill of their trainer.

Well we've got the best trainer there is: Jesus!

He is the One who *makes* us fishers of men.

So that means that we must allow and look to Christ to shape us and make us into what He wants. *[pauseeee]*

If you ever feel like you can't share the Gospel, then just remember this truth: Christ *makes* you a fisher of men.

You don't do it yourself, so go to Him and ask for help!

Trust that He can equip you and make you fit for the mission He has called you to do. *[pauseeeee]*

When Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," he was calling us to something amazing.

*And so what we see is that...*

**Christ calls us to a radical new vocation: fishing for men!**

For these disciples, they went from fishing for fish to fishing for men.

And it shows us that Christ radically changes our careers, hobbies, and lives for the Kingdom. *[pause]*

Your daily vocation, whereby you make money, may not change, but as a follower of Christ, you have a higher vocation that transforms any other vocation you have. *[pause]*

So you aren't only teachers, you are teachers who fish for men.

You aren't only custodians, you are custodians who fish for men.

You aren't only lawyers, secretaries, bankers, or homemakers - you are all those things, but you are those things with the overarching vocation of disciple-makers. *[pauseeeee]*

What a difference it would make in our lives if we kept that in mind.

And what a difference it would make if we remembered, "I am a follower of Christ, and that means that I'm a fisher of men." *[pause]*

This is truly a radical new way of life and vocation that God has called us to, as the world's view of what's most important doesn't compare. *[pauseeee]*

So no longer see sharing the Gospel as optional, but see it as a part of being a follower of Christ.

What a responsibility it is, but what a privilege, for it's such a high calling!

We get to participate in His mission of saving souls! *[pause]*

We, of course, aren't the saviors, but we simply point them to the One who is.

And we look to Him the whole time, for we know that we don't make ourselves fishers, but He makes, equips, and empowers us to do it.

It's His plan and His power at work, we simply get to play a part in it. *[pauseeeeeeeee]*

Now each of you should have a fish, so please take it out.

Today we learned that we are fishers of men, so what I want you to do is to write the name of someone that you know personally who isn't saved onto that fish.

And then write your name with it, so we know who we are praying this for. *[pause]*

You don't have to write their last name or even their first name, if you don't want to.

You could just write, 'my neighbor', or 'my co-worker'.

But write down someone's name right now and then I'll have the kids come around and gather them and put them into this fish bowl. *[HAVE THEM WRITE IT]*

*[while waiting, say this...]*

After the service, this fish bowl will be on the back announcement table, and I would like each of you before you leave to pick one out (make sure it's not your own).

And I would like for each of us to be praying for that person's name who is on that fish throughout the week.

Carry it with you, or bring it out everyday for your devotions and just pray, pray, pray over that person whose name is written down.

Imagine the impact that this will make if someone else is just bathing this person in prayer, who you long to see saved.

Who knows what God can do with our faithful prayer, and our active sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ?

Maybe someone will be saved through this, and all glory will go to Him.

*[get fishbowl back and say this...]*

Just look at this bowl full of fish.

These all represent people that we personally know who don't know Christ.

This bowl is only about 1 person that we each know, but just think about all the other people that we know who aren't saved.

Or even just think about all the lost in Clearfield County. *[pause]*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, there are fish out there in this world, who need the saving hope of Jesus, and we are to be His fishers, gathering them and pointing them to Christ.

But will we do it?

Will we step up and remember that to follow Christ is to be a fisher of men?

Will we go forth, emboldened by the privilege of joining in such a high calling?

And will we faithfully trust that Christ will give us what we need and make us into faithful fishers of men? *[pause]*

As I close out the sermon time this morning, I'm going to pray over everyone in this fish bowl, and for us.

Because that's a big part of what we will need as we go forth as His fishers: prayer.