



SERMON RECAP

SEPTEMBER 27, 2026

Series: Mission and Vision

Sermon: "Fishers of Men" is a call to do justice

Scripture: Matthew 4:12-22

Jesus calls the fishermen to follow him in very similar stories Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Of course, John's version is very different, and we will get to that in a couple of weeks. For now, we are reading Matthew's version of Jesus calling Simon, Andrew, John, and James to "follow me." In all three Jesus tells them that from now on they will be fishing for people.

It is a strange and poetic phrase that has been pondered for centuries. Before we get to this phrase, however, I want to share an important Bible study tip. Whenever three Gospels (usually Matthew, Mark, and Luke) tell the same story, look for the things that are unique. When one Gospel adds a detail - or removes it - that is telling us something. It is usually worth noticing.

That is particularly important here because Matthew's added detail is a part that we could very easily gloss over. Matthew - as is often the case in the first Gospel - adds a quote from Isaiah, but it is not easily understood by modern audiences and thus easy to ignore.

Matthew tells us that as soon as Jesus finished his time in the wilderness he went to Nazareth, which is in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali, and then he quotes Isaiah:

Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, alongside the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who lived in the dark have seen a great light, and a light has come upon those who lived in the region and in shadow of death. (Mt. 4:15-16)

Now we can go back to what we learned over the last series. Matthew here is quoting Isaiah 9:2, which was written at a time when Judah was threatened. The Empire of Assyria was coming from the north, and there was great fear. The Northern Kingdom was slowly being overrun and two of the first areas to fall were - you guessed it - Zebulun and Naphtali. These are northern tribes, and Assyria's forces first trampled these areas.

This area was conquered and assimilated into the Assyrian Empire more thoroughly than many other areas. By calling back to Isaiah, Matthew is reminding the of this history. More importantly, Matthew is connecting Jesus' calling his first disciples to Isaiah's message in the midst of the devastation. And remember that that was - when the Assyrian Empire was coming, Isaiah urged the King



"The calling of Simon and Andrew," by Pietro De Cortina. ca 1650-1750. Currently hanging in the Fitzwilliam Museum public domain.

to return to justice. While others sought military alliances or strategic victories, Isaiah told the people what was needed - care for the widow and the orphan, stop trampling the poor, build community that included the alien among you. The light that would come would only come when there was justice in the land.

And now we turn to Jesus calling the men to become "fishers of men." The Old Testament often uses fishing as a metaphor for judgment. Fishing is a way to clear away the unjust. Jeremiah especially declares that the northern kingdom will be redeemed, that God will send people to reclaim the land that was ravaged by injustice "I'm going to send hordes of fishermen to catch them" (Jer. 16:16).

Jesus calling the Simon, John, and James "Fishers of Men" connects them to this prophetic image. They are called to join a movement of justice. This is not just an evangelical call to gain followers - or in today's terms - get people into pews. It is about building a movement that will change the world. The call to discipleship is call to be a part of something larger than their individual lives. "We're going to use your skill, but we're going to do something different with it," Jesus could have said.

Following Jesus is not just about gaining followers or "saving souls," its about changing lives, especially the lives of those who have been hurt, exploited, or marginalized. This is the beginning of our mission statment: To serve with justice. Justice is where it starts - it's not something "we'll get to get to eventually." Serving others is the heart of Jesus' call to the first fishermen, and it is the heart of our call as Two Rivers Church. Our mission begins with service - doing justice - this is how we fulfill our calling.

NEXT WEEK:

Luke 5:27-39, Our Mission (Part 2 of 3) Connect with loving-kindness