

Fishers of Men

Introduction to Parables

The dictionary tells us a parable is “a short story used to tell us a truth or principle.” A parable is a manner of speaking used to get a point across. I find the simplest definition of a parable to be “an illustration used to present a truth.”

The Bible contains many parables. The word parable is found in the Old and New Testament many times. For sure, Christ used parables many times in his speaking. Matthew 13:34 *“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them.”* It is really amazing how simple Christ spoke. He made sure He got His message across. I wish preachers and teachers today would revert back to the simple style of speaking used by our Lord. Most of His words were short 4 or 5-letter words easy to understand.

To simplify His speaking so that the listener was sure to gain understanding, Christ often spoke parables. Christ was not the only or the first speaker in the Bible to use parables. While His parables are the most famous in the Bible, parables go back many centuries. The Old Testament contains numerous parables. For example, in Judges chapter 9 Jotham used the parable of trees choosing for themselves a king to show the inhabitants of Shechem the folly of electing a vile man like Abimelech as their king.

Parables vary in length. Some may be only a phrase while others may be paragraphs in length. One of the shortest parables is spoken in Matthew 15 where Christ said *“they be blind leaders of the blind.”* *“Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.”* This short parable only contains a sentence. Other parables may be quite long. You and I speak in parables though we may not realize it. We do so to illustrate clearly to the person we are speaking to the information or message we desire to deliver to them. What do we accomplish if folk who listen to us do not understand what we said?

The parable of fishers of men
“follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”

The fishermen

We find this parable spoken by Christ in three of the Gospels: Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:17, and Luke 5:10. This is a very short parable which reads *“follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”* Christ never went to the halls of the institutions of higher learning or to the rabbinical school to find his first followers. He found most of them around the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Many were simple men who followed the same occupation as their fathers, that is, fishing. He was looking for men who would follow Him in His ministry and continue His preaching when he ascended back to Heaven.

“I will make you fishers of men.” Were these men to use the same nets used to catch fish in the Sea of Galilee? Were they to go into the marketplace and hurl the net over the heads of the shoppers? No—they would have been arrested for this. Christ was making use of a parable. That is, He was using an illustration to get across His message. Notice that when speaking to fishermen He used fishing as an illustration. To husbandmen, He spoke of the vineyard. To shepherds, He spoke of sheep. He was the “great communicator”—not President Reagan, although he was excellent.

“I will make you fishers of men” surely rang in the ears of the fishermen who would eventually leave the Sea of Galilee and their boats to join Christ as Apostles. David was called from feeding sheep to a higher calling (Psalms 78:70-72). Likewise, those fishermen willing to follow Christ were raised from a lower level to a higher level of fishing. If they would agree to follow Christ, He would allow them to snare men rather than fish from the Sea of Galilee. Christ spoke *“I will make you fishers of men.”*

Christ’s call to these fishermen was received immediately. Matthew 4:20 says *“And they straightway left their nets and followed him.”* These men had many times cast their nets into the waters of the Sea of Galilee. The fish they caught were alive but quickly died when taken from their natural element. Now, these fishermen were being

called on to catch *men* who were dead in trespasses and sins, and once they get into the Gospel net, begin to live!

Fishermen have three rules, I am told:

Rule one- “keep yourself out of sight.”

Rule two- “keep yourself further out of sight.”

Rule three- “keep yourself still further out of sight.”

If a fisherman casts his shadow over the water where the fish are, the fish cannot be caught, for they will be frightened away. Men who fish for souls must always be hidden in their selfish flesh.

The water and fish

Fishermen need a place to fish. Fishermen need water to fish in. The Sea of Galilee is just a speck on the map, a tiny lake. Now, these fishermen had a huge lake, a mighty ocean. The *world* became their sea! They would never again have to fear the fishing hole being too crowded. The world is vast and in need of being rescued. There are 6 ½ billion fish, that is, people, on this planet. Christ taught me to believe all are to be saved, for He said it was not His will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* Not all people will be saved, but all need to be told about Christ. All need to have the net cast their way.

The bait

Fishermen need bait. Fishermen need bait that will appeal to all kinds of fish. All species must be drawn. Both small and great fish must be enticed with the bait. The rich and poor need to be enticed. The black and white need to be drawn. Christ is the bait for he said in John 12:32 *“and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me.”* The fisherman really does need to *stay out of sight* and let Christ be lifted up. No bait other than Christ is acceptable. Neither money nor entertainment nor any other method is suitable to draw a person to salvation. Christ is the one and only attraction. Men drawn in another fashion will never know true salvation.

The net

Fishermen need a net. Shall we catch them with philosophy? Shall we catch men with entertainment? The *Scripture* is the net. The

Bible is what the people must hear, for God has said that He “*chose the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*” I Corinthians 1:21.

Why are no fish being caught in this age? There are only a few fishermen. The leader of the fishing industry, that is, soul winning, is the church. But the church is busy constructing buildings. Churches are busy entertaining members. Secondly, few souls are being won because those fishing are using the wrong bait and the wrong net. I am glad the net was cast my way one glorious day. I am thankful for the fisherman who preached Jesus to me. It is never a good time to be lost. But today may be the worst of all times, for there are so few fishermen. Just remember, God uses men, Jesus, and the Bible to catch sinners and bring them to His saving grace. He does not use lightning, dreams, or visions. Are you a fisher of men? Soul-winners are needed.