



-- Since moving here, I have come to learn that people in Southern Illinois love to tell tales about fishing...

-- The one armed fisherman

-- A Fishy Story

I heard about two avid fishermen who decided to spare no expense on their next fishing trip. For it, they purchased all new equipment: new reels, new rods, and new wading suits. They even bought a new rowboat and a rented a new truck with which to haul it. And for the final touch they rented the best cabin that the Southern Illinois wilderness had to offer. They spent an absolute fortune.

On their first day of fishing, they didn't catch anything. Sadly, the same thing happened on the second day, and on the third day. In fact, it went on like this all week until, at last, on the very last day of their vacation, one of the two men finally caught a fish.

As they were driving home, they were really depressed, and the first fisherman turned to the second and said, "Do you know what—that one lousy fish we caught cost us nearly five thousand dollars?"

The other guy responded, "Wow! It's a really good thing we didn't catch any more!"

That joke seems especially appropriate to me today because we find many of its characteristics at work in our passage this morning. In both, we see fishermen having a dreadful lack of success that is both unexpected and unexplained. As we discussed last week, the fifth chapter of Luke opens with the account of a group of fishermen who seem to be doing everything right, and yet, they still catch no fish. They seemed to be fishing in the right way, at the right time, with all the right equipment, with excellent effort, in a location where they had successfully fished many times before...and, yet, they still returned to shore empty-handed. These fishermen, about whom we will read about again this morning, certainly experienced a failed fishing mission.

-- Read Luke 5:1-11

-- Pray

This morning, as we ponder again these verses, I want to examine the fishing futility they portray from a slightly different angle than we did last week. And the perspective that I hope we will grasp today centers upon verse 10, which I believe is the key verse in this passage. In it, Jesus informs us of the overarching reason why the events of this passage unfolded as they did. You see, in verse 10, Jesus relates this fishing expedition at hand to the grander “fishing” missions that we call evangelism and Christian Ministry, when He says, “*Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.*” In this proclamation, we find the true purpose of this remarkable passage.

There is no doubt that there are numerous invaluable lessons about Christian living to be learned from these verses. For example, last week we looked at the powerful message it teaches us about persevering in obedience to God’s will. However, of all the life lessons included in this passage, one seems to stand above the rest as its chief message. As Jesus’ declaration in verse 10 makes clear, **this passage is primarily a passage about evangelism.**

Therefore, I want to examine it through that lens this morning. And we do, we can see some of the elements of this passage taking on added evangelistic significance. For example, in the fishermen’s boats, we can see emblems of the church that is set out upon a sea that represents the world. In the fishermen, we can see ourselves as Christ-ordained fishers of men, casting out nets that symbolize the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And in the shore, we can see eternity set before us, awaiting the miraculous catch of fish that represents the transformed lives that result from service given in strict and selfless obedience to Christ’s Word.

Thus, whenever we study this fishing mission of these disciples, we are wise to relate what we learn about it to the fishing mission for which we have been made—our mission, as Christ’s ambassadors, to reach out by God’s grace and speak up for His glory so that the lost may hear and believe. You see, what Christ reveals to these fishermen about catching fish is not offered for their sake alone. No, this passage is recorded in Scripture as a message to you and me about a fishing mission of infinitely greater importance. It is left to us for the purpose of instructing us about our mission to reach out to a lost world with the life-changing message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, then, what *does* this passage have to say about our own fishing mission? What is it that Christ wants us to know about the charge He has given us to reach out and speak up for His glory? Well, I believe this passage gives us two

remarkably keen insights into how evangelism works in God's economy. In other words, I believe that, in these verses we see **two essential keys to being successful in our mission as fishers of men.**

However, these two indispensable ingredients of Gospel ministry are not what we might typically think, because when we think about keys to evangelism, we probably expect to see the newest and slickest ministry tools available. But, Christ doesn't offer us those. We might anticipate Gospel gimmicks and gizmos. But, He doesn't offer us any of those either. Well, then, at least we can assume that He gives us a couple of clever acronyms and a dazzling multimedia presentation to share, right? Nope. It's not even that. Now, while there is nothing inherently wrong with any of those tools of evangelism, the evangelistic principles that Jesus offers us here are both far more challenging and infinitely more effective than any such man-made tools could ever be. The two keys to evangelism that He provides in this passage aren't really tools at all. Rather, they attitudes of heart and perspectives of mind that He is calling us to understand and adopt. These two attitudes can, I believe, be summarized in to two simple statements, the first of which is this:

1.) But because you say so...

-- Stephanie's rare talent to remember exactly where random items have been miscellaneously placed

-- Me: "Where is my flash drive?" – Her: "Go look in the bathtub drain."

-- My response to her – "Well, that doesn't make any sense!"

-- In these situations, I have learned to say, "Because you say so..."

This statement is the quintessential statement of faith, isn't it? But, since this statement was the chief focus of last week's message, we are not going to spend as much time on this point this morning. However, it is worth repeating the fundamental biblical truth that these words are at the very heart of Christian living that glorifies God. In this morning's Scripture passage we see that God is seeking people who are determined persevere in obedience to Him regardless of the circumstances. Our God desires people who will obey His Word even when they don't feel like it. He blesses those who will humbly submit to His will even when it doesn't seem to make sense. In essence, biblical perseverance beckons us to live as people who, in every situation and regardless of the circumstances, say, "*But because You say so, Lord...*"

This principle is especially pertinent to evangelism, because if a "Because You say so..." attitude is necessary in anywhere in life, we must confess that it is

especially needed there. Just as Jesus commanded Peter to cast the net again, so He is commanding us to constantly cast out the net of the Gospel. And just like Peter, this command to let down the Gospel net is all too often one that we do not really want to obey. But as we said last week, pleasing God has very little to do with how we feel; it has everything to do with how we obey.

As God's people, we have been given a Great Commission, not merely a good suggestion, and, Lord, forbid that we will ever respond to this critical mission by saying, "Well, maybe when I feel like it..." Rather, let us give glory and praise to God by persevering in faithful obedience to Him. Just as Peter responded to Christ's command to "Let down the nets," so let us respond to the Great Commission in the same way that by saying along with Peter, "But because You say so..." Thus, the first key to successful evangelism is a decision—a resolute determination—to obey to Christ's command. // The Gospel will only go forth from this church when you and I each deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and say, "But because You say so, Lord..."

That statement, I believe, is the first key to effective evangelism. But there is also a second key to effective evangelism that is revealed our Scripture passage, and it is found in a very similar statement—a statement which happens to be the title of this morning's message. Effective evangelism requires us to say, not only, "Because You say so, Lord..." but it also requires us to say...

2.) But because you are here...

- Andy and Jeff at Jubilee Days
- Mike Gallegos
- Andy and Jeff were like Hans and Franz – One on each side
- I felt like Dirty Harry – "Go ahead, punk, make my Jubilee Day..."

As powerful a feeling as that was, as those redeemed in Christ we must know that we have with us a presence of infinitely greater power than that of both of my burly cousins combined. We have been promised by Jesus Christ Himself that He Himself will be constantly with us in our evangelistic mission. He says as much many times, but most notably, Jesus promises His abiding presence with us in direct connection to the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus declares, "*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*"

Do you want to know when evangelism really works? **It happens when Jesus Christ is at the very center of its motivations and operations.** It comes when we reach out and speak up with an attitude that says, “Lord, we cannot do this ourselves, but because You are here...” Listen, we can institute all of the proper policies, we can make countless proactive plans and perform prearranged plots, we can purchase every promotional product and implement perfectly premeditated procedures. We can do all of that and a lot more, but if we do not have the blessing of Jesus Christ, we have nothing at all. In fact, Jesus bluntly tells us as much in John 15:5, when He says, “Apart from me you can do nothing.”

Do not get me wrong here; our obedient efforts are of vital importance. Recall that, although Christ gave the fishermen men the command to lower the nets, He didn’t get in the boat and lower the nets for them. He told them what to do and expected them to obey. Jesus was absolutely the *champion* of their success, but they were still the *channel*. He is the *Master* of mercy, but we are still the *means* by which it is communicated. We must always remember that, in his infinite wisdom, God has chosen to fulfill His perfect purposes through you and me. However, as we do, let us never forget that our lives and ministries consist of fulfilling *His* purposes, in His way, by His strength, never our own.

Therefore, **this statement, “But because You are here,” is extremely important to our passage this morning.** The fishermen we encounter here had spent the entire night working their very hardest and implementing all the best wisdom the world had to offer about catching fish, and yet, still, they caught nothing. Yet the next day, on what seemed like a pointless whim, they caught so many fish that they were astonished to the point of repentance. With that in mind, we are blessed to notice that there was really only significant difference between the miserable failure of their first fishing mission, as recorded in verse five, and their overwhelmingly large catch of fish recorded in verses six and seven. And here is the kicker: worldly wisdom simply cannot account for that miraculous difference. You see, this reversal of fishing fortune had little to do with *how* they were fishing, but it had everything to do with *who* they were fishing with. The secret to their success was profoundly simple. They were triumphant simply because Jesus was in the boat and because they followed His instructions.

As we noted last week, these fishermen had surely seen significant success in the past. However, in this instance, God orchestrated the details of their fishing expedition to teach us the following vital truth about evangelism: **in every aspect of Christian living, evangelism included, Christ is the source of our success.** You see, success never comes by our design; it comes by God’s decree.

We must realize today that victory in evangelism is not the result of our great plans; it is, rather, the product of Christ's gracious presence with us. It comes when Christ is in the boat and we are following His instructions. It comes when we are walking by His strength and serving for His glory. // It comes when we finally deny ourselves and obediently say, "But because You say so, Lord..." // It comes when we finally trust Him enough to say, "But because You are here..."

Let me **conclude** with one last observation. In our verses today, we see that the disciples whom Jesus encountered that day on the Sea of Galilee clearly saw the power of both of these statements, and because of that, their lives would never be the same again. In fact, as we read in verse 11, they ditched their boats on the shore, left everything, and followed Jesus from that day forward. Let me ask you: Are you ready today to trust that God has a plan to use *you* to bring the lost to faith in Christ? // Are you ready today to obey God's call to reach out and speak up about the Good News of Jesus Christ? Are you ready to start fishing for people for the glory of God? Are you ready to say with me this morning, "But because You say so, Lord...?" Are you ready to press on confidently in God's will by saying, "But because You are here...?"

I can guarantee you one thing: If you are really ready to trust God and obey His will your life will never be the same!