

Bailey
11/2/58 J.M.

"Fishers of Men"

Scripture Lesson: - Luke 5: 1-11 (ms)

Text: - Matt 4: 19.

Introduction:- There are always elements of the unexpected in the fulfillment of the promises of God. No doubt the disciples anticipated that Jesus would appear to them under similar conditions and circumstances to that of his appearance at the close of the first Easter day when they were assembled together in a room with the door being shut and suddenly the risen Lord appeared unto them.

We can well imagine that when the disciples arrived in Galilee they immediately assembled in a room in anticipation of the appearance of Jesus. But Jesus did not appear to them in this manner as he had appeared to them when they were assembled in a room at Jerusalem.

I.

As there was delay in the appearance of Jesus there were seven of the apostles who decided to go fishing. They were fishermen by profession. The disciples had toiled all thru the night and had taken nothing. As the day broke upon the Sea of Galilee, these fishermen were tired and hungry and weary. Their eyes were hungry for sleep. It was in this hour amid hunger, toil and discouragement and even defeat in the object of their quest that the risen Christ appeared. By his appearance under these conditions and circumstances Jesus taught his disciples that they may look for and expect his presence amid toil and hunger and the reverses of life. The living Christ can always change defeat and discouragement into victory.

The defeat on this occasion was turned into victory by the disciples catching a great draught of fishes in response to following his instructions.

II.

On two occasions during the ministry of Jesus the disciples caught a great draft of fishes in response to following his instruct-

ions.

On two occasions during the ministry of Jesus the disciples caught a great draught of fishes in response to following his directions. The first of these was during the early ministry of Jesus. After Jesus had taught the people while standing on Simon's fishing boat near the shore, he commanded Simon to launch out into deep water and let down his net for a draught of fishes. Simon responded saying, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." On this occasion Peter was true to the word of Jesus in the face of circumstances that seemed contradictory to his word. When they let down the net they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, so much that the net broke. They beckoned to their partners which were in the other ship to come and help them. So great was the catch that both boats were filled until they began to sink.

Simon was so overwhelmed at this great catch of fishes that he fell at Jesus' feet saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Jesus said to Simon on this occasion; "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men!" When they brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him.

II.

The purpose of this first miracle of Jesus in connection with the catching of the great draught of fishes was to teach his disciples that they were to become fishers of men.

The occasion of the second miracle resulting in a great draught of fishes was toward the close of Christ's earthly ministry during the forty day period between his resurrection and the ascension. His disciples understood that he was reinforcing this lesson that he had taught them before, in connection with the great draught of fishes, that they were to become fishers of men.

III .

There are some very important lessons for us to

learn in connection with the draught of fishes in relation to becoming fishers of men.

I. To become fishers of men we must have the presence of the living Christ. Christ was present on that morning on the sea of Galilee. He appeared in an hour when the situation seemed hopeless in relation to catching any fish. But no situation is hopeless when we have the presence of the living Christ.

We will be confronted with many seemingly hopeless situations as fishers of men. There will be times when our labors will seem to be in vain. We may toil for hours and weeks and even years and the results may seem to be very meager. But we are not to be discouraged when we have the presence of the living Christ. We should ever bear in mind that we are not responsible for results but we are responsible for our faithfulness to the living Christ.

Who then is responsible for the results? The living Christ is the responsible one. The disciples could be faithful to the word of the instructions of Jesus; they could let down the net, but they could not fill it with fish.

We need the guidance of the living Christ if we are to become fishers of men. If we go upon our own charges, if we follow our own instructions, we shall meet failure. The message of Christ in the case of the first draft of fishes was for Peter to cast the boat out into the sea and let down the net. Peter responded that they had toiled all night and had taken nothing, but he said, "Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net!"

III.

In the second case, Jesus instructed the disciple to cast the net on the other side of the ship. This was a very simple thing to do. Some may say could not Jesus have filled the net with fishes from the side of the ship where they had been fishing? Indeed Jesus could have filled the net with fish from that very spot, but Jesus always conditions his promise with something to do. In

In this case it was a very simple thing. It was merely lifting the net and placing it on the other side of the ship. No promise of God is fulfilled without man having a part in that promise in meeting the condition by which it is fulfilled. "We are co-laborers with God." We are partners with God. There is something for us to do in connection with every fulfilled promise. When we work under divine guidance, we are certain to obtain definite results.

Philip was under divine guidance when he overtook the Ethiopian eunuch upon the highway, entered his carriage and propounded to him the message concerning Christ.

Ananias was under the divine guidance when he went to Saul of Tarsus in Damascus who was stricken with blindness, and proclaimed to him the message of Christ.

Conclusion:- There may be vast multitudes all ~~xxx~~ about us who are waiting for someone to cast in ~~x~~ the net, to fulfill the word of Jesus and speak ~~x~~ to them about Christ. The harvest truly is ripe and the laborers are few.