

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, January 22nd, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

**"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."
Third Sunday After Epiphany
Matthew 4:12-23**

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

God, our Creator,
from nothing you made our world.
**You formed us, love us,
and give us all that we need.**

God, our Redeemer,
you rescued us from sin.
**You have given us new life
and hope of healing to the world.**

God, our Comforter,
you are with us always.
**You comfort us, renew us,
and guide us into your truth.**

Almighty God, for your gracious love for us,
we praise you.
Amen.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God, our Creator and Redeemer,
your faithfulness endures forever.
You offer us new life in Christ Jesus and call us to follow him.
You challenge us to bring life and hope to the world you love.
In you we find strength and courage to face every challenge,
until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ arrives.

Faithful God,
you sent Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost
yet it's hard to recognize we have lost our way.
We seek the next new thing instead of your gift of new life.

We follow the trends of our culture rather than Jesus' example.
 Wash over us with your cleansing Spirit,
 and renew our commitment to follow your purposes revealed in Christ Jesus.
 And so we offer our praise and gratitude to you, O God,
 with Christ and the Spirit, as the one True Living God, now and always. Amen.

Opening Hymn #330: "O God, Our Help in Ages Past"

O God, our help in ages past,
 our hope for years to come,
 our shelter from the stormy blast,
 and our eternal home.

Under the shadow of thy throne
 thy saints have dwelt secure;
 sufficient is thine arm alone,
 and our defence is sure.

A thousand ages in thy sight
 are like an evening gone,
 short as the watch that ends the night
 before the rising sun.

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Holy and merciful God,
 in your presence we confess
 our sinfulness, our shortcomings,
 and our offenses against you.
 You alone know how often we have sinned
 in wandering from your ways,
 in wasting your gifts,
 in forgetting your love.
 Have mercy on us, O Lord,
 for we are ashamed and sorry
 for all we have done to displease you.
 Forgive our sins,
 and help us to live in your light
 and walk in your ways,
 for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
 Your sins are pardoned.
 The penalty is paid.
 Thanks be to God.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

Music Ministry: "A Prayer" by Choir

Responsive Reading

Question 116. What is the seventh commandment?

"You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18).

Question 117. What do we learn from this commandment?

We learn that the unique unity of husband and wife in marriage is not to be imperiled or destroyed by the infidelity of either partner.

Lev 18:20, Mt 5:28, Heb 13:4

Question 118. What is the eighth commandment?

"You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19).

Question 119. What do we learn from this commandment?

God forbids that we should take what rightly belongs to someone else. The eighth commandment includes every form of stealing from petty theft to robbery. It condemns bribery, fraudulent business dealings, manipulation of the economic system to the disadvantage of others, particularly the poor, and may be extended to stealing the goods of the generations to come.

Lev 19:13, Mic 6:9-11

Children's Hymn #319: "Wherever I May Wonder"

Wherever I may wonder,
 Wherever I may be,
 I'm certain of my Maker's love;
 God's care is over me.

Throughout the whole creation,
 I see God's loving care

For everyone in every land,
God's children everywhere.

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination **(Congregant Prepared)**

Scripture

Matthew 4:12-23

¹² Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned."

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Ministers to Great Crowds

²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Sermon

I want to share a testimony that I heard given by a man who is now a pastor.

He begins by say that it was when he was just thirteen years old that another young man, someone only three years older than him, said something to him that would change his life

forever. The older boy would say something to the younger, something so powerful that it altered the entire path of his life.

Ask yourself what one sentence is so powerful that it could turn a hardened thirteen-year-old agnostic child, into a faithful believer in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Remember that line was not delivered by a pastor, or a professional evangelist, an elder of the church, or a Sunday School teacher. It was a line spoken to him by another young man just a few years older, and not only that, but also one who himself had just come to faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour!

What do you think that sentence might have been?

I am sure that many of you are racing through ideas in your head right now. Could it have been the scary 'come to Jesus or you will end up in hell' or perhaps the opposite, 'do not worry Jesus love you just the way you are, just accept him into your heart'. Or perhaps it was some other mix or combination of those things.

I will tell you though it was probably the simplest sentence that could be spoken, and one that I know has converted more people to Christianity than any other. The older young man, who just happened to be the soon-to-be pastor's brother simply said, 'Why don't you come to church with me?'

That simple sentence spoken with earnestly to his younger brother forever changed the path of his life. Impacting not just his younger brother's life, but the lives of every person that has heard that story, including you and I.

Our scripture today includes the verse, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' This verse is of great importance and ties into many of the things that we have been examining in the scriptures throughout the past year.

'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' Sounds so simple doesn't it. I am sure that we have all heard this scripture used in a sermon before, I am sure that many of us have been told that we are to be fishers of men when we become Christian.

Yet notice how the line begins, 'Follow me'. This is the first step, the part that we have discussed over the last few weeks, the Holy Spirit being at work in someone and helping them to humble themselves and submit to the Lord God in obedience to God's Law and God's Word.

'Follow me' also means something else that we often forget. When we follow someone we are leaving the place that we are at when we meet them. No one say follow me and then stays in that exact spot. For the men that Jesus was speaking to that day it meant to follow him on his trips all around the region as he preached and healed people.

The older brother in the story I shared had become a follower of God and the Holy Spirit was at work in him, changing him into the man that God wished for him to become. To follow Christ

he had given up many of the things other kids his age were doing, he was not going to all the parties and partaking in all of the sinful pleasure that were happening, instead he was working at the church, taking part in fellowship and helping his community.

To follow Christ he had given up some of those things that he wanted to do, to do those things which he was called to do, and that included being brave enough to invite others to discover the Joy of being a follower of Christ in their own lives.

When he invited his younger brother to join him, it was out of love for his brother, and that was all he had to do, invite him because he loved him. When the younger brother arrived at church everything else was already done. There were people who greeted them at the door and made them feel at home, there was a choir who lead them through songs of praise and worship, there were members of the congregation that led them in prayer and read the Word of God, there was a Minister who spoke on and taught the meaning of God's Word and the importance of it in our lives, who explain that God loves us so much that he died upon the cross for every one of us personally, and that we all matter to him as his children. So much so that even if we manage to make a complete mess of our lives he will always welcome us back with loving open arms. There were brothers and sisters in Christ there, looking to help him grow in his knowledge of scripture and stand with him in fellowship through all the seasons of his life.

At that service there could have been the perfect worship, the most joyful and pious expression of faith in music, the most deep and biblical sermon preached, the greatest fellowship ever dreamed of, and it would have had absolutely no impact on his life if his brother had not said, 'Why don't you come to church with me?'. Without an invitation no one can come to experience the Church of Christ and the salvation that comes in being a follower of Jesus.

George Barna, a Christian Sociologist conducts many surveys on Christians about their faith. In a survey on faith, he discovered that only 64% of Christians feel a need to share their faith with others and out of that group 34% of Christians will not share their faith if they feel it may negatively affect their relationship with a friend or family member.

Yet this is exactly what we are called to do in the great commission, to spread the word of God to every nation, people, and tribe to the four corners of the earth, and that includes our family and friends, and even our enemies.

That follow me, that Jesus calls us to, means that we are separated out of the world and we need to be willing to stand there, alone at times and speak about our faith and our God. It means we need to be willing to stand apart and invite people to our services, our luncheons, our bible studies, because we love them and want them to know Salvation in Jesus Christ. Isn't that the most loving thing you could do for someone?

A few years ago, a man was speaking at a conference on the secret of doubling the size of your congregation. As you can imagine, the room was packed with pastors and elders looking to keep dying congregations alive. Can you guess what the secret was? It was simple, everyone

who attends the church just has to bring one more person along, not 20 people, not 10 people, not even five people. If every person brought one new person along to church the congregation would be doubled. This is what evangelism is, inviting people to church, inviting people to find salvation in Christ. It does not mean that you have to convert them yourself, there are a wide variety of people who preach and teach God's word, you do not even have to make them come here, it is the Holy Spirit that will get at work in their hearts and bring them here and bring them back, but you have to be willing to simply say, 'why don't you come to church with me?'

You see in the scripture we read today Jesus calls on those who follow him to become, '**fishers of men**' not aquarium keepers of men. He calls them to go out and fish for them, not just look after the ones who have already come.

Think about the analogy of fishing, if you want to catch a fish, you have to go fishing. No one has ever been sitting at home, in front of the computer or television and suddenly thought, "WHOA, I just hooked a big one, and reeled in a fish.' If you do not go out fishing, you will never catch a fish. For those of you who prefer a sports analogy Wayne Gretzky said, 'You miss 100 percent of the shots you do not take.'

It does not matter if you are a good fisherman or a bad fisherman, it does not matter if the waters are full of fish or if there are just a few, if you are not fishing you will never catch a fish. The most important part of catching fish is going fishing. So here in the scripture Jesus is telling all of us that we are to follow him and go fishing. We have to go into the world and invite people to discover Jesus in their lives by inviting them to his church and among his people.

However, this fishing analogy does not just end there, when you go fishing you attach bait to the hook, usually a worm. Notice it is not caviar, or filet mignon, it's a simple worm. Many times, when we go out and try to talk to people about God we hesitate because we feel like we have nothing to offer them. We have a worm, not that great steak, or dessert that everyone wants. We feel like we cannot evangelize because we do not know the doctrines well enough ourselves, or we do not know enough scripture, or we do not know enough about church, or our lives are not Christian enough yet. We can list off hundreds upon hundreds of reasons why we cannot evangelize to others, but the truth is to be 'fishers of men' all we need is that worm, we can always offer them an invitation to join us on our Journey of faith by living a Christ like life and someday by simply saying, 'Why don't you come to church with me?'

We do not need to go out and give our full testimony to people, we do not need to go out and convince them to join our church, we just need to live our lives each and every day in a Christ like manner, and when we can, and when we are comfortable, we invite people to church to join us in praising and worshiping the one true living God.

We evangelize because we are called to be fishers of men, called to share the Good News of salvation with the people that are lost in this world. We proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ because we think it is worth knowing about. The reason you invite friends to join you in a hobby, or play a game, or watch a movie is because you want to share the things you love with

others. Inviting someone to church should be the same thing, we invite them because we believe that they have something to gain from the experience. We share our faith because it is worth sharing. We share it because it is good news!

So, what is the good news you share? What is the one reason you would give to others for being Christian. I am not asking you to come up with the perfect answer, just the right answer for you, right now, in this time, and be aware that, that answer may change in the future as you grow in your faith.

Here is a list of reasons that people have given for their faith and why they share the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ. I am sure that each of you will relate to many of these:

Forgiveness – Whatever you have done in your past life, all of your failures and regrets are put to death in Christ, and you are given the chance to be reborn in Him

Peace – Many people say they find peace in Christ, in the chaos of this world there is peace in knowing that God is in control and your eternity is safe in Him. This can give us peace in prayer and in worship even in the worst times of our lives.

Purpose – We matter, we are not just some random scientific accidents that happened, our lives matter to us and to our God. We have value as the sons and daughter of the one true living God.

Plan – God has a plan for our lives, and even when things get rough, and we go through trials and tribulations we can know that God's plan is at work and everything that happens is for the glory of God.

Prayer – We know that we have direct communication with God, we can pray to him at any time, any place and in any situation and he will hear our prayers, and he will answer them according to His will in his time.

Fellowship – We have brothers and sisters in Christ who love us, care for us and seek to help us in our faith journey, helping us grow in our knowledge of God, in our relationship with God and holding us accountable to our words and deeds out of their love for us

Guidance – In a world that is falling apart, where the definition of things can change on a whim, where society is always changing the rules, we have God's guidance in his Scripture which directs all of his people to be set apart from this world and live according to his Word.

Life – Did you all know that 50 years from now everyone here who is a true believer in Jesus Christ as their Saviour will be alive. Sure, we won't all be alive here on Earth, some of us will have moved onto the next stage of life, our time of eternal life in the kingdom of Heaven, but we will all be alive.

Mercy – God knows that we will struggle with our sin, we will have victories and defeats and he will love us and through the work of the Holy Spirit in each of us, move us towards his Sanctification continuously, no matter how many times we may fall, he will always be there to pick us up and help us to continue in our walk with Him.

You may have something else in your mind and that is excellent, we should all have reasons that we love God and things that we want to share with others.

As fishers of men this is our bait, we invite people to join us, no pressure, no need for you to convince them, no need to share your life story or your testimony, just a simple answer as to why you think your faith matters if they ask, and then let the Holy Spirit do the work in them. They may tell you no one thousand times, and that is fine, you have done your part simply by casting the hook into the water. By taking the shot, even though it may never be a goal. By sharing the opportunity to come to Christ even though it may be rejected.

So, as we get ready to close up our worship for today, I want to ask each of you to think about this. Are you willing to share your love of God with others because it is worth sharing?

Ask yourself how many people do you feel you can invite to join you at church this year? Not how many people you will teach about doctrines! Not how many people you will mentor through their journey of faith! Not how many people you will share your witness or testimony with! Not even how many people are going to say ‘yes’ to your invitation!!!

Simply how many people are you willing to invite to church, to begin or perhaps to continue, or even to grow in their relationship with God this year? One a month, one every 3 months, one every six months, or perhaps just one this year, or perhaps you are just going to work on living the most Christ like life you can and have them want to begin their journey to Christ just because they are trying to figure out where your peace and joy are coming from in this chaotic world.

Let us Pray,

Guide Us by Your Word and Spirit

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of almighty God,
 send your Holy Spirit
 into our hearts
 through your Word,
 that he may govern and guide us
 according to your will,
 comfort us in all afflictions and misfortunes,
 lead and uphold us in your truth against all error,
 so that we may stand firm in your love
 and offer ourselves to do good works,

and through the certain hope of your free grace
 be blessed forever;
 with the Father and the Holy Spirit
 you live and reign,
 forever and ever.
 Amen.

Source: Die pommersche Kirchen-Ordnung und Agenda, p. 291

Music Ministry: “Peace” by Trish Warren and Glenda Gould

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #313: “O Worship the King”

Oh worship the King, all glorious above;
 oh gratefully sing God's power and God's love,
 our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
 pavilioned in splendour and girded with praise.
 Thy bountiful care what tongue can recite?
 It breathes in the air; it shines in the light;
 thy mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,
 our Maker, De fender, Redeemer and Friend.

O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,
 while angels delight to hymn thee above,
 thy ransomed creation, in glory ablaze,
 in true adoration shall sing to thy praise.

Pastoral Prayer

God of purpose and promise,
we open our hearts to you in prayer, trusting in your mercy to bear the burdens we carry.

We thank you for the work and witness of your Church,
bringing your Good News into many lives and situations throughout the earth.
Today we pray for congregations that are struggling financially,
for all the churches caught up in conflict,
and for all those church members who are tired and need your renewing Spirit.
Guide them with your grace.

Lord, we thank you for the healing that comes from your hand, O God,
in times of reconciliation when your forgiving love is at work,
and in times when pain is eased and grief is comforted.
Today we pray for those whose emotions are raw,
for those whose bodies are weakened in this winter of sickness
and for any whose minds are troubled in any way.
Give them hope for new life with you.

We lift to you people around the world.
who work for justice and unity to prevail in the midst of division:
in nations where conflict has broken out or repression rules,
in places facing poverty, famine or destruction from disaster,
and anywhere racial and ethnic disparities weaken common life.
We pray for Canada in this time when resentments simmer and differences deepen.
Send your justice to bring relief and your peace to help understanding prevail.

As the followers of Jesus, give us the courage to unite not only in prayer
but also in action for the needs of this world.
Strengthen us to work together, despite our differences,
so others may see what it means to follow you.
We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
As the one true living God,
Now and forever, amen.

Benediction

May our Lord Jesus Christ,
the one who came with grace and truth,
also fill your hearts with grace and truth,
as you serve him in the days ahead.
And may the joy of the Lord—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—
be your strength. Amen