

Devotion on the Miracles of Christ (The First Draught of Fishes) – 7 March 2014, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. 3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. 4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, **Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.** 5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. 6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. 7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, **Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.** 11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him. (Luke 5:1-11)

I hope every reader of this devotion will clear his heart and mind of the rubbish which the world has cast upon your souls and relish the beauty and majesty of today's miracle and its contextual grandeur. It comes very early in the ministry of Jesus and it sets the stage for the fervency of his trusted core of disciples – Peter, James, and John – who also were privileged to be with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. They would never forget this amazing miracle of Jesus and the impression it made upon their hearts doubtlessly was a burning light to their future preaching as apostles.

The setting is spectacular for beauty and peace – the Sea of Galilee (or Genneserat) was the venue of many wonderful events in the life of Christ – events indelibly branded in the memories of His disciples for all time and eternity. But Jesus had not only a memory of past events, but future ones as well. He could foresee the

storms on the Sea, the feeding of the 5,000 on the adjacent mountain. He could remember, long before the event occurred, His breakfast of fishes which he prepared for His disciples on the shores of Galilee following His Resurrection. The lesson which He will teach the disciples is two-fold: 1) Obey God even if His Word makes no worldly sense – it should not make worldly sense since it is not of this world! And 2) The Lord made the seas and all that is in them. He therefore holds sway over the sea and its abundance. The natural laws are subject to His command and suspension.

Jesus is walking on the shores of Galilee when many people who saw Him and recognized Him began to swarm about Him. It is noteworthy that multitudes surrounded Jesus always. He was never alone until He was lifted up on the Brow of Mt. Calvary – that suffering and sacrifice He made alone!

*“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret.”* I can imagine Jesus standing by this beautiful sea admiring the blue waters and verdant shoreline. But the one who made such beauty was often prevented from the solitude needed to enjoy it. The people pressed hard upon Him to hear the Word of God. Would He mix the Word with a bit of humor and attention getters? No, because every Word that Jesus spoke was the Word of God! There are many Words that He spoke that are not recorded. *“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”* (John 21:25)

It sometimes happens that the preacher must get himself apart from the crowds and multitudes in order to preach to them. He cannot be a part of the world if he is to preach of things Holy – so he must make some distance (social, geographical, or spiritual) between himself and his charges. *“And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land.”* The Lord has need of our resources, so these vacant boats were standing by for His use. The Lord could easily have done without them – He could have STOOD upon the water if He pleased – but He allows us to have a part in providing the Manna of Heaven to those about us. *“And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.”* The Master of the Seas taught from the Sea to the people on the shore. His Hand moves in the gales that lift the waves of the sea, as well as in the tiny seed planted beneath the surface struggling to reach the light of the sun.

Action should always follow learning. A characteristic of learning is that effective learning results in a change of behavior. Once Jesus has spoken the Words of God in His sermon to the people, it is time to cast off into the deep. Long before I began elementary school, my Sunday School class was taught the words to a simple little song whose simple little meaning grows in power to my mind as I grow older and mature in my faith. That song was “Deep and Wide.” Its lyrics began: “Deep and Wide, DEEP and WIDE. There’s a River flowing Deep and Wide.” It had reference to the Word of God, and that Word is much deeper than the unfathomed ocean floors. *“The Word of the Lord will not return unto Him void,”* so once we have taken on that Word, it is time to weigh anchor and cast off from the shore. *“Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, **Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.**”* Now this was a strange and unusual command for Peter, a seasoned fisherman. He may have felt tempted to tell Jesus to stick to His theology and Peter would stick to his fishing. There is a Deep of the heart of a Christian. It is made deep by the prevailing Waters of the Word. *“Deep calleth unto Deep”* (Psalms42:7)

*“And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.”* These are the early days of the ministry of Jesus. Peter had not witnessed all that he would later witness of the Power of Christ. So he offers a limp excuse not to obey, but grudgingly does so. Is this not precisely like you and me when God sends us among unpleasant and seemingly defiant sinners? Do we not question being placed out of our clean and proper environments? We have heard the Word preached from Godly pulpits, and we have read the Word regularly (if we are salty Christians) directly from the Fountain of Life – the Bible. If God commands anything that does not seem natural, we must understand that it is because it is NOT natural! In man’s natural state, he is a sinner, lost and depraved. In his regenerate and justified state, he is spiritual and a new creature.

By the way, it is not natural to go fishing in the daylight sun. Peter well knows this. He has fished all night long and caught NOTHING. So this itinerant Rabbi now tells him to launch out into the deep and let down his nets – not for a dry run, but for a draught of fishes! Peter states his case but obeys. Even if we complain before the Lord, in the end, we must be obedient to His Word to procure the fullness of His blessings. *“And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.”* These fishermen had never before caught such a draught of fishes. Their nets were overflowing with the catch – their net broke for the numbers. I wonder what Words Jesus had spoken in His seaside sermon? It may have supported the conclusion of these fishermen that there was a future for them in fishing by listening to the now-Master fisherman! They were right! But not in the sense they may have believed.

Please try to envision the commotion caused by this single draught of fishes. The two boats of the disciples could not hold the catch. Other nearby ships were hailed to come and relieve the burden of the fishes. They, too, were overfilled to the point of sinking. *“And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.”* Would not such a miracle have made a strong and lasting impression on these weather-worn seamen? The number of souls needing conversion far outnumbers the available seats in our churches, yet those seats remain empty Sunday after Sunday.

Simon Peter was a tough fellow. He was strong and self-confident. He was not prone to being subservient to any mortal. Yet, Simon Peter knelt before Jesus and worshipped Him: *“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken.”* The term ‘LORD’ is not used loosely. It does not mean Good Teacher, Master, or Rabbi. It is a title of God. When we confront the power of God, we too must fall upon our knees and reverence Him. We must do, as Peter did, confess our sins and unworthiness. We never cease to be astonished at the works of God in Christ. We should be astonished at the benefits of Christ in our own hearts. All of those seasoned fisherman were likewise astonished. Hearts that are called of God coalesce around the teachings of their Lord. *“And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon.”*

*“And Jesus said unto Simon, **Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.**”* When we understand and obey the Word of God, there is never cause for fear. All these men would become fishers of a different kind. Hopefully, all who read this devotion are fishers of men.

Catching fish is not enough – they must be brought to shore. Simply getting a

verbal confession of faith from a sinner is not enough. They must be brought to safe harbor where they will be nurtured more and more in the love and knowledge of God. *“And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed.”* There is a deep-rooted change of heart that takes place when one has come before the Person and Power of the LORD. Those things of the world that once seemed a priority lose their attraction. The blinding Light of a New Attraction takes the place of those old yearnings. We no longer slave to out-do the Joneses. We no longer set our hearts upon those treasures that will fall away at death, but are drawn to those treasures which we build in Heaven where neither moth nor rust can eat away. We bring every soul within our grasp to land, we forsake all things of the world, and we follow Christ – and Him only! Have you done, Friend?