

Trinity 5

Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. Do not be afraid.

When Peter did this such a large number of fish were caught that their nets began to break; and both boats were filled to the point of sinking.

Imagine this! How many fish would it take to sink two small sailing boats?

Here is a miracle that impresses the world. Who wouldn't want a boatload of fish?

Sadly, this is all that many think about Christ--someone to make you successful.

Turn on the TV or radio and you will hear assorted spiritual hacks teaching Christ as a way to success in business, well-being and relationships.

But none of these calls to follow Christ rise above a boatload of fish.

Jesus, however, brings us to higher ground and greener pastures.

When we do what Christ commands, good things happen—that's clear.

But the real question is: Why so? How you answer this question reveals much.

Is it because Jesus is a spiritual guru? Does His deep knowledge and understanding teach you how to harness God's power for your abundance.

If you think this, although it's important what Christ says, the the real test of Jesus' word is: does it work—does it accomplish what I'm after?

But, what if they caught no fish? What if you do Jesus' Word and are a failure?

Naturally you would say, "That's the last time I follow THAT advice."

When the devil has led you to evaluate Christ's Word and command by the measure of pragmatism, it's easy for him to take the next step and lead you to disobey Him because "*it's not working.*"

Here all kinds of excuses are offered up in order to make it not seem like unbelief.

You might say, "well, that command is certainly good advice for most people, but Jesus is obviously not aware of our present situation.

"I know I'm supposed to attend Church, but it just doesn't DO much for me.

"I know I'm to love everyone, but Jesus can't have known how mean this person is or how much pain they have caused me.

"I know I'm not supposed to bad-mouth others but I need to vent or I'll explode.

This kind of unbelief also lays its trap for Churches.

"We know that Jesus says to 'baptize and to teach all things everthing I have commanded you...,' But it doesn't seem to be working.

We have to do something different. Something more effective also.

As long as we can still do both we will, but if there's a rub, we know what happens.

We face these very temptations every day.

Temptations to say, "Faithfulness to God's Word is a great place to start, but if it no longer works—there must be something that I am missing."

But to say this is to forget that JESUS alone truly catches the fish.

It makes Jesus into a has-been God—one who made the universe or started the Church a long time ago—but who now has backed off and let us take over.

With His work in the past, He is kind of a cosmic observer and a celestial coach.

He gives advice—even mostly good advice—from the sidelines, but doesn't participate in the game.

If you believe this way, you will never understand why Peter reacted as he did.

For "*When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'*"

This is not the way you react to a spiritual guru. No matter how wise...

With these words, Peter recognized that he was in the presence of the Holy God.

Because He is the creator Himself, the Word which Jesus speaks is not only advice, but it is a continuation of His creating work.

As our Redeemer, His words are not only guidance but life and health themselves.

So, when you act according to Jesus' command, you must never consider yourself the REAL fisherman or that you are really doing the work.

Your obedience to His command only makes you a participant in God's work.

Whatever is done at Christ's command is not done by you but by Christ Himself!

When the disciples cast out their nets at Jesus' Word, they were merely the instruments of Jesus' miraculous catch of fish—Peter saw this and believed.

So, when you humbly follow Christ's calling in your life and do as He commands, it is not you or your effort which will yield the increase but Christ is the one who is responsible—He gives the increase *in His time and in His way.*

Therefore, when you disobey God His own work is thwarted and not done.

Consider what would have happened if Jesus said, "I'm not going to go to Jerusalem because I won't be successful there. I know the Father commands me to drink this cup, but I know it will kill me and end my ministry."

Thanks be to God that He didn't think this way! Instead, he put away all self-centered evaluations of God's Word and simply obeyed.

As a result, His suffering and death accomplished your salvation.

If God's command might also result in suffering for you, do you so quickly believe that this will accomplish no good? God forbid! But believe His command!

But how are you to believe this? How can you return to that perfect faith in God?

Here Christ's command to His preachers comes into play.

When Jesus called Peter, James and John (His first pastors) He said, "*Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.*" this, also, is His creative word.

He said, "As you preach and serve the Sacraments according to My Command, don't for a minute think that YOU are saving any souls...

"Know, rather, that it is I alone make you 'fishers of men.'"

Jesus is the one who stands behind "man-fishing" just as He stood behind the miraculous catch. Therefore, you benefit from His divine work today!

Here Jesus is at work to create faith in your hearts—faith that trusts fully in Him.

This kind of faith now gives you the certainty you need to obey God as Christ did.

This faith also saves you because by this faith, you also receive and believe the life and forgiveness that Jesus won for you with His own obedience.

You don't come to (or keep) this kind of faith by the power of a mere man—by some preacher's skill. You are rather netted and brought into the boat by the same Man who filled both boats — the Lord Christ!

Therefore, you have certainty today, that this sermon is wholly sufficient to bring you safely into the holy ark of the Christian Church.

When the Sacrament is here distributed to you according to the command of Christ, "this do in remembrance of Me," it is Jesus Himself who is at work to feed your faith and keep it alive with His own body and blood.

Today, because of Christ's command to His ministers to be fishers of men you are being gathered into the kingdom of God by Christ Jesus Himself. AMEN.