

Feb 11 – Leader’s Guide - Luke 5:10b-26 “Fishers of Men?”

Read Luke 5:10b - 16

1. If you have heard the phrase “fishers of men” before – how did it shape your understanding of what it meant to follow Jesus?

More often than not this phrase gets interpreted as an invitation to the work of evangelism. As a net catches fish, so share the good news of Jesus so that people might be brought out of the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of Jesus.

In no way would I desire that any evangelistic conviction be eroded by this study. Goodness knows there is a lack of evangelistic fervor in the western church. I would hope however that evangelism could be seen as a part of this rather than the sum total of it.

There may be other perspectives of what it means. Take some time to allow people to share their perspective to warm up to the topic and then move on to allow the scriptures to shape your understanding together.

The original language (Greek) translates the phrase – rescuing people for life or liberating them into life. Luke gives us further clarity of what this might mean by sharing at least two stories to help us understand this aspect of following Jesus.

Read Leviticus 13:1-3, 45-46

2. How do you imagine what life was like for the man “full of leprosy”. How would Jesus’ healing of him have transformed his life?

Leprosy, that we now know as Hansen’s disease, was a disease that impacted the nerves. Unable to feel pain meant that people were susceptible to burns and cuts particularly in the fingers and toes that gave the appearance the disease was eating away at the body. When impacting the optic nerve, the disease would lead to blindness.

It was a horrible disease, but the forced quarantine was likely just as if not more so devastating. You were cut off from family, cut off from all human touch and contact, cut off from community, cut off from the spiritual life of your nation, cut off from earning a living.

It was a disease that with the quarantine laws devastated you in every sense of the word – physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially, psychologically, financially etc...

Although Jesus could have healed by any means necessary his personal touch and compassion would have made a huge impact on the man. After the healing, Jesus sends him to the priest. The priest’s job was to confirm that leprosy indeed was no longer present. This would open the door for the man to be reintegrated into his family, his community, and the spiritual life of the nation. This would also open the

door to him once more making a living, giving him the ability to care for his dependants.

3. How does this story help us understand what it means to be a fisher of men – liberating people for full life?

This work is a wholistic work – it involves liberating people to full life – psychologically, emotionally, socially, financially, spiritually etc...

The next question will help give this some “teeth” you may want to press in there quickly with the next question but if your group is already going that direction just follow their lead...

4. How does this story clarifying what it means to be a “fisher of men” impact your life personally as a follower of Jesus? Our life as church?

In the sermon Tim invited some reflection on how our work – our jobs – or what we do with the bulk of our time can be or is already being utilized in service of this work. The core question is how can I as a Jesus following (name your job, or your role) liberate people to full life? There may be great wisdom in spending some time as a group reflecting with one another how our “day jobs” fit into this work of being a fisher of men. For example – as a Jesus following counsellor I am seeking to rescue people from past trauma liberating them to full life – as a Jesus following lawyer I am seeking to foster laws that undergird the full flourishing of all – as a Jesus following artist I am seeking to ultimately point to the beauty of new creation – a future hope for all – How would you fill out that sentence for yourself?

In the west we have often split up this wholistic work of Jesus into left and right. The left leaning church focuses on social justice, the right leaning church focuses on discipleship and evangelism. We often throw stones at one another, condemning one another for not living faithfully as a follower of Jesus. Perhaps the invitation needs to be to work together, to learn from one another the fullness of what it is to follow Jesus. It also invites us to reflect on how we need to grow as a local church to live into the fullness of this calling. This perspective sits behind the motivation to press into matters of Kingdom Justice as a church.

Read Luke 5:14-26

5. Jesus’ work is wholistic in nature but there is priority within it. Luke tells the story in such a way that we see Jesus’ priorities. What were his priorities?

Jesus charges the man healed of leprosy not to tell anyone about it. Why? If word gets out Jesus will be inundated with need. What would be the problem with that? If you had the power to bring such transformation to others, wouldn’t you want to make sure as many as possible were healed? Not if it kept you from the core thing you came to do – the thing that would really help.

Even in this story Jesus in the face of such need just gets up and leaves and spends time with his father. Why does he do this? Well he tells us most notably in Mark 1: 35-39. He didn't come for that – he came to preach the kingdom.

We also see his priorities when in the face of the man needing healing he offers instead the forgiveness of sins.

6. The actions of the paralyzed man's friends reveal what they believe about his deepest need. In Jesus' response we see him reorient us to the deepest need of the human heart – the forgiveness of sins. What is meant by the forgiveness of sins, and in what ways is the forgiveness of sin the deepest need of the human heart?

The forgiveness of sins is not just – remember that lie you told – don't worry Jesus has forgiven you. It is that and far more. It is new life, new birth, a heart of stone turned to a heart of flesh, the transformation of your relationship with God from that of a boss to a Father – the giving of a new identity as a beloved, delighted in child of God – being given an entirely new future.

The forgiveness of sin is essentially the restoring of your true humanity. Who you were created to be as made in the image of God. What could be deeper than that?

7. What do we learn about who Jesus is and what he has come to do from this interaction with the Pharisees?

That he is able to forgive sin because he is God. You can only forgive sin if that sin has been committed against you. All sin is ultimately against God, for it is a rebellion against his rule, it is a marring of the image of God in our fellow creatures when we wrong them.

This conflict with the pharisees ultimately leads him to the cross where he does for us what he does for the man with leprosy. He takes upon himself our sin, our uncleanness and in exchange gives us his goodness, his righteousness, a new identity, a new life, a new heart, and a new future.

8. What most stood out to you in this exploration of what it means to "fish for people"? How will this impact your life personally as a follower of Jesus? Spend some time praying into this for one another.

This is simply a personal reflection question to invite you as a group to be about encouraging one another in the way of Jesus.