

Dirty-Handed Christians...Smell Fishy!

Luke 5:1-11

September 22, 2019

To everyone here this is simply a fishing rod and Penn reel. To me it is 50 plus years of fishing memories with my dad. This fishing pole and reel are over 50 years old. Recently I had a fishing friend of mine clean it up and see if it could become fishing functional again. He tried. It's nice and clean. However, it is no longer able to be used to catch fish unless some missing parts are ordered.

Many Saturday mornings, early Saturday mornings, I held this rod and reel in the bow of a small fishing boat with my dad in the rear at the little outboard engine. For hours we would slowly troll along the shores of Lake Eloise in hopes of catching the lunker large mouth bass. We rarely came back to the dock of Rainbow Basin without some bass and the smell of fish. Dad had learned from his dad and he was passing on to me his passion for fishing.

I remember one moment that stands out to me when dad took off from work early so we could go out one afternoon to fish. We caught some smaller bass before we returned to the dock to get some snacks. Dad looked at me and said, "Now lets go back out and catch the big one!" I was tired and ready to go home, but I listened to dad and got back in the boat. It was about 30 minutes later that I hooked a 7 lb. bass!!!

We fished offshore for Tarpon, one of which I caught at the age of 8 that hangs in my office. We caught snook and trout in the rivers and even salmon on Lake Manistee in Michigan. My dad was the only executive in his company that would go with the blue collar factory workers on the company's annual charter boat fishing trip. He taught me on those fishing trips the joy of being with others, no matter who they were in life.

This rod and reel, although I will no longer use it to catch fish, will always be my reminder of a father and son who shared many moments of life together fishing, catching, learning life lessons and simply enjoying time together.

Today, we are going to get in the boat and go fishing with a dirty-handed Christian by the name of Peter. He was a commercial fisherman who one day met Jesus and everything changed.

Peter's fishing boat was pulled up on shore after a long night of nothing. He and his crew had fished all night with nothing to show but empty nets. Jesus was teaching and the crowds grew along the shore. He stepped into Peter's boat and used it as a floating pulpit.

After teaching, Jesus asked Peter to take him out fishing. Peter was dog tired and the last thing he wanted to do was to row back out to cast heavy nets. He told Jesus about his "night of nothing." However, Peter said to Jesus, **"But if you say so, I'll let out the nets."** (Luke 5:5)

Peter threw the first net and started to pull up what he thought would be another net of nothing when all of a sudden the net pulled back. It was a full and overflowing net of fish that filled both of his boats.

Peter learned a lesson, a faith lesson, the day after his night of nothing. He learned to listen to Jesus. He also learned humility. He told Jesus, **"I can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself."** Peter and his whole fishing crew were in awe. They had just been through a night of nothing and now they couldn't handle the haul of fish. From a night of nothing to a smelly fish reality.

This is where Peter's fishing career ended...on the biggest catch of his life. It would become a memory of when Jesus called him to a different fishing career. He was now being called to fish for people. They got the boats to the shore and Peter followed Jesus.

What's the first "smell fishy" lesson of life can we catch?

In the night of nothing came a life of something!

Out of a night of nothing came a call to something!

Peter was tired. The last thing he wanted to do was to go back out into a sea of nothing.

Has anyone ever smelt "a night of nothing?" You are tired from the day in and day out of life with nothing really to show. You are ready to quit. You are tired of it all. In the night of nothing you are wondering if this is all there is to your "career."

Then Jesus comes along and steps into your world. He asks you to cast your net one more time. You are humbled and afraid. Who are you to have Jesus in your boat? And this is where we need to hear Him tell us not to be afraid. He is calling you to join His crew and become a dirty-handed Christian that smells fishy. He is calling you to go and fish for people.

Who me?

That would have been Simon's response when he first met Jesus, before the fishing trip. Simon was Peter's name before Jesus changed his name to Peter. Here is how it happened. Andrew, Simon's brother, introduced Simon to Jesus. (John 1:35-42) When Jesus met Simon he told him that from now on his name would be Cephas or Peter which means "rock."

What was going on here? Jesus not only saw Simon Peter for who he was, a fishy smelling commercial fisherman, but He also saw who Peter would become...the leader of the Early Church...the Rock! Peter would not become the strong follower and leader overnight. Peter had to see in himself what Jesus was seeing in him...a fisher of people.

What's the "smell fishy" lesson of faith can we catch here?

Jesus sees not only who we say we are, but He can see who we can become in Him.

Can you see the person Jesus sees in you?

Or do you let others tell you who you are?

Who do you listen to?

Dirty-handed Christians smell fishy by being the person Jesus sees in them!

This change, this newness of life, doesn't just happen overnight. It begins out of a night of nothing. It starts by seeing the person Jesus sees in you. It then goes further..it goes DEEPER!

When Peter really didn't want to go back out fishing after that night of nothing...Jesus told him to "go deeper!"

To go deeper meant to work harder, even when he was tired.

Peter doubted they would catch anything. However, **he didn't stop at his doubts. He went deeper.**

There would be times in the three years that Peter and the disciples followed Jesus that they would question Jesus, be afraid of where He was leading them, and have to face threats. Peter would deny his affiliation with Jesus. The disciples would desert Jesus at his arrest. (Mark 14:48-50, 66-72)

Jesus answered them by telling them not to be afraid of their doubts, fears, and pains in life. He told them in this godless world they would have those nights of nothing, the struggles of being tired and defeated in life, but take heart, He would conquer them all. (John 16:33)

The disciples grew in their faith and they eventually all rose out of that dark night of nothing of Jesus' crucifixion into the deep love of resurrection life! Tradition tells us that they all gave their lives fishing for people for Jesus.

What "smell fishy" lesson of faith do we find for us?

Change! Go deeper! How we often run from it. We don't like it.

It often means pushing out into deeper waters of life. It is hard work to go deeper, to grow in our faith. We have our doubts, fears and struggles. Jesus is there! He has overcome all that! Don't stop at your doubts, fears and struggles. Go deeper! Grow! Don't stay in your night of nothing. Look for Jesus. Listen to Him tell you to go deeper! Discover the true joy of smelling fishy for Jesus as you go deeper with Him.

But it can be so hard! That's where a fishing guide can be of tremendous help!

I have a friend, Capt. Dave, who made a big life change from running citrus harvest crews to being a professional fishing guide in Mosquito Lagoon. Dave and I are good friends. We have spent many an hour fishing, shrimping and gigging for flounder. In fact, the day of my wedding, he and I headed out to the lagoon to fish. The wedding was at 2p.m. Guess what time I got back to the house? 1p.m. smelling sooooo fishy!

What? We had one of those days! I caught a 9 pound trout...a gator trout. Dave was my best man in Loreen and mine's wedding. Later on in the wedding reception video he made the comment, "I put my buddy Ken on two beauties today!"

Captain Dave had a saying each time we would head out on a fishing trip, "Let's get this boat smelling fishy!"

A boat that smells fishy is a boat that is in the water with a guide willing to go where the fish are. It is a guide willing to do what it takes to get fish in the boat. It is a guide who has the patience it takes to get fish in the boat.

What smell fishy lessons can we get in our boat of fishing for people?

Fishing for people for Jesus is often called "witnessing for Jesus." The first question we need to ask is, "**Are we willing to get our boat smelling fishy?**" You can't catch fish for Jesus if your boat isn't in the water. Are you willing to get your life in the water to witness for Jesus? You can't catch fish unless you are willing to go where the fish are.

Do we just stay around the dock waiting for fish to come to us or are we willing to go deeper?

Are we willing to do what it takes?

Are we using artificial bait or are we being real with people?

Are we coming across like frozen bait or are we fresh and alive with them?

Are we willing to pay the price of being a dirty-handed Christian smell fishy witness for Jesus?

Are we patient? Are we willing to continue to share Jesus' love with people who want nothing to do with His life-changing love?

Will we trust Jesus, as our Guide, to go deeper, even after a night of nothing?

After that dark night of nothing of His crucifixion, the disciples thought their fishing days with Jesus were over. Jesus resurrected their hopes when He appeared to them in the upper room of fear. He offered them His peace. Thomas missed Jesus. He doubted what the others told him. Jesus appeared a week later and do you remember what Jesus told Doubting Thomas to do? "Look at my hands!" (John 20:26) Jesus' hands revealed the mark of crucifixion...the mark of love and new life. Thomas believed.

Later, not sure how much later, Peter decided to go back to his old life and to go fishing. Others joined him. They fished all night. Guess what they caught? A night of nothing.

Guess who appeared? Jesus! Although at first they didn't recognize him standing on the shore. (John 21:1-19)

He called out to them from the beach as they were rowing to shore, "Catch anything?" Peter had to say what any fisherman hates to say, "We got skunked! Nada! Night of nothing!"

Jesus told them to try the other side of the boat. They did!

Guess what happened? Same thing as the first night of nothing... nets full of fish! They were not strong enough to pull the nets into the boat. It was then that John told Peter it was Jesus on the shoreline. Peter jumped overboard and swam to the shore.

Jesus had a fish fry! He also asked Peter three times if he loved Jesus. Peter affirmed his commitment to Jesus as his guide in life. Jesus told him to go and witness of his resurrection love to the lost.

Jesus had promised His Holy Spirit would give him power to do so. (Acts 1:8)

The disciples were called to go and fish for people for Jesus in the waters of Jerusalem, Samaria and the ends of the earth.

Simon....Peter the Rock...did that. Tradition tells us he was crucified for his witness and was hung on a cross upside down.

What "smell fishy" lessons can we discover anew for you and me? Look at your hands? Are they dirty? Are you willing to smell fishy for Jesus whose hands bore the mark of death for you? After following Jesus are you tired and wanting to go back to your old way of life?

Do you love him? Serve him! Fish for him!

The power from the Holy Spirit is not limited to strength beyond the ordinary. That power involves the courage, boldness, confidence, insight, ability and authority we need to be His fishing crew for people. We need His power to share Jesus in the waters of life He calls us to. The Jerusalem...the people close to us. The Samaria...people who are different than us...ends of the earth... wherever life may take us.

Witnessing is not showing what WE can do.

Witnessing is TELLING/SHOWING, what JESUS has done for us and through us.

Witnessing involves listening to Jesus' plan and being obedient to whatever side of the boat we are to cast our nets from.

Witnessing calls for a desire to serve Jesus over my own desires.

Witnessing is showing the light of Jesus' love when people are in a night of nothing.

Witnessing is coming alongside a person who is tired from the life they have been living.

Witnessing is willing to smell fishy for Jesus.

It's time to fish!

It's time to get smelly...to smell fishy!

Can you imagine walking into Bath and Body works and ask the sales associate if they have a candle with the aroma that smells fishy? Can you imagine the look you would get?

If there was a candle, or better yet a hand cream, that smells fishy what would be the ingredients?

We have listed many of the smell fishy ingredients. The Apostle Paul, a great fisherman of people for Jesus, shared his passion with a young fisherman, Timothy. He passed on these smell fishy ingredients:

"...proclaim the Message with intensity; keep on your watch...challenge...warn...and urge your people. Don't ever quit. Just keep it simple." (II Timothy 4:2 Message bible)

As we light that smells fishy candle or put the smells fishy hand cream on can we ask ourselves:

Whose message am I proclaiming? Jesus or me?

How am I sharing His love? Weakly or with surety?

Am I fishing where HE has sent me?

Am I challenging the people with God's truth?

Am I warning them that there will come a day of judgment?

Am I urging people to Jesus with acts of love and compassion?

Have I quit after a night of nothing?

Am I making accepting Jesus' love something complicated or simple?

It's time to fish!

Half the people who have ever lived are alive today and most of them don't know Jesus! The fishing report is greater than ever!

Are you willing to smell fishy for Jesus?

Are you willing to be real for Jesus?

People want a personal review and not some info commercial with some paid actor portrayal.

They want to check the reviews of dirty-handed Christians who smell fishy with the life changing love of Jesus.

Will you give them that personal review or will you give them a pre-rehearsed script?

Why smell fishy?

Jesus is coming again!

Jesus wants to find His followers dirty-handed and smelling fishy.

Jesus wants to find his dirty-handed followers fishing for Him!

Jesus calls you and me to tell people:

- who are lost in life there is a way to new life.
- who have listened to lies there is a Truth in life.
- who feel unloved there is someone who loves them.
- who are in a night of nothing there is hope of a new day.
- who are tired of life...there is One who sees in them more than they can see in themselves.

It's time to go fishing for Jesus!

Do you smell fishy?