

“How to Fish like a Pro”

January 21, 2018

**Our Savior’s Way
Worshipping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Bill Mann**

I used to be a fisherman. I’ve caught some pretty nice fish. In fact, one time when I was fishing up in the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota--it was evening. The sun was going down. We had pulled the canoe up on this little pile of rocks in the middle of the lake ... (but that’s a fish story and you don’t need to hear it). I’ll just say, “We caught 24 walleyes in about five minutes.” Just saying. I’m a fisherman at heart. I guess this is why I’ve always been intrigued by our Gospel for today. It’s the story of Jesus calling his first disciples.

They say when you recruit a team you want to begin with people who have something in common. Jesus’ first four disciples were all fishermen. The first two recruits--Peter and Andrew were brothers. The next two recruits--James and John were brothers. And all four were fishermen. And all four were friends with one another. Four new recruits. They don’t need to explain themselves to each other. They understand one another right away. The core of the team. Later on, Jesus is going to introduce some diversity into the team. Remember the name of the disciple Jesus recruits next?—Matthew—a tax collector. Can you think of anyone more opposite—four guys who own their own fishing business, plus a tax collector. But, for today, we just have Peter and his brother Andrew, James and his brother John—the four fishermen. Why else do you think Jesus uses a fishing metaphor to teach them what they’re going to do—“Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” I want to give you a

better idea of what we're talking about, so here's a short video about two Jewish fishermen on the Sea of Galilee.

How many fishermen do we have here this morning?—Not many. I guess before we can talk about this passage we need a lesson in fishing. Where do you learn how to fish?—on the internet, course. On “WikiHow” there are four steps to becoming a successful fisherman. (And remember, we're not just talking about fishing for fish. We're talking about fishing for people.)

STEP #1 Learn how to fish. Learning proper fishing techniques is key to becoming a good fisherman.

On the video you saw the fisherman on the Sea of Galilee using nets. Don't do that in Virginia. Nets are illegal. Plus you need a license. But first get yourself a fishing pole, a hook, a line, and a sinker. It also helps to have a bobber. Oh, and we also need bait. The fishing pole gets the bait out there. Our fishing pole is the courage and the confidence that Jesus is the answer to the problems people face in the world. The fishing line is the connection we have to God through prayer and His Word. The bobber gives us a sense of when people are ready. All fishermen needs patience. We need to wait and listen and not give up. And we need a hook. The hook is the goodness of God and the forgiveness of sins which is ours in Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross and he rose from the dead. Jesus did that so that we can have a better life right now and an eternal life with him in heaven. That's the grace of God.

STEP #2 Go where the fish are. If you are learning to fish it is important to begin by exploring local ponds, lakes, rivers, and streams.

When I was a kid my Dad had a boat. On weekends he would take my brother and me out fishing. We would hit the local lakes. Our favorites were White Bear Lake and Big Marine Lake. We had the good fishing spots marked. We made sure we were in exactly the right spot by lining the boat up with landmarks on the shore. Now, of

course, you can use GPS and sonar to find the fish, but the principle is the same. Go where the fish are.

Going where the fish are often requires us to get out of our comfort zones. Have you ever been ice fishing? Cut a hole in the ice, stand out there on the lake in below zero weather with the wind blowing and hope you catch a fish. (I had a rule. It had to be at least 20 degrees above zero before I would get out on the ice.)

Over the years I've listened to a lot of advice about fishing. If it's a hot day you won't catch any fish. If it's a full moon you won't catch any fish. If it's after a hard rain you won't catch any fish. Fisherman argue about this stuff, but there's one thing they don't argue about—if you don't get out on the lake or the river or the ocean, you are certainly not going to catch any fish. A lot of people have the idea that being a Christian is all about coming to church on Sunday morning. But folks, this is the fishing “clubhouse.” If you want to catch fish, the fish are out there and you gotta go out there where the fish are. If you're going to be a serious fisherman, sometimes you have to get out of your comfort zone.

STEP #3 Join a local fishing club. A great way to learn from other anglers while socializing is by joining a local fishing club.

As I said, “This is the fishing clubhouse.” It's a good place to be. We can talk to one another about fishing. We can get all kinds of good advice from other fishermen and women and find out where the fish are biting. Here are some things that I've learned from other fishermen over the years. (1) Go places where you know you will have a positive impact and where people need to hear the message. Go even when it's uncomfortable. (Remember ice fishing!) Talk about the Lord and His goodness even when it seems people don't want to hear it. (2) Go to new people. Maybe you've been talking to someone for years and years and praying for them with no result. Good for you, but maybe there's a full moon or maybe there's been a hard rain recently. Go to a new place with new people and try to fish there. Every fisherman knows there comes a time to pull up the

anchor and move to a new spot. Do you remember what Jesus said?—“Throw your nets on the other side of the boat.” (3) And finally, while you’re fishing, pray. Pray that the Lord will open the heart of the person you’re talking to. Pray that the Lord will open your eyes to new opportunities. Pray that the one that keeps getting away will experience the tug of the Holy Spirit and be caught by the grace of God.

STEP #4 Don’t give up. Every fisherman has a bad day. It just deepens the appreciation of the sport.

Do you know what they say when fisherman doesn’t catch any fish?—It’s called “getting skunked.” Nobody wants to get skunked. And no real fisherman ever gets skunked. They just run out of time and have to quit early. But it is easy to get discouraged if people don’t respond to the message of the Gospel. Do you think Jesus ever got discouraged? Maybe not in the same way we do, but Jesus certainly wept over the people of Jerusalem and Jesus got angry with the money-changers in the Temple, and in the last hours before he was arrested and crucified Jesus cried out, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.” (Mark 14:34) The real question is not do fishermen get discouraged. The real question is—“What do you do when you do get discouraged?” My advice is—turn to God and His Word. Let this Word of God be written in your heart--“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9) And God bless! I’ll pray that you catch lots of fish.