

When Jesus Catches You

(Luke 5:1-11 – Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on February 6th, 2022)

I don't know about you, but as far as fishing is concerned, I am hopeless. I can remember only going fishing about four times in my life. I think each time I had about as much success as Simon Peter and his colleagues had had during the night in our story from Luke today.

The first fishing expedition I went on, was with my Dad and brother on the banks of the river at Lorne. Dad had cast our lines for us into the river. Mum sat in the car at the top of the bank reading. We sat by the river for what felt like an eternity with our lines just dangling. I thought I would try and find out about the finer points of this craft so started to talk - you can imagine my popularity! I was told very promptly that such noise would scare any fish away and that if I wanted to stay I would have to remain quiet. Then I thought something tugged at the line, I was getting a little excited and loud. As I wound the line in I found it was a snag. Being somewhat of an expert by now I decided I would cast my own line. Dad put the worm on the hook (I couldn't bring myself to do this bit) and I threw my line in. Immediately I felt a strong pull on the end of the line, after a quick investigation I soon discovered I had cast my line into the tree above me. I guess it was both the humiliation and the quietness that sent me back to the car.

My next fishing expedition was quite a long time after the first. It was a great deal more successful however, or so I thought. This time I caught a little Rainbow Trout. You can imagine my excitement. When we investigated it, my Dad told me, I had to throw it back as it was under size. I still do not believe his theory that the fish was already dead and had just by luck been snagged by my line.

The third time was at the river near where my grandparents farmed; desperate to impress them I followed the rules. I sat and waited quietly and patiently. Then I felt a gentle tug on the end of the line. I began to reel it in, it was a big one, heavy, I needed help, finally as it emerged from the water, I realised it was a big old log - my grandmother had never heard me swear until that day, and I am certain she did not approve.

My final fishing expedition was in adulthood. I was away camping with friends and one evening we were sitting on the riverbank fishing. This time I was patient and quiet, this time I caught an eel - finally success, which had nothing to do with patience and my wanting to impress a particular young man so was trying really hard, no, the river was teeming with eels!

I could only imagine what went on in Simon Peter's mind when Jesus told him to go deeper into the water, put out his nets and try for some fish again. Why would you go out again, especially when the conditions for fishing are now even more undesirable and you are very tired. Perhaps it is because Simon Peter is exhausted and not keen to argue after fishing all night without success that he launches out, just hoping the lake might now be teeming with fish. Or perhaps there was just something about Jesus?

I wonder if Simon Peter was just a little bit interested in what Jesus was teaching as he finished up for the night. He has no problem it seems in letting Jesus take his boat. He

lets Jesus take the boat out into the water so that he can teach the crowd a little bit more easily. Did Simon Peter know that this act would lead to a chain of events that would change his life forever?

How would you make yourself known to a fisherman who has spent the night working for naught, who has nothing to take home in order to provide for his family? You would show or provide him with the seemingly impossible - a huge haul of fish, that would be sure to get his attention. That is of course what the story tells us Jesus did.

After the crowds dispersed, Jesus meets Simon Peter on his terms. For whatever reason Simon Peter does as Jesus says and goes out a little deeper with significant results. Sure, there were a lot of fish, but there is more. Jesus catches Simon Peter in some way.

This capture happens in the normal course of events in his life. Jesus is not only revealed as a great teacher and miracle worker, but as one who works miracles for him, as one who encounters him on his own turf. This encounter with Jesus is so compelling for Simon Peter, that when he is asked to leave everything behind to follow Jesus and change his occupation, he has no hesitation in leaving all he knows. He is ready to follow him without knowing the destination.

Jesus calls us out into deeper water too; he calls us to reach out and catch people up in the love of God in this place in 2022.

To continue the fishing metaphor, I think we get a bit of a job description for following Jesus.

First, you need to know the type of fish you intend to catch in order that you might have the correct equipment - bait, lines and place yourself in the correct place. In order to connect with people, we need to understand our times and what it is that makes people tick.

Secondly, we need to know the weather, the tide and storm information. Knowing the tides will teach us the best time to fish. Similarly, we need to know what the fads and culture is, what the ebb and flow in society is if we are going to be relevant.

There are many places you can fish - ocean, surf, from rocks and piers, in rivers and lakes. We need to choose our place, where are we going to operate in a more concentrated fashion. In other words, who will we choose to share God's love with – the elderly, troubled youth, the homeless and unemployed, the asylum seekers. No doubt a good fisher person can fish anywhere, but I suspect they know which place they enjoy most and where they connect best.

Fisher people take safety precautions. They wear appropriate clothing, have distress signals, hopefully know how to swim and will have told someone where they are and when they expect to return. Our safety precautions include prayer, study of the word, study of society and the support of each other.

Simon Peter and his colleagues were mending their nets after a long night out fishing. They knew the value of good preparation. They knew that successful fishing was hard work sometimes seemingly without return.

Finally, successful fishing takes patience and quietness.

When Jesus catches us, he calls us to follow. When Jesus catches us, something amazing happens. When Jesus calls us he reminds us not to be afraid, as he is with us. So, go out into the world following him and share his message of love and peace. Go with the courage of Simon Peter to leave all that is familiar and go out into the deep places proclaiming all we have learnt from Jesus. Amen.