
The Call is to Fish

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Dean Sam Candler**

We are in the middle of winter, and the gospel for last week talks about going fishing. Jesus said to two of his first disciples (Andrew and Simon Peter), "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

Fish don't bite much in the winter time. The winter time is when the good fisherman rests inside by the fire and sorts out her tacklebox. He saunters into the outfitters shop and looks at new rods and lures. Maybe he watches a television show about catching largemouth bass in Louisiana.

But you can also come to church, and hear Jesus talk about going fishing. The Bible is full of fishermen, and it even includes a story that takes the fish's point of view. In the story of Jonah, it is the fish who goes fishing. The fish goes humaning! It is a fish, a whale, who catches the disobedient prophet, Jonah. (The Bible, remember, likes to take opposite points of views.)

However, Jesus was inviting his disciples not to a sense of fulfillment, but to a task. He was not saying, "Follow me, and I will show you where there are thousands of fish!" He was not saying, "Follow me, and I will make you rich." Or, "Follow me, and you will have the answer to every question you have ever asked." Jesus was not offering them fish. He was offering them the activity of fishing.

Jesus does not offer the fish in his original call. Jesus offers the activity of fishing. He offers the journey. Yes, I like to come to church in the winter time, and hear Jesus invite me to go fishing. It makes me realize that there are many ways to go fishing. With a cast net, by yourself, or with a long seine net, and twenty friends. With a casting rod, a fly rod, or a bamboo rod. Without a boat, in a canoe, in a huge trawler. Even when I do not catch anything, it sure is fun.

There are as many ways to fish as there are ways to spread good news. We all have different ways to spread good news, but each of us is called to the same task. Spread good news. Fish for people. With words and without words. With sound and with silence. With modern music and with ancient music. With choral music at the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta, and with guitars and drums somewhere else. There are as many ways to spread good news as there are ways to improvise at the piano, over and over again. Whether anyone is listening or not. Whether I catch anything or not.

The call is to fish, whether I catch anything or not. The call is to sing, whether anyone is listening, or not. In the summer or in the winter. It is that practice, that discipline, that journey, that creates the gospel of love and justice. God will provide the fish, the people, in God's time.



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