

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

CATCH OF THE DAY

Matthew 4:12-23

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Analysis by Kris Wright

12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 15 "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.' 18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.' 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

DIAGNOSIS: FISHING HOLE

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Casting Our Nets*

Casting and mending, mending and casting, the fishermen sit by the sea, the “old fishing hole” doing what they do every day of their lives, day in, day out: casting out their nets, hauling in the catch (if they’re lucky), sorting, selling, mending. Peter, Andrew, James and John, fishermen, casting their nets in the shallows; it isn’t exciting or glamorous, but it puts food on the table. Such is life in Galilee of the Gentiles, the “people who sat in darkness.” Life is a good catch of fish. This is a livelihood, but ...

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *It’s Not a Life*

While there may be food on the table and stomachs may be full, there is a deeper hunger that fishing in the shallows won’t satisfy, a hunger in the heart that goes unfulfilled. There is a hunger for food that will last, food that feeds the spirit and not just the body. There is a faith-hole, a void that fishing harder or longer with the same old nets will not fill. So the fishermen are left casting about aimlessly in the wrong ways, seeking in all the wrong places, searching for passion and purpose – wholeness. This is no life.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Caught in Our Own Nets*

Those who insist on making their own living, casting their own nets, choosing their own fishing holes, God will “deliver them up” to their own desires. He will leave them to their vain attempts to satisfy their hungers, physical and spiritual, with whatever their nets drag in. There are those who sit “in darkness,” who “dwell in the region and shadow of death” (v. 16). They are caught in their own nets, and there they will

drown in the old fishing hole, the kingdom of death.

PROGNOSIS: FISHING WHOLE

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *Jesus Goes Fishing*

“A light has dawned in the region and shadow of death” (v. 16). Jesus, the beloved Son himself, descends into the old fishing hole of death. “He descended into hell, and on the third day rose again and ascended into heaven.” By the cross and his death, Jesus walks the region and endures the shadow of death. He comes to judge with mercy and with promise of a new kingdom, one not in the shadow of death, but in the light of the Most High. He comes casting his Father’s net, the kingdom net, to catch those in the hole of death and draw them up to new life, to health and wholeness.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Caught in God’s Net*

All their fruitless casting about for health and wholeness, for someone to fill the void, is over. Jesus sees the hunger of their hearts, and he feeds them with himself, body and blood. He creates in them the faith-fullness they have been seeking. They are caught in his net of love, and he will not let them go. They are filled and empowered with and by his passion. Now this is Life.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Casting God’s Net*

Jesus gives them new purpose for their everyday lives. He calls them and makes them “fishers of people.” And having fallen helplessly, hopefully in love, the fishermen leave their own nets, their boats, their father, their old lives behind and follow Jesus. Throughout Galilee and beyond they will follow, doing as Jesus did, preaching, teaching, healing among the people. The kingdom of God is, indeed, at hand. This is The Life!