

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Fishing for Life

Mark 1:14-20

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Analysis by Peter Keyel

14Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." 16As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. 17And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

DIAGNOSIS: Trapped in the Grind

Step 1 Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *We're Just Fisherfolk*

Life is hard. All you can do is work and try to keep food on the table, and maybe save a little extra. Simon, Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee aren't any different. Certainly there are injustices in the world; what the Romans don't take in taxes, Herod's men do. That's not even counting all of the other

ugliness and horrible things that happen every day. But it's not the first disciples', nor our, job to fix things. We've got jobs and stress of our own.

Step 2 Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *We Won't Fix Anything*

Even if it was the disciples' job, it's not like there's anything they could do to fix the problem anyways. They're just fishermen, and probably couldn't even read. How are they going to convince Herod, let alone the Romans, to enact any kind of social justice? What's the point in even trying? Likewise, we can't really do anything about the injustices we face, so what's the point in trying? Our hearts aren't really in it. About the only thing we can fix are nets.

Step 3 Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *We'll Die*

John the Baptist is the best example of this. He got arrested because he tried to change things. He fought the Law and the Law won. And he was a professional! Even if we did try, we'd just end up like him, arrested, executed, without putting a dent in Pharisaical power. Problem is, we're accountable to God. A tough life ending with death is what we've earned for ignoring the plights of others. Either way, we're dead.

PROGNOSIS: Freed to Follow

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Jesus Died for Us*

But here comes Jesus, with his call of "Follow me". With the disciples, the Pharisees, and everyone else, we follow Jesus' ministry as he puts not just his heart into the change he promises, but invests his very life. It looks like he's just another John the Baptist, crushed by the system of Law he is trying to change. But then God raises him from the dead! The system has been changed, forever, and to a much greater extent than we believed could be possible because we are included in this new system. Death is no longer our final certainty! We have

been freed!

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Jesus Fixed Us*

The encounter with Jesus leaves the disciples and us forever changed. In their eagerness to answer his call, they leave everything behind: job, family, and possessions. Death and the daily grind no longer rule them or us. Our hearts are now in it, because we have the certainty that injustice will not be our final word. New life in the resurrection is now our final certainty. Jesus has made us “fishers of people.”

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *We’re Fishers of People*

The rest, as they say, is history. The first disciples’ catch is known to us through Scripture, historical witness, legends, and the institution we call the church. Today we, too, will catch people, using the same baits and nets Jesus gave us: forgiveness of sins, love, and mercy. It’s still not really our job, so much as our all-consuming hobby. The best part about this new hobby is that we can practice it everywhere. Through it, injustices are ended and beautiful things are done.