

FISH STORIES AND GOD'S STORY

(Jonah 3:1-5, 10)

(Mark 1:14-20)

Intro: Today we have fish stories.
-One fishier than the next.

I. Jesus And His First Disciples (Mark 1:14-20).

A. Jesus' First Words.

1. Parents celebrate firsts with their children.
 - a. First steps.
 - b. First words.
2. Sophia.
 - a. First words.
 - Daddy.
 - #She figured out the "D" sound before anything else.
 - Mommy.
 - Baby.
 - b. Now she's also figured out:
 - Ball.
 - Me.
 - More.
 - No.
 - #She's not even two yet.
 - *But she's got "no" figured out.
3. Jesus' first words as a toddler aren't recorded.
 - a. Abba.
 - Daddy.
 - b. Ema.
 - Mommy.
4. Jesus' first public words as recorded in Mark's Gospel:
 - a. "The time is fulfilled."
 - b. "The kingdom of God has come near."
 - c. "Repent."
 - d. "Believe in the good news."
 - Mark 1:15.
5. These are significant words.
 - a. Time.
 - God's time.
 - God's opportune moment.

- b. Kingdom of God has come near.
 - Not:
 - #Place.
 - #Heaven.
 - #Here.
 - But:
 - #Rule.
 - #Reign.
 - *Of God.
 - +There's a new sheriff in town.
 - +There's a new world order.
 - =World will never be the same.
- c. People will never be the same.
 - Keep on repenting.
 - #Keep on changing your ways.
 - Keep on believing in the good news.
 - #Good news was often a message from the battlefield.
 - *"Victory."
 - *"We won."
 - #God's good news.
 - *Embodied message of God's:
 - +Love.
 - +Mercy.
 - +Forgiveness.
 - +Salvation.
 - *God's victory over:
 - +Sin.
 - +Death.
- d. These are powerful first words.
 - Agenda-setting words.

B. Then Comes The Fish Story.

- 1. Jesus does not operate in a vacuum.
 - a. He calls:
 - Disciples.
 - Helpers.
 - #To proclaim:
 - *Reign of God.
 - *Victory of God.
 - b. First four were fishermen.
 - Two sets of brothers.
 - #Simon and Andrew.
 - #James and John.

2. How did these brothers respond to Jesus' call?
 - a. Simon and Andrew left their nets.
 - Immediately.
 - b. James and John left their father.
 - Immediately.
3. I've told you about Mark's fondness for the word "immediately."
 - a. 54 x in the New Testament.
 - b. 42 x in Mark (78% of all the New Testament occurrences).
 - c. 11 x in Mark 1.
4. Doesn't that sound fishy to you?
 - a. Who would leave a successful business?
 - To follow an itinerant preacher?
 - To rely on the generosity of others.
 - #Sounds fishy to me.
 - These were not no-account bums.
 - #Simply looking for:
 - *Handout.
 - *Way out of Galilee.
 - They were successful.
 - #They had hired help.
 - *Mark 1:20.
 - #They owned their own homes.
 - *Mark 1:29.
 - Who would give up all of that?
 - #Immediately.
 - *Sounds fishy.
 - b. Who would leave their family behind?
 - Father.
 - Mother.
 - Spouse.
 - Children.
 - #On a venture:
 - *Got John the Baptizer in trouble.
 - +Arrested.
 - =Mark 1:14.
 - +Imprisoned.
 - =Mark 6:17.
 - +Eventually beheaded.
 - =Mark 6:27.
 - #Immediately.
 - *No family conferences?
 - *No "good-byes?"
 - #Sounds fishy.

5. We would never do that, would we?
 - a. Leave what we know.
 - Career.
 - Family.
 - b. Pursue something we know so little about.
 - What do we know about fishing for people?
 - We're not very good at that.
 - Our worms aren't working.
 - Maybe we've got the wrong bait.
 - #If only we had:
 - *Different pastor.
 - *More inspiring sermons.
 - *More dynamic Bible study.
 - *Not so many senior citizens.
 - *More youth activities.
 - *More attractive property.
 - *Different location.
 - #We would be reeling people in.
 - *Sound fishy to you?
 - *Sounds fishy to me.

II. Jonah (Jonah 3:1-5, 10).

- A. Jonah Didn't Want To Have Anything To Do With God's Fishing Expeditions.
 1. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh.
 - a. He didn't want to go.
 - b. He preferred to book passage on the *Costa Concordia*.
 - Take a Mediterranean cruise.
 - Why?
 2. Our Daytime 5x5 class could tell you.
 - a. We've been working our way through the Minor Prophets.
 - b. Last week we were reading Nahum.
 - Book that's only three chapters long.
 - Book that is never read on Sunday mornings.
 - c. Nahum is about the destruction of Nineveh.
 - Perhaps a liturgy written to celebrate the downfall of Nineveh.
 - Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria.
 - #Assyria was the world power of its day.
 - *Conquering:
 - +Nations.
 - +Peoples.
 - =Including the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
 - 722 B.C.

*Often using the most brutal tactics.
+Tactics that brought to mind for our 5x5 class.
=Adolph Hitler.
=Nazi Germany.

-Who would want to be sent?
#To Adolph Hitler.
#To tell him to repent.
*Not Jonah.

3. Jonah.

- a. Turned tail.
- b. Set sail in the opposite direction.
 - Away from Nineveh.
 - Away from God's call.
 - #Who could blame him?
 - *Nineveh.
 - +Lost cause.
 - +Death sentence.

4. Then comes the fish story.

- a. God sent a storm.
 - To stop Jonah's escape.
- b. God sent a fish.
 - To save Jonah.
 - #From the bottom of the deep blue sea.
 - #When Jonah was thrown overboard.
 - Fish spit Jonah back up on dry land.
 - #After three days.
- c. God gave Jonah a second chance.

B. That's Our Kind Of Fish Story, Or Is It?

- 1. God called Jonah a second time.
 - a. Jonah 3:1.
 - b. That's our kind of story.
 - God giving us another chance.
 - #Another.
 - #Another.
 - #Another.
- 2. But God gave him the same assignment as the first time.
 - a. Back to:
 - Nineveh.
 - Enemy territory.
 - Likely death sentence.
 - b. Jonah went.
 - Sound fishy to you?
 - Sounds fishy to me.

3. God's mercy?
 - a. For:
 - Ninevites.
 - Nazis.
 - Illegal immigrants.
 - Gays and lesbians.
 - #Sounds fishy.
 - b. For those who have done us wrong.
 - Sorry, God.
 - That's way too fishy for my taste.

III. But These Fish Stories Are God's Story.

A. Kingdom Of God Has Come Near.

1. We pray for it in the Lord's Prayer.
 - a. "Thy kingdom come."
 - b. It does.
 - Even without our prayer.
 - #Luther's explanation to the Second Petition.
2. We don't come near to the kingdom because we are:
 - a. Expert fisher-folk.
 - b. Obedient prophets.
 - c. Always merciful.
3. Kingdom comes near to us because God is merciful.
 - a. Comes in the form of Jesus.
 - Swallowed up by the grave on Good Friday.
 - Coughed up by the tomb on Easter morning.
 - #Hooks us with his cross.
 - #Reels us in through the waters of Holy Baptism.
 - #Gives us his own body and blood to nibble on.
 - *Kingdom of God has come near.
 - b. Even when we see other people as:
 - Enemies to be punished.
 - Fish to be caught.
 - c. Kingdom of God has come near to us.
 - Here.
 - Now.
 - In this time.

B. What Difference Does That Make?

1. Do we still see other people as fish to be caught?
 - a. Think about it.
 - b. Not too cool if you're a fish.

2. Do we still see "enemies" as undeserving of God's mercy?
 - a. Story about Abraham Lincoln.
 - Report that 300 Confederates had died in a Civil War battle.
 - Lincoln is said to have wept.
 - When someone said to Lincoln:
 - # "Don't cry for them."
 - # "They're our enemies."
 - # "Good riddance."
 - Lincoln is said to have replied:
 - # "Sir, you have a small heart."
 - b. Is our heart too small?
3. God's heart is big enough for:
 - a. Jonah.
 - Ninevites.
 - b. Fishermen.
 - Fish.
 - c. You.
 - Me.

Concl: That's how God's story.
-Comes to be fish stories.