

Matthew 19-04-28a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 28th of April 2019. We continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew, picking up this morning in Matthew chapter 4, looking at verses 18 through 20.

We'll ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and we'll get started. Father, how grateful we are for Your faithfulness, Your mercies that are renewed to us every morning, the grace by which our sins are forgiven, the price that was paid to make that possible by Your Son and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for Him.

We thank You for the record of His words and works on this earth, for His ongoing ministry of mediation and intercession at Your right hand, and the anticipation we have of His soon coming return to bring us to Himself and before Your throne. We pray that as we study this portion of Your word this morning, that Your Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart, that we will be encouraged and motivated and enlightened as we reflect on this portion of the ministry of the Lord Jesus and His interaction with His disciples, that we will grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior and as a result be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. You'll remember last time that after rehearsing the inception of Jesus' public ministry at the baptism of John, the temptation in the wilderness, we went back and sorted the chronology of events and how much has transpired by the time we reach verse 13 of Matthew chapter 4. When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum. And a lot of things have happened.

Pretty much everything in the first four chapters of John have happened. A lot of incidents are covered in Luke. And we're going to continue to see this morning that Matthew's account is compressed here at this point in Jesus' ministry.

And there are some things that happen that Matthew does not mention. And we think, well, why wouldn't he? And it reminds us that in each of the gospel accounts, we have four of them, and some things are included and some things are not in each of those accounts because each of them has a different emphasis and a different purpose. And we've used the image of our stereo vision and the slightly different perspective that is given to our brain by each eye, and this allows us to have depth.

And as you look at any object in your near vision, if you focus at a distance, you have a double image. Some things are hidden to one eye that are visible to the other and vice versa. And this is a part of what gives us depth perception.

It is also a part of what sharpens and focuses the theme in each of these accounts. But since we've done the three other gospels and we're now doing Matthew, we are freely

partaking of the information that's in the others and doing much more of a synthetic study just to apprise ourselves of Matthew's perspective and that there are reasons why he leaves these things out. So we saw that there has been months of activity.

Jesus has been with his first four to six disciples in Cana of Galilee, up in Nazareth and Capernaum and so on. And there's been quite a bit that has transpired when Matthew says, Jesus heard John had been put in prison, departed to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth. We know what happened in Nazareth.

This is the infamous Brow of the Hill episode. And a prophet is not without honor, but in his own country and among his own people. He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali.

And you think, well, why isn't it just the regions of northern Israel or the regions of Dan or something of that nature? Well, of course, this is a quote from Isaiah 9, verses 1 and 2. And we went back and looked at that context. We had to go back to the middle of chapter 8 to see that this is a time of judgment. This is a time of sorting the people in Israel.

Are they going to respond to the word of the Lord or not? And this is true for us. We don't always think of it, but every time we hear the word of God, there is either an attraction or not. It either draws us and moves us or we remain passive, unmoved and unchanged.

As most of you know, in my spare time, I make bullets. I cast them out of lead. And if you use 100% lead, they're very soft and you have to take special precautions so that they don't leave elements of themselves behind in your weapon that is called leading.

And this is not a good thing. So you want to toughen up the lead. You want to make it a little bit harder and not having a sophisticated hardness gauge.

A guy came up with a very clever method for testing the hardness of your lead melt. When you make ingots and you've been mixing these things together before you cast the bullets themselves, you want to know, well, how hard is the lead? 100% lead is too soft, so you want to add something to make it harder. You can find junk pewter and add pewter.

That will harden it because there are elements of tin and antimony in those. There's also antimony in old-fashioned wheel weights. So I made it my mission to go around to the National Tire and Battery and other places that dealt in tire mounting and balancing and begging, borrowing, and otherwise acquiring buckets full of used wheel weights.

They're covered in oil and road grease and whatnot. And so you have to, first of all, sort them because some of them are lead mixed with antimony and they're very hard. Others are steel.

Others are aluminum. And so you have to sort them. So what do I do to figure out which ones are lead? Well, I sit down with rubber gloves and two items.

I have a really strong magnet that I got out of a speaker, and I have a pair of nippers or wire cutters, pointed wire cutters. And many times I can tell by experience there are certain wheel weights that always look the same. They've got square ones with stick them on the back and they're lead.

Sometimes they're stamped PB right on them and it's very easy. Other times they're under a layer of paint. You don't know what they are.

So one of the tests is to see if it sticks to a magnet. It sticks to a magnet. It's not lead.

So this is a sorting process. And I pitch the other ones, the ones that are not useful to me, in a bucket to take back for recycling. And the lead I put in a pile.

I sort them because some of them are useful to my purpose. This is going somewhere, by the way. Some of them are useful to my purpose.

And to be sure that they're lead, I'll then take those nippers and see, test their softness. And unlike steel or aluminum or some of the other materials, even plastic, the lead ones react a certain way. They're soft enough that you can dent them.

It's kind of like when they used to test a gold, you know, you see a pirate biting a little gold doubloon or something, and if he could dent it with his teeth, it was gold. Similar type of thing. Well, the theme that we're going to see this morning is about this kind of differentiation.

And we find it here in this passage, because it says that Jesus dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea. He didn't have to say that, but he does, because he's setting up his Old Testament quote that is going to come from Isaiah chapter 9, verses 1 and 2. And we saw, when we looked at that context last time, that the Word of God came in the middle of chapter 8 of Isaiah. And it has one of two effects.

The old saw used to go, the Puritans used this analogy, that the Word of God, the gospel, was like the sun shining. And if you are wax, you melt. If you are clay, you harden.

The same sun has two different effects, depending on your reaction to it. Jesus, as we've seen many times, illustrated himself as the rock on which we could fall and be broken, or the rock that falls on us and grinds us to powder. It's the same rock, but it has two different effects.

We need to be broken. We need to have our pride broken. We need to have our self-sufficiency broken.

We need to look at and rely on the grace of God in recognition of our fallen and corrupt

nature. And it doesn't matter how old we get or how long we've been believers, how far we've gotten in our understanding of the Word of God, we are always going to be corrupt, fallen, and susceptible to weakness and failure if we are not constantly strengthened by God's gracious provision of His Word and His Spirit. So that was the context.

So when it says here, Leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea. The sea is an important element here for two things which follow. One is this quote in verse 15, the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali by the way of the sea.

And this ties that quote to Jesus' location by the sea in Capernaum. The sea is important, and it's going to be important in verses 18 through 22. These things would have not happened if Jesus was not by the sea encountering the fishermen at the shore.

So that's one thing. Secondly, why Zebulun and Naphtali? Well, the ancient tribal assignment for Zebulun is where Nazareth is located. The ancient tribal land assignment for Naphtali is where Capernaum is located.

Jesus began in Nazareth and He has now gone to Capernaum. So these are the two regions specifically identified in Isaiah 9, 1 and 2 that are going to see a great light. Nazareth and Capernaum.

We tend to lose this because we don't know the geography like people in these early days did. But the land of Zebulun and by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. It's funny that where it says beyond the Jordan, obviously Galilee is not east of the Jordan.

It's not Transjordan. It's not over there. And so when it says beyond the Jordan, they've actually postulated that the writer was living over there and was saying, I'm on the east side and Galilee is beyond the Jordan from me.

And that he wasn't Israelite or wasn't located in the land. But I don't have time to debunk that except to say not so. Beyond the Jordan is talking about in the land of promise.

Israel spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness and it was not until they crossed the Jordan and crossed the Jordan and took possession of the land that they had this region of Zebulun and Naphtali and all of the rest of the 10 tribal assignments. So, Galilee of the Gentiles is also significant as readers, even in the earliest days of these gospels, knew that by the time these gospels circulated, that salvation had come to the Gentiles. And there were Greeks and non-Israelites, non-Jews who were coming to faith.

And so it is a harbinger that Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles. And with hindsight, you realize that there's going to be a bit of a symmetry there where the gospel is going to end in the hands of the Gentiles just as it begins. Galilee of the Gentiles, this was a largely mixed region, Galilee.

There were a lot of non-Jews that lived up there, which is why they could say, you know, can any good thing come from this region? And Samaria is mixed. Well, it's beyond Samaria. So it's that much more looked down upon.

But here's what's very interesting. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned. This is largely, quote, from the Septuagint version of Isaiah chapter 9, but words have been changed.

Words have been changed. And whether you look at retroverting back to the Masoretic Hebrew or whether you look at the Septuagint, this is an adapted quote. If you go back and look at these verses in Isaiah chapter 9, the people who walk in darkness have seen a great light.

Those who walk in darkness. And upon those who dwell in the region of shadow and death, light has dawned. Both walk and dwell have been replaced by sitting.

You remember that Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah to Israel. And so this isn't an accommodation for Gentiles. He's expecting Jewish readers to know the original.

And yet he has modified it slightly. So why would he do that? Why wouldn't he just quote it directly out of the Septuagint? Why would this have not been modified back? Many times when there is a difference, whether it's a difference in the Gospel accounts, whether it's a difference in the Isaiah and Kings and Chronicles accounts, as we saw when we had three different points of view, if there's a change made, it draws attention to that. We might just glide right through this without paying attention.

But he has changed it slightly. And what does that do? If I say, fourscore and eight years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent, you would say, hey, wait a minute, that's supposed to be fourscore and seven, isn't it? Fourscore and seven years ago? Isn't that the Gettysburg Address? If you change, you know, in God we believe instead of in God we trust, you say, wait a minute, why the change? That's not what it says. Well, why would there be a change here? Why would he say that people who sit in darkness have seen a great light and on those who sit in the region of shadow and death? They're not walking and they're not dwelling.

Which is more active and which is more passive? Walking or sitting? Unless you've got a motorized wheelchair, sitting is less movement than walking. Dwelling implies activity. If you dwell in a place, you've got to acquire food, you've got to do cleanup, you have to interact with others.

Sitting is much more of a passive view, isn't it? And these people, they might have been walking and they might have been dwelling, but they are so burdened down, is the connotation here, that now they're just sitting. They're not even walking anymore.

They've walked in the darkness so long and have suffered so many injuries and it's so futile that they've just sat down.

It's much more passive. They are much more in need of the light. It's one thing to walk in the dark.

We've got all kinds of great flashlights now, cob LEDs and super bright things that flash and focus and go red and do all sorts of things. But if you have access to no light, pretty soon you find that it's safer, after discouraging circumstances, to just sit. And so this sitting in darkness amplifies the need.

The need for light is even greater, because they're no longer able to walk and they're no longer able to dwell. All they can do is sit. So it draws our attention to the need and Jesus goes where there is a need.

Now, what are the possible rationales for where Jesus begins his ministry? Want to reach the maximum number of people in the minimum amount of time? Go to Jerusalem during a stand at the temple, big audience, a couple of days, you can talk to thousands. Popular support, you might go to the marketplace and you might decry the fraud and abuse and taking advantage. You might go to the temple and cleanse it as your first act, because this would gain a groundswell of grassroots support, right? What drives Jesus' decision as to where to start? Matthew emphasizes it here, it is need.

There are people sitting in darkness. There are people sitting in the shadow and the region of death. They are the neediest people in the world.

They're the most despised. They are the least respected. They are the furthest from Jerusalem.

So in making his decision, it isn't self-promotion. It isn't self-glorification. It isn't a popular movement.

Jesus goes where there is the greatest need. And this is going to be important as we move forward to finish this chapter. People who sat in darkness have seen a great light and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned.

Now, what happens when the light begins to shine? You have this in the first chapter. John talks a lot about Jesus being that true light that shines on every man in that life was the light of men and so on. What happens when you shine the light? What does John say? Men love darkness rather than light when their deeds are evil.

What did we begin talking about this morning? There is a sorting. There is a separation. Are you wax or are you clay? The word of God, Isaiah chapter 8, moving through this section of Isaiah chapter 9. So yes, there is a need and when the solution is offered, there's either going to be acceptance or not.

And not accepting is rejecting. People like to say, well, I'm just agnostic. I'm not a rejecter.

I'm not a hater. I'm not reacting against it. I'm just not interested.

I'm just neutral. There is no neutral. There is light and there's darkness.

There is righteousness and there is evil. There's no in between. When the light shines, when the word of God comes, it divides.

It bifurcates and you're on one side or the other. And to not be for it is to be against it. Whatever you tell yourself, however seemingly neutral and indifferent and amenable you might be, well, if that's good for you, great.

If you do not accept, what are you? If you are conceived in iniquity, born in sin, if you are corrupt, if you have a fallen nature and you do not accept God's grace in salvation and rehabilitation and regeneration and the impartation of the Holy Spirit and the cleansing of sin, what are you? It doesn't matter what you think you are. It's what you are. You are unregenerate.

You are unimproved. You are not rehabilitated in any sense. And without the sustaining grace in our ongoing life as believers, the same thing can happen.

It's like the law of entropy. It's a down escalator. Have you ever gone up the down escalator? I've done it several times.

I have a sense of perversity. And if there's not a lot of people around and there's nobody on the thing, it's fun to go up. But if you're not actively stepping, the downward trend will overcome your intention of getting to the second floor.

I went up and down an escalator at least twice, I can remember, because the up escalator was broken and they were working on it. And they said, well, you know, go over to the other side of the store and take the stairs or take the elevator or whatever. I thought, well, it's faster to just take this up elevator.

And I just, you know, if you walk fast enough, you can go up the down elevator. Well, this is the idea. There is light shining.

The people sitting in darkness have seen a great light. Well, what are they going to do? If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we're going to have fellowship in the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son will keep on cleansing us from all sin. If you continue to sit when the light shines, you're no better off than when you were in the same no good.

From that time, verse 17, Jesus began to preach and to say, change your mind, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It is at hand. It's near.

It's imminent. It is potential. Then Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee sees the two brothers, Simon called Peter, Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

You remember that this is not a cold call. They've spent weeks, months with Jesus, had a wide variety of experiences, going to Jerusalem, up in Cana, back and forth. There's been a lot that has happened.

But walking by the Sea of Galilee, He sees two brothers, Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. Fishers of men.

Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. What does it mean to be a fisher of men? The more you think about this, the more difficult it becomes. The knee-jerk response is, Oh, there's people out there that need to be hauled in and brought to Christ.

Sometimes we think in modern terms that you're on the shore with a cane pole and a bobber and a little bit of bait, and you'll hear evangelism pitches talking about you, you've got to lure them in. That's why it's called a fishing lure. Lure them, hook them, pull them in.

Go to the highways and byways and compel them to come in. Hook them, net them, drag them in. By whatever means, all's fair.

I was thinking about people who are critics of the United States and everything about us basically, especially Europeans and people in far-off places. For them, anything American is automatically evil. Everything we've ever done was bad and self-serving and motivated by greed.

We're an evil capitalist empire. We're firebombing terrorists. We have killed civilians hither and yon.

That's our main purpose is just to aggrandize ourselves. We get involved in wars to make money and get oil. You cannot believe some of the vituperation and vindictive hatred, hatred, wild-eyed bloodshot hatred of the United States that persists in other places.

So much so that anything American is automatically bad. All Americans are bad. Everything America does is bad.

There is no good at all. This kind of thinking is non-racial racism. People know that it's

bad to be a racist and to condemn someone for the color of their skin.

They say, well, but see, the difference is I hate you for what you've done and what you do, not for what you are. So it's okay. But having accepted this rationale, people now feel free to hate as bad or worse than any racial bigot you've ever seen.

It's just a license to hate. It's a license to raise oneself by, it's the well bucket. You reach over and grab the rope and push one bucket down, and the one you're in rises up.

You're like in the dumbwaiter. And you raise yourself up by pushing that thing down, and you justify it by saying, well, but they deserve it. This is the same thinking by which Christians, quote unquote, shoot abortion doctors.

Well, what they're doing is so evil that the gloves are off. All's fair. They're so evil that anything I do is justified.

And you become twofold the child of hell of whatever it is you hate, but you're blind to it. Well, this giving oneself a free pass and saying, well, all's fair has seeped in not such a violent way into evangelism. Well, there are souls on the line.

These people are going to fry in conscious torment in hell. So all's fair. I can bait and switch.

I can terrorize them with hellfire and brimstone. Jonathan Edwards centers in the hands of an angry God. People are weeping and terrorized by the vivid depictions of what it's going to be like in torments.

Oh, I don't want that to happen to me. Let me come to faith. All's fair.

All's fair in evangelism because it's life and death, and eternity is on the line. And there is the appeal. Well, look, Jesus told the disciples, I will make you fishers of men.

How was fishing done in those days? What are these guys doing when Jesus walks by the Sea of Galilee? How was fishing actually done? Think about it. There was actually hook and rod fishing in those days, but that's not what these guys are. They are commercial fishermen.

It's a business. So what kind of fishing do they do? They have a net with floats in the middle and weights on the edges. They go out in a boat to where they think there are schools of fish.

They cast the net on one side of the boat. The rocks pull the edges down. The floats hold the center up, and you have sort of an upside-down basket.

As the rocks descend and the fish rise, starting to look for a way of escape, it's below their depth and so on, then the fishermen will dive into the water, swim down, grab the

underside of the net, and turn it into a bag, a loose net bag, which is then pulled up. He hands the edges to the other members of the team, and they pull that bag of fish, that net of fish, into the boat. It's quite tiring because there's a lot of swimming and diving involved and casting.

These rocks are heavy that weight the edges, and sometimes they would do it at night. I've heard people say, they actually said, well, you know, fishermen use light to lure fish, and I'm thinking, what, they hung lanterns over the boat, you know, fishing at night? I'm not quite sure how they think that worked. But this is what Peter and Andrew are doing.

Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. So he said to them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. So you think, well, what's going to happen to these fish once they are netted? They die, right? What benefit is it to the fish to be netted? Are they being rescued from a terrible fate? Are they being put into a new Edenic pond somewhere where they can live and grow and flourish and reproduce? What happens when you net these fish? They die, they are consumed, they, you know, fish, and it's a completely passive picture.

The fish don't say, oh, here's something attractive, let me swim in that direction. They are taken against their will and dragged forcibly into a boat where they die. So how would someone take it who is a professional fisherman and knows all about the fish and what happens to them and has been doing it since they were children, and a guy comes by and says, come with me, I'm going to have you do what you're doing to the fish to people.

It's not the wonderful metaphor that we think of, you know, removed by 2,000 years from the days when fishing was done in this way. So it's worth rethinking. What did fishing for men mean to people in that day? Turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 16.

Jeremiah chapter 16. The word of the Lord came to me, Jeremiah, saying, You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place. For thus says the Lord concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place and concerning their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land, they shall die gruesome deaths.

They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried, but they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their corpses shall be meat for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth. This is the covenant God of Israel talking about his own people.

And what does he say? He says, Jeremiah, you are going to be a sign of impending judgment on my people. And the impending judgment on my people is to die gruesome deaths, not be lamented or buried, but like refuse on the face of the earth, consumed by

the sword and by famine, their corpses shall be food for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth. For thus says the Lord, verse 5, Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them.

For I have taken away my peace from this people, says the Lord, loving kindness and mercies. Both the great and the small shall die in this land. It is indiscriminate.

They shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them. No eulogies, no flowery funeral services, no memorials, no sprays of flowers, no black band of mourning or widow's weeds and so on. Nor shall men break bread in mourning for them to comfort them for the dead, nor shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother.

Also, you shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them to eat and drink. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will cause to cease from this place before your eyes and in your days the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. And it shall be when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, Why has the Lord pronounced all this great disaster against us? What is our iniquity? What is our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God? Then you shall say to them, verse 11, Because your fathers have forsaken me, says the Lord, they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them and have forsaken me and not kept my law.

And you have done worse than your fathers. For behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart so that no one listens to me. That is underlined in my Bible from a previous study.

Each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart. No one listens to me. Therefore, I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know, neither you nor your fathers.

And there you shall serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favor. You've chosen other gods. You're going to go to the land of other gods, and you're going to serve them involuntarily.

Therefore, verse 14, Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. But the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where he had driven them. For I will bring them back into their land, which I gave to their fathers.

Behold, I will send for many fishermen, says the Lord, and they shall fish them. And afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill and out of the holes of the rocks. For my eyes are on all their ways.

They are not hidden from me, nor is their iniquity hidden from my eyes. And first I will

pay double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled my land. They have filled my inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols.

Verse 16 is our verse. I will send for many fishermen, says the Lord, and they shall fish them. They will fish men.

Now, what is the purpose of the fishing? Looking at the context, you can say, well, it's verse 14 and 15. The Lord who delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt is going to do an even greater thing. His reputation for deliverance from bondage in Egypt is going to be surpassed by delivering them from this exile and captivity, because he's going to bring them back from the land of the north, which is Babylon, and from all the places where he has scattered them.

But what is the purpose of the fishing? Verse 16 begins a new paragraph. This is not fishing and hunting them to bring them back and to restore them. The fishermen and the hunters here are agents of divine judgment.

These are the Babylonians, and wherever they try to hide to escape God's judgment, they are going to be found. If they try to hide in the depths of the sea, they're going to be fished out. They're going to be netted out.

If they try to hide in the holes in the caves of the mountains, they're going to be hunted out. Why? For my eyes are on all their ways. They're not hidden from my face, nor is their iniquity hidden from my eyes.

You might think you could hide in the depths of the sea. You might think you could hide in the holes in the caves of the rocks in the mountains. But God's fishermen and God's hunters, in this immediate instance, it's the Babylonians, are going to hunt them and fish them out and take them away.

And I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled my land, they have filled my inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols. God offers hope in the middle of that and says, I will eventually bring them back and I will be noted for that deliverance. But in the meantime, I'm going to fish them.

I'm going to hunt them. I will send fishermen and I will send hunters as agents of judgment. Why? Go back to verse 11.

Your fathers have forsaken me. Verse 12, you have done worse. Each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart and no one listens to me.

Because of this, they're going to be fished and hunted. They're going to be netted out from their hiding places. They're going to be ousted from their hiding places and caught and snared and hauled off into exile and captivity.

That's what the fisherman does. Now, lest you think that I'm just taking one Old Testament passage and making a meal out of it, turn a few pages over to Jeremiah 25 and verse 9. Verse 8, Jeremiah 25, 8, Thus says the Lord of hosts, Because you have not heard my words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations. I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstone and the light of the lamp.

Notice, I will take away the light of the lamp. This whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. So there is a time of judgment that will not be rescinded, it will not be shortened, it will not be ameliorated, it will not be softened.

This is parallel to what we just read. Turn to Amos chapter 4 and verse 2. You should have a few unstuck pages in these minor prophets after our kings and prophets study. Amos chapter 4. Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountains of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, Bring wine, let us drink.

The Lord God has sworn by His holiness, Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Haman, says the Lord. And going out through walls is a picture of going into captivity.

God is going to have His prophet actually act this out. Turn over to Habakkuk. We don't get to go to Habakkuk very often.

Habakkuk chapter 1. Remember in Habakkuk, he asks questions and God answers. How long, O Lord? Will we cry and you not hear? We cry out to you violence, and you do not save. And the Lord replies.

And then He asks a second question in verse 12. Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die, you have appointed them for judgment. O rock, you have marked them for correction.

You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. Why do you look on these who deal treacherously, and hold your tongue when the wicked devours those more righteous than he? Why do you make men like fish of the sea, verse 14, like creeping things that have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with a hook, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their dragnet. And these who operate these hooks and nets rejoice and are glad.

They sacrifice their net, and burn incense to their dragnet, because by them their share is sumptuous, and their food plentiful. Shall they therefore empty their net, and continue to slay nations without pity? We covered the meaning of this when we did Habakkuk, but even if you don't remember the details, what you do notice here is that the hook and the nets are judgment. This is a bad thing for those who are taken, and it is the will of God against those who do not listen, who deal treacherously, who oppress the poor, who don't honor God's law.

As we've seen in Psalm 119, God sets great store by His precepts, and His ordinances, and His statutes, His commandments, His law, His way that is marked by those statutes. People who disregard them, God makes those men like fish of the sea that are taken up with a hook, and caught in the net, and gathered in the dragnet. This is the Old Testament view of fishing men.

What Bible do Peter and Andrew have? What have they heard in synagogue their whole lives as faithful Israelite believers, who knew enough to be looking for the Messiah down at the Jordan when John was preaching, who have heard the talk of the axe laid at the root of the trees, the winnowing fan in His hand? How did we begin this morning? The light that shines is going to sort people into those who are drawn to the light, and those who love darkness rather than light. What happens when a fisherman throws the net and drags the fish ashore? Turn with me as we go to the break here to Matthew chapter 13. We'll be seeing this in the not too distant future.

Matthew chapter 13. Jesus has something to say about this. Verse 47, Matthew 13, 47, "...the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind." Remember back in Jeremiah when He said, small and great, it's indiscriminate.

"...the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind." Now, the net is cast and the result is a sorting, a division, a separation. "...so it will be at the end of the age the angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire, there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Jesus said to them, have you understood all these things? They said, yes. They may say yes, I'm not sure they actually did, but that's fishing.

So what does it mean to be a fisher of men? What will these men do? Peter in particular is going to preach the gospel to his own Jewish brethren, and what is their response going to be? Wonderful revival, kingdom comes in, the millennium starts, or are they dispersed, scattered, and their temple destroyed? The net is cast, the fish are drawn ashore, most, all of them are bad and are cast away for judgment. The time of fishing is the time of judgment, the time of separation, the time of differentiation. So the happy, let's go to the highways and byways and compel them to come into the kingdom, it'll be good for them, is not what Jesus meant by, I will make you fishers of men.

Fishers of men are agents of God's judgment. You can either be judged and found worthy, or you can be judged and found wanting. There are good fish and there are bad fish.

The net draws them all, just as the light shines on the wax and the clay. It is what it reveals. What they preach is going to reveal what is in the hearts of men.

Jesus is going to tell them later, you've got the keys to the kingdom, and the sins you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven, or have been loosed in heaven. The sins that you retained have been retained. It's a sorting, it's a differentiation, those who accept God's forgiveness and those who don't.

And Peter and the other disciples are going to be apostles who will declare the deliverance or the judgment that is coming on people who have now heard this message. That's what it is to be a fisher of men. Let's pause here and take a break.

When we come back, we'll think about the implications of that and move a little bit further forward in this passage, which is more diverse than you think. But we'll see it when we come back.