SATURDAY MORNING TOPIC

Dropping the Net

Matthew 4:18–20 · Men's Discussion · NASB95

MATTHEW 4:18–20

"Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed Him."

The Net

On Galilee, a fisherman's net was his life. He fished all night, then washed and mended his nets every morning. Peter and Andrew were throwing cast nets, which took years to master. James and John left their nets, their boat, *and* their father's business (Matthew 4:21–22).

This wasn't their first meeting with Jesus. Andrew had already told Peter, "*We have found the Messiah*" (John 1:41). The shore is where knowing Him turned into following Him.

MY NET

I'm a builder, men. Books, websites, software. Most of it I build for the Lord, which is exactly why my net is hard to see. Peter's net wasn't sinful either. It was his skill and his security. Jesus didn't ask him to stop being a fisherman. He said, "*I will make you fishers of men.*" But first, Peter had to let go.

KEY VERSE · MATTHEW 4:20

"Immediately they left their nets and followed Him."

PART ONE · THE BACKGROUND

The World of the Fishermen

The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake roughly thirteen miles long and eight miles wide, ringed by fishing towns. Fishing there was an industry, not a hobby. Fish were caught, salted, and shipped across the region. Peter and Andrew came from Bethsaida, whose name means "house of fishing," and later made their home in Capernaum on the north shore (Mark 1:29).

> **JOHN 1:44**
>
> *Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.*

Most of the work happened at night, when the water cooled and fish rose toward the surface. These men knew long nights, sore hands, and empty boats. That is why Peter says in Luke 5:5, "*we worked hard all night and caught nothing.*"

THE THREE NETS

The Gospels use three different words for nets. Each one shows how much of a fisherman's life was wrapped up in them.

The cast net

Round and weighted at the edge, thrown by hand from shore or shallow water. It opened in the air and dropped over a school of fish. This is what Peter and Andrew were throwing (Matthew 4:18).

The working net

The everyday nets of the trade, made of linen and heavy when wet. They tore easily and had to be washed, dried and mended after every night's work (Luke 5:2).

The dragnet

A long net pulled between boats or from shore, gathering everything in its path. Jesus used it to picture the final judgment (Matthew 13:47).

Every morning: wash the nets. Every afternoon: mend them. Every night: throw them again. The net was his tool, his income, and his routine. It was his life.

FOUR MEN, FOUR NETS

> **MATTHEW 4:21–22**
>
> *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; and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.*

> **MARK 1:20**
>
> *Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.*

Peter and Andrew left their nets: their trade and their income. James and John left their nets, their boat, *and* their father. Zebedee had hired servants, so this was a working family business. They walked away from an inheritance. Each man's net was different. The call was the same.

BEFORE THE SHORE

> **JOHN 1:40–41**
>
> *One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ).*

Matthew makes the call sound sudden, but John fills in the backstory. Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist and had already spent time with Jesus. When Jesus walked that shore, these men knew who He was. Many of us have known *about* Jesus for years. The shore is where knowing turns into following.

PART TWO · PETER'S STORY

The Net Shows Up Three Times

1 · THE NET THAT BROKE (LUKE 5)

> **LUKE 5:2–3**
>
> *And He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat.*

Jesus started by borrowing Peter's boat. He stepped into Peter's workplace, his tools, his world. Then He told a professional fisherman how to fish.

> **LUKE 5:6, 8**
>
> *When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; … But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"*

> **LUKE 5:10–11**
>
> *And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.*

They didn't walk away from a failing business. They walked away at the moment it finally paid off.

2 · THE NET LEFT BEHIND (MATTHEW 4, 19)

> **MATTHEW 19:27**
>
> *Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?"*

> **MATTHEW 19:29**
>
> *And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.*

Peter remembered what it cost. Jesus answered with a promise, not a rebuke.

3 · THE NET PICKED BACK UP — AND THE NET THAT HELD (JOHN 21)

After Peter denied Jesus beside a charcoal fire (John 18:18), he went back to the boat. That night they caught nothing. Then a voice from the shore:

> **JOHN 21:6**
>
> *And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.*

> **JOHN 21:9, 11**
>
> *So when they got out on the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid and fish placed on it, and bread. … and although there were so many, the net was not torn.*

Same lake. Same kind of miracle. But this time the net didn't break. Peter denied Jesus beside one charcoal fire; Jesus restored him beside another. Three times He asked, "Do you love Me?" and gave Peter a new net to carry: "*Tend My lambs … Shepherd My sheep … Tend My sheep*" (John 21:15–17).

> **ACTS 4:13**
>
> *Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

The same patience, grit and timing Peter learned on the water became the tools of a fisher of men. Jesus didn't throw away who Peter was. He redeemed it.

1 What net are you afraid of letting go of — and why?

LUKE 5:5, 11

"Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." … they left everything and followed Him.

MARK 10:21–22

Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

PHILIPPIANS 3:7

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Peter dropped his net right after the biggest catch of his life. That's the hardest time to let go: when it's working. Two men heard "Follow Me." Peter dropped his net; the rich young ruler held on and walked away grieving. And Jesus *loved* the man who said no. Our nets are usually good things — work, reputation, money, control — that we have quietly made into our security.

GO DEEPER

- If you lost that net tomorrow, would you still know who you are?
- Is your net something God gave you to use, or something you now use to feel safe?
- What did Peter gain that he never could have caught on his own?

MY ANSWER

2 When life hurts, what old pattern do you reach for — and how do you know it's beginning?

JOHN 21:3

"Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will also come with you.' They went out and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing."

HEBREWS 12:1

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

After Peter denied Jesus, he went straight back to the boat, and took six men with him. Old patterns never stay private, and they never produce anything. Hebrews calls sin the thing that "so easily entangles" — net language. Every man has a boat he runs back to: work, anger, a bottle, a screen, or simply going quiet. And it almost always starts before we notice.

GO DEEPER

- What are your early warning signs — isolation, irritability, "I'll just handle this myself"?
- Who goes back to the boat with you when you run? Who might follow you there?
- What is your "way of escape," and who in this room has permission to call you out?

MY ANSWER

3 Where is Jesus asking you to surrender control this week?

LUKE 9:23

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

PROVERBS 3:5–6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

GALATIANS 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

PSALM 46:10

Cease striving and know that I am God;

Jesus met Peter back on that same shore, cooked him breakfast, and gave him a new net: "*Tend My sheep*" (John 21:17). Surrender isn't one moment. It's daily. And Jesus never takes a net without giving a greater purpose.

GO DEEPER

- Name it specifically. What is the one thing you'll hand Him this week?
- What would "cease striving" look like on an ordinary Tuesday?
- What new net might Jesus be handing you in exchange?

MY ANSWER

WRAPPING UP

This Week

DROP THE NET DAILY

- **Morning:** Before you pick up your phone or your work, read Matthew 4:18–20 and name your net to God.
- **When it hurts:** Call a brother before you go back to the boat.
- **Midweek:** Text one man from this group and ask, "How's your net?"
- **Saturday:** Come ready to share one moment you let go, and what happened.

MEMORY VERSE

LUKE 9:23

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

PRAY TOGETHER

Lord Jesus, You see the nets we hold. You know what they mean to us. Give us the courage to let go, the honesty to see our old boats, and the faith to follow You daily. Make us fishers of men. Amen.

CLOSING

Peter didn't drop his net because he had it all figured out. He dropped it because of *who* was calling. Same Lord. Same shore.

"Follow Me."

See you Saturday, men. — Ed