The Call Of The Fishermen

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Date: 11 April 2021

Preacher: Colin Dow

[0:00] Please turn with me this morning to Mark chapter 1, and I guess especially the words we find in verse 17 of Mark chapter 1, and Jesus said to them, follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.

Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your greater glory our supreme concern through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen. What is church? Well, that's a good question. Not when is church, or where is church, or who is church, but what is church?
And when I ask that question, I'm not asking about church buildings over and against the people. I'd like to think that over the piece, we've all come to understand that the church is the people, not the building.
As I'm fond of saying, Glasgow City is a family we belong to, not a building we come to. No, when I'm asking what is church, I'm thinking more along the lines of the question, what can we expect to happen at church?
[1:26] What do we do at church? When, not if, we get our new building, what can we expect to happen there?

And what can we expect it to be? Well, for the next four Sundays, I want to try and answer these questions using passages in the Gospels, which speak about boats and fishing.
Because after all, we've talked about our search for a new building being a search for a new fishing boat from where to fish for the souls of Glasgow's peoples. And this week, we're going to look at Mark chapter 1, verses 14 through 20, and the calling of the first disciples, and what this has to teach us concerning what the church is.
And from this passage, and from this verse, I want us to see three things about what we can expect to happen here in this church, but in our new church also, what we can expect Christ to do for us there.
First, it will be a place to hear the voice of Jesus. Second, it will be a place to hear the call of Jesus.
[2:41] And third, it will be a place from which to fish for Jesus. I know that we're all apprehensive about moving.

But let's mix some excitement also into our apprehension, because although we might be leaving behind this awesome building in St. Vincent Street, everything that's important is coming with us.
Most important of all, the gospel. First of all then, what do we do in church? A church is a place to hear the voice of Jesus.
To hear the voice of Jesus. Little words, little phrases in the Bible wash over us, because we've heard them so many times, let's face it, they're very ordinary words.
But if we should stop and think what they are really saying, we would be utterly amazed. For example, consider the first few words in verse 17. And Jesus said to them.
[3:47] Five words in English, five words in the original Greek language. But what words? Time and again, we read these words in the Gospels. Stop and think for a second.

What do they really mean? As we go deeper and deeper into this, we can exhaust the brains of the smartest theologians simply because there's so much involved in these words.
And Jesus said to them. A few verses earlier in verse 11, during his baptism, Jesus heard the voice of his Father from heaven saying to him, You are my beloved Son.
With you I am well pleased. So, the and Jesus who said to them is none other than the Son of God himself, the object of God the Father's eternal and infinite pleasure.
He is God's Messiah. Later in verse 15, words we read together, we hear Jesus proclaiming the Gospel. The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

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[5:03] Now, the only reason Jesus can so certainly say the kingdom of God is at hand is because he, the King, has come. Jesus himself is God's King.

And so, even in the course of these few verses immediately preceding our passage, we get a sense of the unique dignity and majesty of the Jesus who speaks.
The Son of God. The Messiah. God's King. God's King. Security.
So, the King's King. marched into Scotland and made his camp in Glasgow for a whole week. Well, on the Sunday he was here, Cromwell, together with several of his senior generals and advisors, marched into the inner kirk of Glasgow Cathedral just up the road and sat under the ministry of the Reverend James Durham, one of Scotland's youngest and finest ministers.
You might think to yourself, poor James Durham. He has the most important and powerful man in the world sitting in front of him, listening to him preaching.
[6:32] A man who has invaded Scotland with his army. I don't think I'd have liked to have been in James Durham's shoes, especially when he chose as the theme for his sermon the sin of the English army in invading Scotland and the iniquity of Oliver Cromwell in beheading King Charles I.

Good on you, James Durham. Well, the thing is, Durham knew, as should every one of us, that the most important person in the inner kirk of Glasgow Cathedral that day was not himself.
Nor was it Oliver Cromwell. Nor was it any of Cromwell's generals or advisors, which included the great Puritan John Owen.
It was the spirit of Jesus Christ himself, the Son of God, God's Messiah, God's King. What can we expect to happen in our new building?
We can expect the living Christ to speak to us there. The King of Kings, whose word is more important than that of presidents and prime ministers, Lord protectors, or Puritan generals.
[7:51] You see now what I mean when I say that little phrases, little clauses, little words in the scripture wash over us, because we've heard them so many times. And Jesus said just three words, but changing everything about how we approach church, because it's here, through the ministry of the divinely inspired word of God, we hear the voice of Jesus speaking to us.

But notice also to whom Jesus spoke and what they were doing while Jesus spoke to them. He spoke to common fishermen who were both men in their nets and fishing, normal people, do normal things, and Jesus, the King of Kings, speaks to them.
There was no one in the world on the same level of status and dignity as Jesus. Speaking to the emperor of Rome would have been beneath him.
Yet Jesus chose to speak to these common men. Don't you just hate it when you're in company and you're speaking with someone face to face, right?
And that someone to whom you're speaking isn't really looking at you. They're looking around to see if there's anyone more important than you to whom they should be speaking.
[9:20] Someone more influential than you with whom they can network. Well, here we have the Son of God, God's Messiah, the King.

He never does that. Rather, of most importance to him are those who are of least importance to the world.
What then can we expect to happen in our new building? We can expect to hear the voice of Jesus speaking to us common people. Whatever situations we're in, listen to my situation, usually on a Sunday.
We've arrived in church just in time, having rushed the kids out of the house and struggled to find a parking space. We've had angry words in the car on our way into church.
And we sit down, frustrated and inwardly fuming. And for a few minutes, our minds are filled with all the pressures of the week. Our kind of precarious bank balances.
[10:31] Our nasty bad tempers. That awkward relationship we have with our colleagues at work. But then as we calm down, and as we begin to really listen, we hear the voice of Jesus, the Son of God, speaking to us through his word.

Now, if this isn't enough to add a little bit of excitement into your spiritual life, I don't know what is. Because I'm more important than Oliver Cromwell or President Biden, Prime Minister Johnson, or whoever else, is going to speak to you directly about things that only you and he know about. things of the utmost eternal importance. What is church? It's a place where Jesus speaks to his people.
And that is awesome. Second, church is a place to hear the call of Jesus.

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To hear the call of Jesus. I'm sure you know this story fairly well. How caught, unaware as it were, Peter and Andrew, James and John heard the voice of Jesus to go and follow him.
[11:54] They were fishing just a little offshore. James and John were sitting on their boat, mending their nets. And all they could hear was the hubbub and chatter of people nearby. Perhaps the sound of animals.

Perhaps the gentle lapping of water up against the shoreline. It had been a day just like any other day. That is until they heard the voice of Jesus saying to them, follow me.
That's the call of Jesus to us all today. Whether you're here in this building or you're participating in our service via Zoom, follow me.
It is right that as Christians we call ourselves followers of Jesus. Most Bible translations have as their title for this passage the calling of the first disciples.
Because at its most basic level, the call to discipleship in Jesus is the call to follow Jesus. We're Jesus followers. That's who we are as Christians.
[13:03] What can we expect to happen in church? We can expect to hear the voice of Jesus calling to us saying, follow me. For as often as we hear the word of God being preached, we'll hear him calling to us, follow me.

Keep following me. Follow me closer than you've ever followed me before. We'll have spent the week distracted by a million things. Our studies in university, complicated relationships, our own private struggles and temptations.
And then we'll hear his voice call out to us once again on the Lord's day. Follow me. In the Jewish world of the day, disciples of a rabbi followed him physically everywhere he went.
They listened carefully to his teaching. They watched how he conducted himself and the particular areas of the law that he chose to prioritise and how he explained that.
And so the call to follow Jesus is a call to make him our Lord and Master. It's a call to listen to him teaching us through his word.
[14:18] It's a call to live our lives with him. It's a call to follow him into our families. It's a call to follow him into learning how to be the best husbands we can be to our wives and how we can be the best fathers we can be to our children and how we can be the best friends we can be.

It's a call to follow him into our workplaces. Learning from him how to be the most diligent and creative employee or employer we can be. Learning from him how to relate to our colleagues well and how to be team builders and not team breakers learning from him the basic skills of time management diligence honesty it's a call to follow him into our university lecture theatres and our school classrooms it's a call to follow him into all the challenges of life the challenges of living in a society hostile at best to the gospel and apathetic at worst.
it's a call to follow him into holiness of life love of one another and a daily dependence upon his grace and you know in following him we're just going to learn so much about him and about ourselves we're going to learn that by nature we are stubborn and strong willed that we are frail of mind heart and body by contrast we're going to learn that Jesus is humble and gentle of heart that he is far more ready to forgive us than ever to condemn us and that he wisely and lovingly leads us in the paths of righteousness we're going to learn that his loving grace is always sufficient sufficient in our weaknesses sufficient in our failures sufficient in our confusions and doubts time and again we're going to fail him time and again we'll return to him in repentance and you resolve to follow him more nearly and love him more dearly we're going to hear the call to follow him through all life's twists and turns when things are bad and when things are good the late mother of David and Norman
Morland she used to sit right at the back over there she had a profoundly poetic streak and she used to talk of Jesus and she would never use an easy word if she could use a hard one more poetic one I should say Jesus and all the vicissitudes of life the vicissitudes of life now the vicissitudes of life are the unwelcome changes in life circumstances the things that don't go according to plan and she'd had her fair share of them through her life and it gave her a very thoughtful and a wonderfully poetic edge she followed Jesus through all the vicissitudes of her life the dark turns that's the call of Jesus the call to follow him in and through all the vicissitudes of your life all of life's changing circumstances my father used to say your luck in life is like a flower son it opens and it shuts and the call to follow Jesus is a call to follow him whether the flowers open or the flowers shut there'll be some of us here who have been disciples of Jesus for many years decades even over those years our love for Jesus has waxed and waned waxed and waned but at this

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present time let's be honest it has grown somewhat lukewarm we've lost our first love and we're going little more than going through the motions right now our devotional lives are boring uninspiring there's a form of godliness about us but there's no attendant power and we know it we'll be coming to church we'll be thinking to ourselves it'll just be like every other Sunday and then during the singing of a song or during the preaching of the word we're going to hear the voice of Jesus calling us to follow him again and the freshness will return and we'll leave church that day renewed and walking close with Christ once more there'll be some of us who have never been disciples of Jesus in the first place we just come to church out of habit or because it's the dumb thing or because our parents would be happy to know that we're here we love being here let's be honest but to us there's a lot of darkness surrounding what the real gospel is and anyway we've got other things which are more important to us right now good Scottish impression good Scottish expression we've got a lot of wild oats to sow but then during the service a song that's being sung or during the preaching of the word we hear the voice of Jesus calling us to leave the nets behind and follow him and a light a switch is going to go off in our minds and for the first time we're going to truly see and understand the importance and centrality of the cross and we'll have that compulsion to place our lives into Christ's eternal hands we're going to hear the call of
Jesus in our new building that's what we can expect to happen to our children who we often feel that we're dragging to church on a leash and to our friends who we so so fearfully invite to come to church and that's what's going to happen to us if that's not enough to spice up your apprehension with a wee bit of excitement I don't know what is and then lastly a church is a place to hear the voice of Jesus to hear the call of Jesus it's a place from which to fish for Jesus a place from which to fish for Jesus there are few more powerful descriptions of discipleship than that which Jesus gives us in this passage follow me and I will make you become fishers of men but clumsy in this translation but I get it thus far in their lives
[21:23] Peter, Andrew, James and John had been fishing for a different kind of animal now Jesus is calling on them to fish for the souls of men they're going to become what was called man fishers man fishers an altogether more noble and challenging vocation so what can you expect to happen at church you can expect to be challenged to and equipped for the great Christian task of man fishing now let's think about this for a moment in the context of the image of a fishing boat of a fishing boat fishermen go out to sea in a boat and they make their nets ready for a catch but where is it they cast their nets they don't cast their nets into the boat of course not they cast their nets from the boat into the sea there's no fish to be caught on the boat they're all in the sea in the same way as man fishers we go fishing not in the fishing boat we call the church rather we fish in the sea of the world in the sea of our families our workplaces our university classrooms our fellow school pupils our leisure clubs whenever we get the opportunity to tell others about Jesus that's that's our sea that's why for the eagle-eared among you

I've entitled this point a place from which to fish for Jesus not a place in which to fish for Jesus I am fully convinced that 99.9% of our reticence in sharing the gospel with our family and our friends comes from our own lack of confidence in the gospel therefore what you can expect to happen in church is to be given confidence in the life-changing power of God in the gospel of his son as the whole council of God is preached week by week from this pulpit as we share our experiences of following Jesus as we join together in prayer with and for one another as we share in the holy sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper will be equipped on the inside with new confidence in the truth of the gospel and we'll want to share it later this year
God willing we want to invest in a series of evangelism training events through an organization called a passion for life but at the end of the day as the Scottish rep for passion for life told us on a zoom call a couple of weeks ago evangelism isn't about techniques we learn it's about our passion for Jesus and his gospel the more we love him the closer we follow him the more we'll want others to love him and follow him for themselves Lord's day by Lord's day as we invest in our growth and grace we're going to become more and more passionate about Jesus and therefore more passionate about those we love becoming passionate up for Jesus also he'll teach us how to be man fishers to view our homes our friendships our work relationships those chance meetings we have with other people who are walking their dogs in the park as the seas in which we cast the net of the gospel the church will not be a place we will expect people to come to let me say this again I want you to listen to this very carefully this is the mindset shift we need as Christians the church won't be a place we can expect people to come to the church will be a place from what the church

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will be a place we shall challenge people to go from the church will not be a place we can expect people to come to the church will be a place we challenge people to go from the days of opening up church doors and expecting people to come in they're long gone fish don't jump into a fishing boat rather in obedience to the command of our Lord and following his example we will go from this place and we will let down our nets for a catch church and so everything about our new building is designed not to make it more comfortable for us to stay in but to make it more useful for us to go from it will have a well stocked library of useful Christian books it will have rooms packed with resources where our children will learn how to follow
Jesus for themselves it will have a central pulpit from which God will speak to his people equipping us for service and evangelism and evangelism it will have a strong broadband signal something we cannot get here so that our services and other evangelistic training events can be broadcast to a wider constituency it will have facilities for hospitality facilities for administration facilities for publication most important of all it will be arranged in such a way that congregational prayer meetings will be easily facilitated and central to who we are the building will become our servant for ministry and tool for ministry and mission not the other way around from that building we are going to be man fishers from that building letting down our nets for a catch church I know that all of us are apprehensive about moving from the building here on St.
[27:33] Vincent Street we've been here since 1971 that okay hands up that's before I was born right the thought of something new is pretty stressful to all of us last month's prayer meeting Evan beautifully pointed out that our congregation has had several homes during its life since 1824 we have fished from many boats during these years in the ball we've heard the voice of Jesus heard the call of Jesus and we fished for fished for Jesus and our building will be no different but just designed far better for our purposes as 21st century followers of Jesus fishing for the souls of 21st century Clausewitians so what is church it's all these things and more are you apprehensive

I bet not half as apprehensive as I am are you excited yeah I am also but over against it all is the great plan of God he is building his church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against him but Christ and his gospel are and always will be victorious over the darkness and the sinfulness of this present age to Christ be all the glory of our efforts to fish for him let us pray our heavenly father it's easy it's easy to speak about these things but it's very hard to do them father we pray that you would move our minds and our hearts our emotions and our wills not just to hear the voice of Jesus not just to hear the call of Jesus but to go fish for Jesus in whose name we pray amen immediately for Jesus to Jesus and we gute and please bless hearts and pray amen compatible with Yeshua and we may let us may Jose

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