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Early Galilean Ministry (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg continues to discuss the early Galilean ministry of Jesus. He emphasizes that Jesus preached about the cancellation of unpayable debt to God, and how his message of spiritual jubilee was relevant for delivering forgiveness to those who received him before the day of vengeance. Gregg also touches on the story of Jesus preaching in his hometown of Nazareth, where he faced criticism from those who did not believe in him. The audience is left with a deeper understanding of the messages preached by Jesus during his early ministry.

Transcript

It is a part of the gospel that Jesus preached that our debt, that is our unpayable debt to God, has been cancelled. That is, we've been forgiven of our sins. We could never pay that debt ourselves.

This does not mean that we are not indebted to God to be obedient to him. We certainly are. But in the sense that that debt which we could never pay, that debt that was a burden crushing us, of guilt that could never be cancelled by anything we could do, has been now cancelled.

This is good news for us poor in spirit folks. And it's a deliverance from the bondage of sin, from captivity. This is a spiritual jubilee, and it is the antitype, the fulfillment of the type, that God intended when he made the jubilee legislation.

And Jesus was saying, this is it. Now Isaiah actually said it first. Though Isaiah, we don't know what year Isaiah made this prophecy, or whether a jubilee year fell within his lifetime.

He ministered for over 50 years, so there must have been at least one jubilee year within the time of his ministry. It's possible that Isaiah actually gave this prophecy during a jubilee year. No one can know.

I mean, it's just a guess. No one can prove that he did or didn't. The wording of it almost would sound as if you could conclude that he did.

Because God has anointed me to proclaim that this is the year of release. And Isaiah could be speaking, first of all, about his own ministry of proclaiming jubilee. But Jesus says, this is actually about me, and this prophecy is actually fulfilled in your hearing right now, as I'm speaking to you.

I am the one who's proclaiming good news. I am the one proclaiming the spiritual jubilee. With the coming of me, and God's anointing on my ministry and my prophetic word, you can mark the beginning of the spiritual year of release.

This is the acceptable year of the Lord. And so when he said, today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing, he meant it, of course, as the ultimate fulfillment of the spiritual antitype to what was the jubilee legislation. Now, I'd like to point out that Jesus did not even read the entirety of Isaiah 61.

He did read Isaiah 61.1 and part of verse 2. But he stopped before he had read the entirety of it. Let's look at Isaiah 61 so that you might see what part he omitted in his reading. In Isaiah 61 verses 1 and 2, it says, some of this will be very familiar, the spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor.

Good tidings means the gospel. That's what the word gospel means, good tidings. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And that's where Jesus stopped and said, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. He did not read the remainder of verse 2, it says, and the day of vengeance of our God. Now, there are three opinions about why he did not read the last part of it.

One opinion is that it's not significant that he didn't. The day of vengeance of our God was also being announced, he just didn't want to read the whole chapter. He had to break it off somewhere, so he broke it off at a convenient place and just said, this scripture, this entire passage, including the part he didn't read, is now fulfilled in their hearing.

Another view is that there's a huge gap. You can imagine who postulates that, it's the people who find gaps, hidden gaps everywhere in scripture. In the middle of verse 2, that proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord was what Jesus did at his first coming.

And the day of vengeance of our God will be at his second coming. And so Jesus didn't read the last line of verse 2 because it would not be true that this was to be fulfilled immediately. This would be fulfilled some thousands of years later.

Now, I would simply point out to you, Isaiah doesn't give any clues that there's several thousand years gap between the first clause and the second clause of verse 2. But that doesn't dissuade dispensationalists from finding gaps places like that. They find them in

a lot of different places that the Bible would not give us a clue that they are to be found. I would say a third alternative is, in fact, not that there is such a gap.

I believe the day of vengeance of our God was, in fact, imminent as well. Not only was it the year of salvation, the acceptable year of the Lord, but it was also the fact that the day of vengeance was at hand and that Jesus' message was relevant for both purposes. To offer deliverance and forgiveness to those who would receive him, but the day of vengeance was soon to come upon, even within that generation, upon those who would reject him.

That his announcement was a two-edged sword. It had two sides to it. Salvation for the one and vengeance on the other.

Now, it's true that he was, even at that moment, proclaiming liberty to the captives. At that very moment, he was proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord. He was not, at that moment, proclaiming the day of vengeance of our God, but that doesn't mean that that was to be held off until the second coming or some thousand years later.

It was just not his emphasis at this point in his ministry. He was coming with only the good news, initially. As his ministry wore on, he began to introduce more and more of the bad news.

And finally, in Luke chapter 21, Luke chapter 21, verses 20 and following, Jesus said, but when you see, he was talking to four of his disciples who asked him about this, He said, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her, for these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Now, note, in Luke 4, Jesus reads the passage from Isaiah, leaving out the reference to the day of vengeance.

The day of the vengeance of our God. And he says, this day, this scripture has been fulfilled. That is, up to that point, it had been fulfilled right at that moment.

But now he predicts that his disciples will see the fulfillment of all things. Not just the parts that had already been fulfilled in the very act of his preaching, but that which would be fulfilled later in that generation, as he makes clear. Because he says in verse 32 of Luke, Luke 21, 32, he says, Surely I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things are fulfilled.

But that fulfillment that would take place in that generation, with Jerusalem being surrounded by armies and destroyed and so forth, he describes that in verse 22, Luke 21, 22, These are the days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled. Interesting that both places, Luke 4, where he reads the first part of Isaiah 61, and Luke 21, where he alludes to the second part of Isaiah 61, 2, the day of vengeance. Both of

them speak of fulfillment.

The first part was fulfilled in their hearing as he preached. The other part was not yet fulfilled, but would soon be. They would live to see it.

And then all things that are written would be fulfilled. So, I am not of the camp that believes that Jesus cut off his quotation in the middle of verse 2, because the second part pertained to his second coming or to thousands of years distant events. There's a huge gap.

It simply was true that he was not yet proclaiming the day of vengeance. And the part he read of the Spirit of the Lord's upon me to preach the day of the acceptable year, that was happening at that moment. However, before his ministry ended, he was predicting within that generation the days of vengeance and the fulfillment of all things.

Now, going on, his sermon is not over, because it says, after he made this comment about all the scriptures, this scripture is today fulfilled in your hearing. Luke 4.22, it says, So all bore witness to him and marveled at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. Gracious words is actually a Hebraism.

In the Greek, it's the words of grace that proceeded out of his mouth. John tells us in John 1 that Jesus was full of grace and truth. John 1.14 mentions that Jesus was full of grace and truth.

And, of course, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. He was full of grace, and so the words that came out of his mouth were words of grace. So far, everything he said up to that point were gracious, merciful, good news kinds of things.

But now he had the bad news for these people, just this particular group. But in verse 22, they said, Is this not Joseph's son? In the places in Mark and in Matthew, Mark 6 and Matthew 13, which talk about his preaching in Nazareth, it has them saying the same thing, only a little differently. They say, Is this not the carpenter? In Mark, it says, Is this not the carpenter? In Matthew, it says, Is this not the carpenter's son? But then it goes on to say, And isn't Mary his mother? And aren't his brothers James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? And aren't his sisters dwelling among us too? So we have a more elaborate description of his family as known by the local Nazarenes there.

In the other Gospels, here we just have them having the same problem as they did apparently in his second visit. They thought, This guy's too familiar. He's not from some royal blood.

How could he be the Messiah? Isn't he Joseph's son? They may not have known Joseph was of royal blood, according to the genealogy of Matthew 1. Anyway, these people, Jesus was too familiar to them. And that's why he said that a prophet is not received in his own country. Okay, let's read verse 23.

Then he said to them, You will surely say this proverb to me, Physician, heal yourself. Now, we do not have record anywhere of anyone ever saying this statement to him. Physician, heal yourself.

Many have felt that this finds its fulfillment, this prediction finds its fulfillment, in the fact that when he was on the cross, three or two and a half years after this point in time, as he was on the cross, many went by the cross and mocked him and waved their heads at him and spit at him and said things like, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If you saved others, why don't you save yourself? That sounds very much in principle like, Physician, heal yourself. Physician is a person who heals people.

You've been healing people, why don't you heal yourself? And some feel that Jesus is predicting those comments, which later some people made on the cross, or when Jesus was on the cross, they made to him. Now, it's possible that he did mean this. However, I think that this comment is directed more particularly to the people of this village.

And we don't even know for sure that anyone from this village, except Mary, was at the foot of the cross. And certainly she wasn't making these comments to him. So, we don't have any record that any people from Nazareth happened to be in Jerusalem at the time that Jesus was crucified, though it was Passover, and many of them probably were.

There's no specific mention of these people being there. I think what he has to say, what he's referring to, Physician, heal yourself, is explained in the very next statement. He says, Whatever you have heard done in Capernaum, whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in your own country.

Now, heal yourself, in this case it would be extended, meaning heal your own town. You're healing, and we heard you've been healing in Capernaum. You've been healing in other places, you've been doing miracles there.

Why don't you do the same at home? Heal yourself, in this case, would be more in the extended sense of your own people, your own villagers, your fellow, you know, people you grew up with, your own family and neighbors. You heal others, why don't you heal us, your own people? I have a suspicion that that's how he means it. Now, it's interesting that they make reference to what they have heard was done in Capernaum.

Fact is, there's been no record of him doing anything in Capernaum up to this point. This may argue for this story being told out of its sequence, out of its chronological sequence. Not everything in the Gospels is reported in the chronological order that it happened.

And we do read immediately after this story is over, in verse 31, Jesus went down to Capernaum, and he actually relocated there permanently, fairly permanently. It became his outreach headquarters for the next year. So, we see immediately after this story is related, in verse 31 of Luke 4, we find Jesus actually going to Capernaum, and much was

done in Capernaum.

But up to this point, we've read nothing of it. Of course, Luke hasn't recorded Jesus doing anything in Galilee at all prior to going to Nazareth. And John has recorded things done in Cana.

Although, of course, the noblemen had lived in Capernaum. And it's possible that the story of the nobleman's son, who was healed in Capernaum, though Jesus had not been there, Jesus gave the word from Cana, and then, you know, 16 miles away, this boy in Capernaum was healed by a miracle of Jesus. It's possible that that particular incident, news of it, had reached Nazareth.

And so when they say, we heard what you did in Capernaum, it might not mean that he had ever really been to Capernaum, but that there was a boy healed in Capernaum by Jesus, even though he had not set foot there. So we don't know exactly what things in Capernaum they're referring to. It's possible, of course, that Jesus had visited Capernaum before this without there being a record of it.

Only a very small percentage of the things Jesus did and places he went are really specified for us. John tells us at the end of his gospel, if all the things Jesus said and did were recorded, the world itself wouldn't be able to contain the books, which is a hyperbole. But nonetheless, he's emphasizing that in the books that we do have of the life of Jesus, they certainly don't contain all the things he said or did, nor even the majority of them.

Therefore, he may have been to Capernaum before this. But there's a number of ways of understanding their comment, which is actually his comment, he put it into their mouth. You will no doubt say something like this.

What he's saying is, you no doubt will expect me to perform here. A hometown boy makes good, comes home. You know, he's attained fame and fortune elsewhere.

He's a household word in certain parts of the country. Now he comes home, of course he'll put on a demonstration for his own people. And Jesus says, that's what you may be thinking.

But that's not what's going to happen. He says, because assuredly I say to you, verse 24, no prophet is accepted in his own country. That is, when he's at home, he's too familiar.

Now, a magician, a guy like David Copperfield or something, could go back to the town he grew up in and put on a show and there's no problem there, because that's just stage magic. Jesus, however, had to respond to faith. Jesus' actions were the works of God responding to the faith of parties who needed a miracle from God.

In the other stories, the ones in Mark and Matthew, about Jesus being in Capernaum,

both of them mention that he left that town having done little there, having done few miracles there because of their lack of faith. He healed a few sick folk, it says in Mark. But he marveled at their lack of faith.

You see, Jesus wasn't a performer who just ran around doing miracles and could do them at will. It was necessary that he was the agent through which God was doing his works of healing and deliverance to people in response to their faith. So even though his hometown people felt like he owed them a performance, after all, he'd been performing elsewhere, he should perform for them, he was indicating that in your own country, that's the place you're least likely to be able to do it if what you're doing is based on the faith of the people, because they don't believe you.

They don't believe you're really that special. They know you too well, you're too familiar to them. You grew up among them, you played with their kids.

You never showed any signs of supernatural power in those 30 years that he lived among them. So their ability to believe that he would be really the Son of God was greatly inhibited by the fact that they knew him as well as they did in all those years where he wasn't so exceptional. And therefore he was not going to be able to do as many works among them despite the fact they felt he owed it to them.

Now, having said that no prophet is accepted in his own country, he gives two examples of a couple of prophets who weren't. Elijah and Elisha. The stories come from 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 5, respectively.

1 Kings 17 is a story about how Elijah the prophet, having pronounced that there would be no rain for three and a half years, needed to find a place where he could survive the famine that would come. And God directed him to the home of a widow of the land of Zarephath, which was to the north in Phoenicia. It was not in Israel.

She was not a Jewish woman. She was about to starve to death. He came walking up onto her homestead and she and her son were gathering sticks there.

And he said, Lady, could you give me something to eat? And she said, Well, frankly, we're just about out of food right now. We just have enough flour left to make one little cake. And my son and I were just gathering the wood to build a fire.

We're going to bake this cake and eat it and die. Because it's our last food and we've got no hope of any other food. We're just collecting wood for our last meal.

And Elijah said, Well, you go ahead and bake that cake and you give it to me. And God will take care of you. Now, that was a real act of faith on her part.

To give up the last food, all of her motherly instincts, even though she knew her son was going to die after eating that one, still, if there was any food left, her instincts would be

to give it to her son at the very least, not to this stranger. But perceiving him to be a prophet of God, she obeyed him. She gave him some of the food.

And as a result, her supply of food was miraculously sustained for three years or three and a half years until the famine was over. The Bible says that she went back to the bin to look. And there was always flour in the bin every day.

There was more oil in the crews every day. Although she had been out, it was miraculously sustained, just like the manna was provided every day to the Jews in the wilderness. And Elijah stayed with her so there was enough food to feed her and Elijah and the boy.

Now, what Jesus said is that during that famine, there were many widows who could have used miracles like that. There were many widows hungry and suffering from the famine in the days of Elijah. But he wasn't sent to any of the widows of Israel.

The one woman he actually helped was a Gentile. Why? Because a prophet is not honored in his own country. A Gentile who had faith was going to get a miracle from God that a Jew without faith would be passed over for and would not receive.

Now, his statement here, of course, would have implications. That would be offensive to the Jews. And that he did offend the audience is quite clear by their reaction.

They actually tried to kill him. But what he is insinuating is that a Gentile with faith, even though they are not of the countrymen of the prophet, their faith will get something from God which a Jew lacking faith will not get. And he gives a second example of the same phenomenon.

In 2 Kings 5, Naaman, a Syrian official, a Syrian army captain, enemies of the kingdom of Israel, had a Jewish servant girl. He had leprosy. And his Jewish servant girl, who had been taken captive into Syria, she cared for her master and said, Boy, I wish you could just go talk to that prophet that we've got in Israel.

I'll bet he could heal you of your leprosy. And Naaman actually went down and requested from Elisha a healing of his leprosy. And Elisha sent a message to him and said, You go dip seven times in the river Jordan, you'll be healed.

The man initially thought, That's ridiculous. And he started home angry that he wasn't going to do it. And his servant said, Well, if he'd asked you to do some hard thing, you certainly would have done it.

Why don't you do this simple thing? So Naaman was persuaded to go ahead and do what the prophet said. He dipped seven times in the river Jordan. And when he came up the seventh time, his skin was whole like a newborn baby.

His leprosy was gone and he was healed. Now, Jesus said, During that time, there were a lot of lepers in Israel. This man was a Gentile who got healed of his leprosy.

There were a lot of people with leprosy in Israel, Jewish lepers. And none of them got healed. But the only guy that Elisha ever healed of leprosy was a Syrian, a Gentile.

Now, the point Jesus is making deliberately is that just because people are the countrymen of the prophet doesn't mean they're going to be automatic recipients of whatever privileges and powers he has to bestow. It is those who have faith, even though they are not near kin of his, or even maybe not of the same race as him, that will receive from God whatever the prophet is sent to bless people with. Now, of course, the implications of this were insulting to the pride of his listeners because, first of all, Jesus was saying Gentiles will receive blessings from God that Jews will miss out on.

And the people of Nazareth, in this particular illustration, were comparable to the Jews that God was going to pass over and do nothing for because of their lack of faith. Therefore, it says in verse 28, Then all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath and rose up and thrust him out of the city. And they led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built.

Nazareth is a known place today, and it is built on a hill. Today, the name of that hill is referred to as the Mount of Precipitation. There's a cliff there.

And they apparently intended to throw Jesus over the cliff, it says, and to kill him. They were just that mad at him. But it says, Then passing through the midst of them, he went his way.

No explanation is given of how he managed this. Here, he's taken in a mob. They're no doubt holding on to him, every part of his body, dragging him over to the cliff, and he just kind of walks away.

Now, there are other places that the Bible indicates that people sought to stone him or they took up stones to stone him or sought to lay hands on him, but they couldn't because his hour had not yet come. John, particularly, makes that comment several times in his gospel. Luke doesn't say it was because his hour had not come, but I think we can deduce that.

It wasn't time for Jesus to die. That wasn't the way he was predicted to die. Jesus did come to die, but not by falling over a cliff or by being stoned, but by being crucified, so it was predicted.

And that's how he was going to die. Therefore, he was indestructible until such a time as God determined that he would be crucified, and this wasn't that time. And so, even though people made an attempt on his life, he walked through the midst.

Now, how the mechanics of that was worked out is not clear. Whether the people were thrown into confusion as they were at the door of Lot's house, you know, they're breaking down the door and they're made blind and they were confused and they couldn't find the door, or whether Jesus just, you know, many people picture that Jesus just kind of gave them a very intimidating look and people just kind of, you know, froze with intimidation and he just walked through the midst and left town. I don't know.

The Bible doesn't say. All we know is that he got out of there. Whether he got down and crawled between their legs and snuck out of the crowd that way without anyone being able to see where he was going, I don't know.

There's apparently a lot of confusion. It was a mob scene, but I have a feeling Jesus left in a more dignified manner than that, probably. I prefer to think of him giving them an authoritative look that no doubt would cause them to part like the Red Sea and let him walk through and leave.

That may be just too much imagination, but we just don't know. Too much of Cecil B. DeMille there. Okay.

At this point I want to insert just a few verses from Matthew 4. You don't have to turn there, although you can if you want to. It's Matthew 4, verses 13 through 16. Matthew 4, verses 13 through 16 should be inserted, which says, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and the shadow of death, light has dawned upon them.

Now that's a quote from Isaiah chapter 9, verses 1 and 2. Matthew at this point inserts it, because Matthew 4, verses 13 says, Jesus left Nazareth, although interestingly, Matthew has not mentioned Jesus being in Nazareth up to that point. The story of Jesus going to Nazareth is reserved for Matthew 13. But way back in Matthew 4, he says, leaving Nazareth.

So Matthew implies that Jesus went to Nazareth, but has not given us any story of that. He just says, leaving Nazareth, he came to Capernaum. Capernaum was located on the Sea of Galilee, in the region bordering the traditional boundaries of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Now Isaiah had predicted that those who sat in darkness in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali would see a great light. And Matthew sees this as an obvious fulfillment of that. The light was the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus was the light of the world. And those who were in spiritual darkness got to see it.

And it started, his public preaching ministry, full scale, started in the regions that had been the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali.

And that's why Matthew gives this scripture as a fulfillment, when Jesus went to Capernaum. Now Capernaum became his headquarters, and the house of Peter became his specific launching pad for ministry, both locally in the town and to a wider range of cities that he made itineraries to in the region of Galilee. Luke 4, 31 through 44, is related, I believe, out of chronological order.

Now the reason I say so is because Luke 4, 31 through 44, talks about Jesus casting a demon out in the synagogue of Capernaum, and then going to Peter's house, where his mother-in-law is sick and is healed, and so forth. Now, chapter 5 of Luke tells of the calling of the fishermen. Now, one would naturally think it more likely that Jesus would call the fishermen to be disciples before he would be lodging in one of their houses.

The call of Peter and Andrew and James and John is recorded in Luke 5, verses 1 through 11. But before that, at the end of chapter 4, it tells of Jesus staying in Peter's house and healing his mother-in-law. Now, it is not impossible that this could be the right order.

Jesus did know Peter already. We know this because he had met him back in John chapter 1, had not yet called him to follow him. But now that Jesus came to Capernaum, Peter was a known guide to him, and he might have just stayed in his house.

I mean, Jesus preached in the synagogue, Peter having met him before, might have said, Come on over to my house for dinner. Oh, by the way, my mother-in-law is sick. Could you heal her? And he did so, but Peter was still busy about his fishing trade until maybe the next day or a few days later, Jesus called him away from that.

It is possible that the order in Luke is the correct order, but the problem is that Matthew and Mark, in Matthew 4 and Mark 1, record these stories in the reverse sequence. That is, both Mark chapter 1 and Matthew chapter 4 tell us that the next thing Jesus did was call the four fishermen and then preach in the synagogue in Capernaum, cast out the demon, and go heal Peter's mother-in-law. So, what I am saying is, the order of events, the calling of the four fishermen, which is here related in Luke 5 after the healing in the synagogue, or the exorcism in the synagogue and the healing at Peter's house, is actually in both Mark and Matthew recorded as before those events.

So that according to Mark and Luke, Jesus came to Capernaum, he called the fishermen, and after he called them, they became disciples, then he preached in the synagogue, cast the demon out, and went into Peter's house. As I said, that would seem the natural sequence of things, and that is the sequence in Mark and Matthew. Luke has it reversed here.

So, we are going to agree, just because we don't know otherwise, we are going to agree

with Mark and Matthew in the sequence, but I want to take the story of the call of the four fishermen from Luke, because he gives a longer, fuller description of how this took place. Luke 5, verses 1 through 11. So it was, as the multitude pressed about him to hear the word of God, that he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, which is just another word for the Sea of Galilee.

It had more than one name, the lake of Gennesaret. It was also called the Sea of Tiberias, and we most commonly call it the Sea of Galilee. Three names for the same body of water.

And he saw two boats standing by the lake, but the fishermen had gone from 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 from the land. And he sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

Now, when he had stopped speaking, he said to Simon, Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. But Simon answered and said to him, Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing. Nevertheless, it is your word, I will let down the net.

And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken. And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

And Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid, from now on you will catch men. So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed him. Now, the names of the characters here are Simon and Andrew, his brother.

And then we have James and John, the sons of Zebedee, mentioned in verse 10, who are said to have been partners with Simon. And we know that at least three of these people had met Jesus once before. In all likelihood, all four of them had.

Andrew met Jesus first, Andrew and John. Andrew went and got Simon, who, when introduced to Jesus, he was renamed Peter. And whether James was in that story in John chapter 1 or not, we don't know.

But that meeting with Jesus in John chapter 1 had happened almost a year earlier than this. They were acquainted with Jesus, which probably helps to explain why they were so quick to leave their nets upon his calling them. If they had never seen him before, one might wonder how they would be so motivated to follow him and leave everything.

But they, no doubt, in the year since they had met him, had discussed among themselves many times Jesus' significance, whether they thought he was the Messiah or not. Andrew had already said he was the Messiah, had told Peter that. And so they probably kind of wished they could give up the old grind and follow Jesus.

I guess it's an awful lot of people when they get saved become dissatisfied with their old work. It just doesn't seem to have any eternal value to them, and they'd kind of be happy for an opportunity for ministry. I suppose these men, since the call of God was upon their hearts, must have been feeling discontent in such a mundane work as just fishing.

Not that that's not an honorable trade, but when you're called to be a preacher, it's not very satisfying to paint numbers on curbs or flip hamburgers or do telephone soliciting or something for a magazine. These kinds of things just somehow don't strike you as having transcendental value. And I suspect these guys had long, before Jesus arrived there in Galilee, thought, boy, if I could, I'd just like to follow that guy Jesus.

And when he actually invited them, they were quick to do it. Now, Jesus first asked Simon to put out a little way so Jesus could use his boat as a pulpit. Jesus did this on more than one occasion.

The multitudes were so great, often, that they fairly pressed Jesus into the water. This is no doubt because the people in the back were trying to get near enough to hear, and each one was kind of nudging the guy in front of them, until the guys in the front were being bumped forward and probably bumping up against Jesus himself. So it was an ingenious plan to just basically stand out in the boat.

If you're out more than waist deep in water, people aren't going to be bumping against your boat. And also the water itself serves as sort of a natural amphitheater. Sound carries over water in a remarkable way.

Our school used to be located on a lake in Bandon, and we could hear people talking at normal tones who were 100 yards away on the other side of the lake because their voice would just carry over the top of the water. And Jesus apparently exploited this feature to speak to multitudes from the boat. When he was done speaking, he sent the people away, and before he called these men to be disciples, he wanted to give them perhaps a test to see if they really didn't want to be in this business anymore.

You know, do you really want to be a preacher or a fisherman? Well, on nights like that, they really wanted to be a preacher because they hadn't caught anything. And it's kind of frustrating to work hard and break your back all night and not have anything to show for it. So Jesus said, well, try to put out your nets for a catch.

Peter objected, but said, but if you want me to, we will. We've fished all night. Night's

better than day for fishing anyway, so we're certainly not going to catch anything.

But we'll humor you if you think that's what we should do. Go ahead, go ahead, guys. Put the net in.

Show them. Show them there's no fish here. And when he pulled up this great catch of fish, this not only, of course, was impressing them that he had supernatural powers, which astonished them and caused Peter even to fall on his face and say, Lord, depart from me.

I'm a sinful man. He may have been more sinful than most, but even if he were not, many people who are more or less godly had this same reaction when in the presence of deity. Isaiah himself, when he saw the Lord high and lifted up, his first reaction is, woe is me.

I'm a man of unclean lips. I'm undone. Though he was probably a pretty godly guy in his generation.

Peter may or may not have been exceptionally crude or sinful. I mean, he was a fisherman after all, and they aren't known to be the most, what should we say, delicate in their speech and behavior. Anyway, we cannot make any pronouncements about Peter's actual moral character based on this, because even a man of great moral character on occasions is convicted of the fact of his imperfections and in the presence of one that he perceives to be God, he looks pretty dirty compared to him.

And this was Peter's reaction. He said, depart from me, O Lord. It can hardly be that Peter didn't want Jesus around.

I mean, Peter quickly, upon invitation, opted to be with Jesus all the time. He was just giving Jesus fair warning. Lord, I don't think you want to be with me.

You probably better leave me. I'm not worthy. I'm not worthy to be in your presence.

I'm a sinful man. But see, that's just the thing that makes a person qualified to be a disciple. Remember the publican and the Pharisee praying, and the publican was the one who said, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

And Jesus said, that man went down to his house to justify. He was poor in spirit. So was Peter.

That's just the thing that a person has to feel if they're going to be qualified to serve the Lord. Moses himself said, who am I to stand before Pharaoh? Yet he was the most qualified man God had chosen. Often it is so that when God chooses a man, he does so because the man is not qualified, or at least does not regard himself as qualified.

If a man thinks himself qualified, it's unlikely that he'll be used of God, lest any flesh

should glory in his sight. In any case, the catch of fish also, in addition to showing a miracle, showed what kind of revenues fishing could produce. You know, if Jesus had called them to leave on their worst day, their worst business day, their most frustrating, aggravating business day, they'd labored all night and hadn't taken anything.

He said, how'd you like to leave this business and come into the ministry? They'd say, hey, why not? I couldn't make any less in ministry than I'm making in this business. I'm angry at this business anyway. I'm just in the mood to leave.

So Jesus made sure that before inviting them to leave the fishing business, he gave them a prosperous day. He probably made it the most prosperous day they'd had in their careers. There were, after all, that many fish in the Lake of Galilee.

I do not believe we're supposed to understand that Jesus created those fish to go in that net. Creating animals is something God stopped doing on the sixth day, and fish on the fifth. He did not manufacture those fish.

He just drew them into the net, we have to assume. So he showed them, there are a lot of fish in this sea. And this is what I'm asking you to leave, a potentially prosperous business.

Now, they'd been fishermen for years, no doubt. They knew what they could bring in. But the point is, there are always good days and bad days for fishermen.

This happened to be a very good day after Jesus filled their nets. And it would give them cause to wonder, is this a good trade to leave behind? I mean, there's some prosperity to be had here. This is our best business day.

And on their best business day, when they had the most to give up, Jesus said, follow me. He said, and from now on you'll catch men. In Matthew and Mark, where the same story is told, it kind of breaks it up a little bit.

This story in Luke makes it sound like James and John and Simon were all called with the same word, at the same moment. Actually, Matthew and Mark tells us that Jesus called Simon and Andrew, and then walked further down the lake and called John and James. This story just compresses it into a shorter version, but actually tells us more about Peter's reaction.

The others don't mention Peter reacting this way. So we have these men now changing vocations from fishermen to fishers of men. You shall catch men from now on.

Or as it says in the other Gospels, you shall be fishers of men if you follow me. I find it interesting that Jesus, in calling men to be something that they might not feel very well equipped for, can put the invitation in terms that is less intimidating. For instance, these guys had no rabbinic training.

They had no specific literacy in Scripture. If he had said, follow me and I'll make you religious leaders. I'm going to make you preachers.

I'm going to make you rabbis in a new Judaism, in a new movement. They probably would have thought, you've got the wrong guy. I don't even know how to read and write.

I mean, I can't be a rabbi. But if he says, listen, I'll teach you how to be fishermen who catch men instead of fish. They could relate to that.

They knew how to catch fish. Fishing was something that didn't scare them. It wasn't asking too much for them to transfer what they knew about what they were already doing, what they'd done all their lives, to a new vocation of a spiritual sort.

David, for example, before he was called to be a shepherd of Israel in the sense of being the king of Israel, he shepherded sheep. Likewise did Moses. Moses shepherded sheep for 40 years before he was called to shepherd the children of Israel.

He knew how to shepherd. He had to learn the trade. And then when he was called, he was called to do something that was analogous to what he'd learned in the world.

A lot of times, people find that when they are called into ministry, that there is some kind of parallel between what they're called to do in ministry and what they actually knew how to do already in the world. They just transfer what they knew. There was a time, I'll close with this, Danny Lehman and another gentleman named Dale Jensen and I were in Santa Cruz and we were considering starting a ministry together.

We were praying and fasting about that once a week to see whether we should. And we ended up doing different things. Dale Jensen actually bailed out of that deal.

And Danny and I decided we wouldn't do it without him. And so we didn't start this ministry together. But we were going to form a ministry.

And we were looking at our various gifts. And Danny is an evangelist. And it's interesting that what he did for a living before he was supported in ministry was he is a concrete mason.

He made his living laying foundations. And that's essentially what his ministry is. It's building foundations.

He laid, Paul came to town, he laid the foundation, he evangelized the town and laid the foundation of the church there. Others came to build on it. Dale Jensen was an auto mechanic and he was into troubleshooting and also in his ministry of teaching, he was into finding things that were wrong and fixing them in the church.

And I was a window cleaner. And what my passion was to help people understand and see to get more vision at the time of what God was doing and what God had said and

what the meaning of it was. Even on my window washing business card I put for now we see through a glass darkly but then face to face which was the King James Version of 1 Corinthians 13.

But we just noticed that the ministries we were in although we hadn't engineered it that way in a sense were very much like the vocations that we were in. Now it turns out Danny and I were both in ministry before we were in those vocations but it still seemed a coincidence. We had never so designed it.

As Danny is in the ministry of laying spiritual foundations in people's lives through evangelism he also was in the business of laying concrete foundations. And I was in the business of cleaning people's windows and improving their vision. Letting more light in.

And that's what I was doing in the ministry as well. And Dale was troubleshooting and fixing cars that had things wrong with them. And he had that same motivation in ministry.

So Peter was a fisherman. He knew how to do that. That wasn't intimidating.

And so Jesus instead of calling him to be a preacher or an apostle something that Peter would have certainly taught me a sinful man, I could never do that. He says, well you know how to fish? Well yeah, it doesn't take a righteous man to do that. I'm a sinful man but sinful men can be good fishermen.

Well then I'm going to call you to be a fisherman, to catch men. And so Jesus makes it easy as much as possible on those that are called to ministry. He didn't want to intimidate the guy necessarily.

Well we just ran out of time and out of verses.